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Developing Gospel Movement Leaders

Jacqueline E. Bland
jbland15@georgefox.edu

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GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

DEVELOPING GOSPEL MOVEMENT LEADERS

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
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IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

JACQUELINE E. BLAND

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Portland, Oregon

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

DMin Dissertation

This is to certify that the DMin Dissertation of

Jacqueline Bland

has been approved by
the Dissertation Committee on February 12, 2018
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Dissertation Committee:

Primary Advisor: Anderson Campbell, DMin

Secondary Advisor: Kurtley Knight, DMin

Lead Mentor: MaryKate Morse, PhD

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To my Father and Mother, Richard and Mary Bland, Sr.

Your resilient faith, family, and fight for justice created a safe place for me to be molded and shaped into the spiritual leader that I am by standing on your shoulders as I reach back to the next generation of leaders as a legacy and tribute to you, my heroes.

I Love You!

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ABSTRACT

This research seeks to address the current crisis of leadership in the African American community, specifically regarding the continuation of racial hatred, discrimination, and violence by offering a solution that can be used to help address the problem. The objective of this research was accomplished through the process of reading, analyzing, and synthesizing theoretical and biographic materials to create a viable response. The research led to formulating a program involving the spiritual development of a new generation of Christian African American emerging leaders' engaging with the leadership crisis as biblical reformers of their culture.

The research indicates that the racial problem of today mirrors the same problem that existed during Frederick Douglass' day in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The difference is that Douglass developed into a biblical reformer because of his exposure to the scriptures, his engagement in a discipleship relationship, and his participation in a relational community of faith. His engagement with this process created in him the spiritual fortitude to confront the problem of race from his biblically astute and theologically motivated core beliefs. As Christian African American emerging leaders emulate Douglass as a biblical reformer, they will have the same spiritual fortitude to address the social injustice of racial hatred in their culture milieu.

The research concludes with placing significant importance on the role of the scriptures in the sanctification process to refine and reshape Christian leader's attitudes and actions towards acting justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God (Mic. 6:8). Also, as they engage in a discipleship relationship, they are taught by a mature believer how to access scripture to discern God's will, make ethical choices, and live a

life of integrity. Finally, as Christian leaders participate in a relational community of faith, it provides the training venue for applying the scriptures to biblically reform their culture.

CHAPTER ONE: MINISTRY PROBLEM

Introduction

On August 12, 2017, Charlottesville, Virginia, became ground zero for a “Unite the Right” rally. “Unite the Right” protesters included white nationalists and white right-wing activists, who decided to rally in protest of the removal of Confederate General Robert E. Lee’s statue.¹ In contrast to Charlottesville, a number of city officials in several former slave-holding Southern states have intentionally arranged for the removal of Confederate soldier statues from their cities. During the “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville, a twenty-year old white nationalist drove his car back and forth through a crowd of anti-white nationalists, killing one person and injuring nineteen others; after which he fled the scene.² The actions of the white nationalist driver arose out of the continual existence of racial bigotry, hatred, and violence in this country.

Many of the white nationalists and right-wing activist members have felt empowered to lash out emotionally, verbally, and physically towards people of color, but particularly African Americans, since the election of Donald J. Trump as president.³ The vehement hatred that ensued during the Charlottesville rally serves as a backdrop to the

¹ Janice Williams, “White Nationalist Rally Picked Charlottesville for a Reason, Virginia Town Has Long History KKK Activity and Racism,” Newsweek, August 12, 2017, accessed September 20, 2017, <http://www.newsweek.com/white-nationalist-rally-charlottesville-virginia-650108>.

² Andrew Katz, “Unrest in Virginia: Clashes Over a Show of White Nationalism in Charlottesville Turn Deadly,” Time, August 12, 2017, accessed September 20, 2017, <http://www.times.comcharlottesville-white-nationalist-rally-clashes.html>.

³ Sheryl Gay Stolberg and Brian M. Rosenthal, “State of Emergency in Virginia as White Nationalists March,” New York Times, August 12, 2017, accessed September 20, 2017, <http://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/12/us/charlottesville-protest-white-nationalist.html>.

current deterioration of race relations across the country. However, the decline of race relations between African Americans and Euro-Americans reaches back to the seventeenth century when Africans were brought to the new world and enslaved by the slave holders as free labor for economic gain.⁴ The immoral, unjust, and systemic institution of slavery was a societal ill that created a critical need for leadership in the African American community. Frederick Douglass addressed the crisis of leadership during his time, which compels current Christians in the African American community to ask the question, “Who will arise to meet the current critical need for similar leadership?”

The post-Civil Rights era provided the African American community with a variety of opportunities never experienced before, such as integrated schools, voting, housing, and new job opportunities. However, over time these same opportunities turned into components that deteriorated the values of Black owned businesses, educating their own, and Black men providing for their families in ways that became the genesis of a leadership void in this community. Michelle Alexander, in her book *The New Jim Crow*, explains, “The Civil Rights gains of the 1960s was reversed by creating a new system of racialized social control by putting two million African American men behind bars at the turn of the twenty-first century, and millions more were relegated to the margins of mainstream society, banished to a political and social space not unlike Jim Crow, where discrimination in employment, housing, and access to education was perfectly legal and where they could be denied the right to vote.”⁵

⁴ Mark A. Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 8.

⁵ Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York, NY: The New Press, 2012), 58.

The shift of post-Civil Rights jubilation turned adversarial towards African Americans within a decade of its existence. Eventually, racial integration cost the African American community more than it realized such as stagnating and declining Black wealth, collapsing the Black family, and the unemployment rate of Black men spiraling out of control.⁶ The repackaging of racism took some by surprise and ignored by others during the era when the shroud of integration cease to cover up the underlining emotion of hatred by White supremacy groups. These are just a few factors that contributed to the leadership crisis that currently exist in the African American community.

The leaders we need are Adaptive Leaders. Ronald Heifetz's definition of this type of leader is described as, "The practice of mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive."⁷ In this dissertation the definition is refined to be, "the chosen ability to nurture and develop others through respect, attentiveness, honesty, feedback, and ethical values, while empowering them to grow into their full potential in the context of team."⁸ This definition implies that an average person can grow towards leadership with the necessary environment, exposure, and education to do so.

Douglass spent years in the systemic institution of slavery. Yet, despite his depraved beginnings, he went on to escape slavery, became a preacher, and worked as an abolitionist. He also, eventually persuaded the President of the United States to take a stand against slavery and abolish the institution so deeply embedded in this country's

⁶ Atlanta Black Star. 2013. "5 Ways Integration Underdeveloped Black America." Atlanta Black Star, December 9, 2013, accessed February 15, 2017. <http://atlantablackstar.com/2013/12/09/5-ways-integration-underdeveloped-black-america/5/>.

⁷ Ronald A. Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1994), 5.

⁸ Author's definition based on readings from Ronald A. Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1994).

fabric.⁹ The Christian African American community, but more importantly, the country, needs the kind of transformative leadership demonstrated by Douglass.

Description of the Problem

The event in Charlottesville, Virginia is not isolated. It was only one of many violent, racially motivated events in recent times. For most Americans, February 26, 2012 was just another ordinary day. But for one family and for the African American community, February 26, 2012 is the date of an all too familiar tragedy. On that day 17-year old high school student Trayvon Martin was fatally shot and killed while returning from the neighborhood corner store after purchasing a pack of Skittles candy.¹⁰

This incident outraged hundreds in Sanford, Florida, the location of the shooting. Also, this grievous event was perpetrated by a community vigilante who dismissed official police instructions to stay in his car. Instead, he apprehended who he thought was a suspicious armed person.¹¹ What first outraged hundreds, and eventually thousands across the nation, was the all too common release of the shooter with no finding of wrong doing.

Charlottesville harkens back to notions of white supremacy and black inferiority written into the founding documents of this country and codified in her laws, institutions and practices for centuries. However, this history and current day events demand a

⁹ Frederick Douglass, *The Most Complete Collection of Written Works & Speeches with Illustrations and Audio Narrations* (Lancashire, UK: Northpoint Classics, 2011), 14713. Kindle.

¹⁰ Bianca Prieto, "Trayvon Martin: 'We Are Gathered Here Today to Demand Justice' in Teen's Fatal Shooting," Orlando Sentinel, March 14, 2012, accessed June 6, 2017, http://articles.orlandosentinel.com/2012-03-14/news/os-trayvon-martin-shooting-death-rally-20120314_1_shooting-death-bryant-chief-bill-lee.

¹¹ Ibid.

biblically astute, theologically motivated, and professionally proficient generation of deeply committed godly leaders, like Douglass. And yet, to move an individual from a place of racial degradation to leadership that help to transform a country did not happen by chance. It required an intentional decision to engage in a process.

Engaging in a developmental process will provide the necessary leadership needed to bring solutions to the personal and systemic racial hatred demonstrated towards African Americans today. This process contributes to the development of the emerging leader's character, their trajectory towards maturity, and their capacity in leading others. It is primarily about inward formation of the leader, which leads to external transformation of others.¹²

In his classic work, *The Making of a Leader*, Dr. J. Robert Clinton postulates that when a believer's spiritual growth is not prioritized, the leader's ability to lead will eventually cease to be vibrant or exist at all.¹³ Although first written 29 years ago, Clinton's claim is still valid today. Thus, there is a need to be attentive to the lack of spiritual growth in believers, particularly in the lives of Christian African American emerging leaders, to provide a foundation from which to act as biblical reformers of the culture.

Whether intentional or not, some African American Christians forgo making choices which prioritize their maturity in Christ. The choices these individuals make directly affect one's ability to lead in a transformative way. Although, there is a desire on

¹² James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, & Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 237.

¹³ J. Robert Clinton, *The Making of a Leader: Recognizing the Lessons and Stages of Leadership Development* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1988), 167.

the part of many African American pastors and Christian campus ministers¹⁴ to develop a biblically astute, theologically motivated, and professionally proficient generation of deeply committed godly leaders, many lack the skills to do so.¹⁵ Although some are hopeful, others are despondent with this reality.

Importance of the Study

To effectively eradicate the evil of individual and systemic racism, one must act with the moral authority granted only by scripture; given by God who created humankind, and his Son who battled evil victoriously (Matt. 4:1-11). The type of leaders needed to effectively engage the current racial crisis and address systemic inequality in every sector of American life requires deep spiritual formation of character.¹⁶ The transformation of a believer's character will eventually affect their leadership, and provide a solid ethical foundation from which they impact and influence others. Similar to Jesus' followers during his day, these leaders must become the type of leaders in which the gospel is proclaimed through the power of the Holy Spirit and accompanied with a social justice voice.¹⁷

¹⁴ Examples of African American pastors and Christian campus ministers are Rev. Willie Richardson, Pastor Lloyd C. Blue, Tom Skinner, Lee N. June, Christopher C. Mathis, Jr., and Jimmy McGee. Most of the names are from *Evangelism & Discipleship in African-American Churches*, eds. Lee N. June and Matthew Parker (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999).

¹⁵ Tom Skinner, "Personal Reflections on Evangelism Among African Americans," in *Evangelism & Discipleship in African-American Churches*, eds. Lee N. June and Matthew Parker (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 32.

¹⁶ Efrain Agosto, *Servant Leadership: Jesus and Paul* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2005), 9.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 23.

True followers of Jesus Christ are known by their commitment to engaging with the needs of the poor, the marginalized, and the disenfranchised (James 1:27). The unique brand of American disenfranchisement was woven into the fabric of this country at its inception, through race, recognizing enslaved Africans as being merely three-fifths of a person. Dismantling this level of racism, which resides both at the core of individualized beliefs and is also embedded into the laws and institutions of this nation, requires godly leaders of courage, humility, and strength to bring about societal change as reformers. This dynamic was so clearly exemplified in the life and leadership of Douglass.

The second and third century followers of Christ demonstrated cultural reformation through their faith and actions. Similarly, the abolitionists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries developed an Christological and theological praxis of scripture to counter the biblical passages misused to uphold the institution of slavery.¹⁸ As mentors and role models of change, they radically transformed their culture. The same type of leaders are needed today, in light of current racial tension that permeates relationships between majority and minority cultures in the nation.

The spiritual development of leaders equipped to confront the ills of society requires particular attentiveness to their inward formation.¹⁹ Such internal formation takes place in the context of an intentional developmental process, which must include studying the scriptures, engaging in a discipleship relationship, and participating in a relational community of faith. Frederick Douglass' inward transformation came through

¹⁸ Aida Besancon Spencer, William David Spencer, and Mimi Haddad, eds., *Global Voices on Biblical Equality: Women and Men Ministering Together in the Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2008), 10.

¹⁹ Jeffrey P. Greenman and George Kalantzis, eds., *Life in the Spirit: Spiritual Formation in Theological Perspective* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010), 9.

his deep commitment to Christ that compelled him to speak against the institution of slavery as an abolitionist.²⁰

Explored further in Chapter Two, is his observation of the paradox between the “Christianity of Christ” and the “Christianity of the land,” which is still a current reality for godly leaders to address. Thus, the formation of leaders requires the engagement of a developmental program challenging believers to love and live in obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ. As believers become like Christ and see the world through his eyes, they are compelled to address injustices around them (Mic. 6:8). For the African American Christian, this most definitely includes racial injustices. As Martin Luther King, Jr. stated, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”²¹

Furthermore, godly leaders, as biblical reformers of their culture, are a part of a relational community of faith. With an adequate relational network that provides them with feedback, affirmation, and encouragement, they are able to forge ahead towards any type of social change.²² The task of engineering social change can be very challenging, lonely, and costly.

Leaders who regularly engage in a community of relationships whereby they feel known, affirmed, and held accountable are able to withstand the worst of any backlash or

²⁰ Douglass, *The Most Complete Collection of Written Works & Speeches with Illustrations and Audio Narrations*, 12524, Kindle.

²¹ Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from a Birmingham Jail by Martin Luther King, Jr.,” King Papers of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute, April 16, 1963, accessed June 17, 2017, <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/letter-birmingham-jail>.

²² Bruce D. Perry and Maia Szalavitz, *The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog and Other Stories from a Child Psychiatrist’s Notebook: What Traumatized Children Can Teach Us About Loss, Love, and Healing* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2006), 230.

retaliation.²³ The key for many great leaders' successes has been a community of companions who support them through the worse of challenges in life. Examples from the Old and New Testament are leaders such as Moses, Joshua, Samuel, King David, Peter and the Apostle Paul (Heb. 13:7).

Outline of the Thesis

Leaders like those during Jesus' era, and reformers similar to those of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are desperately needed today. The continuation of systemic racism and inequality has warranted the need for a new generation of godly leaders who are biblically astute and theologically motivated to engage injustices effectively and usher in lasting change. To bring adequate solutions to these and other problems plaguing the nation, these leaders must embrace the formation of character and leadership skills. That is the goal of this dissertation.

To effectively transform the character and leadership skills of leaders, what is required is the development of Gospel Movement Leaders²⁴ characterized by studying the scriptures, participating in a discipleship relationship, and engaging a relational community of faith. Like Frederick Douglass, transformed Christian African American emerging leaders will have a platform to bring solutions to the current ills of this nation

²³ Holly Catterton Allen and Christina Lawton Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation: Bringing the Whole Church Together in Ministry, Community and Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 58.

²⁴ Gospel Movement Leader refers to a developmental process of the transformation of Christian African American emerging leaders' character and leadership by engaging in a developmental process consisting of studying the scriptures, engaging in a discipleship relationship, and participating in a relational community of faith, which produces the spiritual fortitude to bring solutions to existing social ills in their culture from a biblically astute and theologically motivated worldview with a social justice voice. The term is influenced from the reading of Efrain Agosto's *Servant Leadership: Jesus & Paul* (St. Louis, MO: Missouri: Chalice Press, 2005).

as biblical reformers of their culture compelled by their biblically astute and theologically cohesive core beliefs. In short, we need a new generation of Gospel Movement Leaders.

Chapter Two will explore how the life of Frederick Douglass can serve as a helpful prototype for such a leader. As a reformer of his culture, he began life in his early years as a slave, and grew to become an abolitionist and ultimately a reformer of his culture through his friendship with President Lincoln. His exposure to the scriptures created his core beliefs to include loving all humankind, but hating the slaveholder's horrific mistreatment of enslaved African Americans.²⁵ Thus, Gospel Movement Leaders are those who genuinely love others unconditionally while addressing their behavior incongruent with scripture.

Douglass' engagement in a discipleship relationship prepared him to discover his calling from God as he learned to study and apply the scriptures in the midst of his life's journey as a slave and subsequently, as a freed person. Witnessing first hand and experiencing the traumatizing effects of slavery throughout his childhood, coupled with a theologically cohesive set of core beliefs formed throughout his developmental process would propel him to become a biblical reformer of his culture, who would play an influential role in reshaping the destiny of an entire nation.²⁶

Douglass' participation in a relational community of faith, AME Zion Methodist, provided the necessary training venue that aided him in becoming a successful leader and orator in addressing the issue of racial hatred.²⁷ His engagement with other like-minded,

²⁵ Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass: The Illustrated Edition* (Minneapolis, MN: Zenith Press, 2015), 43.

²⁶ Douglass, *The Most Complete Collection of Written Works & Speeches with Illustrations and Audio Narrations*, 14179, Kindle.

²⁷ Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass: The Illustrated Edition*, 98

Christ-centered believers enabled him to receive love, affirmation, and belongingness, which transformed his character and leadership. Douglass eventually exchanged his role as pastor for the difficult task of becoming an abolitionist because of his passion to help eradicate the institution of slavery so that his brothers and sisters who were enslaved to its cruel bondage could be free also.

In Chapter Three, the author will turn to a study of sanctification and justification because the first step in forming Gospel Movement Leaders is an accurate command of the scriptures as a basis for a leader's moral authority. Thus, studying the scriptures becomes foundational in the transformation of a believer's character and leadership. It is this author's claim that the application of scripture in the life of a believer furthers the work of the Holy Spirit in the sanctification process, which realigns their attitudes and actions in obedient surrender to God.

The doctrine of sanctification directly correlates to the doctrine of justification.²⁸ The former includes the daily transformational work of the Holy Spirit as a result of a regenerated believer choosing to turn away from sin; whereby, the latter is being placed in right standing with God through the work of Jesus Christ' death, burial, and resurrection. Simply put, the former reflects a believer's part through the Holy Spirit, which includes making daily choices towards righteousness or right living, and the latter is accomplished completely through the work of Christ, by faith alone.²⁹

²⁸ Arthur W. Pink, *The Doctrine of Sanctification* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1955), 43, Kindle.

²⁹ David Peterson, *Possessed by God: A New Testament Theology of Sanctification and Holiness*, ed. D.A. Carson (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 15.

The doctrines of justification and sanctification are congruent in their essence with the element of faith as their foundation. This element of faith enables believers to live righteously before God after he has reconciled them to himself through Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. Sanctification and justification are essential components in the maturing of believers through studying and applying the scriptures.

The sanctification process involves an unceasing journey of learning how to please God in and through believers' lives as followers of Christ.³⁰ Moreover, this process is transformational, enabling emerging leaders to transition from believers to disciples, and from disciples to leaders. The process of sanctification for African Americans includes overcoming internalized effects of racism, viewing themselves as God's image bearers and their ethnic identity as valuable to him as well as exercising prophetic voices against issues of social injustices (Ps. 139:14; Eph. 2:10).

Failure to develop the necessary character through sanctification will ensure a failure of leadership.³¹ The type of failure commonly defined by the Christian worldview is choosing to disobey God either by omission or commission. In the Reformed tradition, both forms of disobedience are diametrically opposed to the will of God as his children. For believers to please God in all areas of their lives there will need to be an inward transformation of character influenced by the power of the Holy Spirit that enables believers to choose not to sin, but instead, to please him over a lifetime of walking

³⁰ R. C. Sproul, *Pleasing God*, 2d ed. (Crawfordsville, IN: Ligonier Ministries, 2013), 19.

³¹ Clinton, 168.

humbly with him.³² This statement serves as a working definition towards understanding sanctification.

Along with the scriptures, the second component of developing Gospel Movement Leaders is discipleship, which is the subject of Chapter Four. A discipleship relationship with others consists of learning biblical principles that addresses confidence in an individual's salvation. Also, it includes reliance on the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives, in-depth scripture study, and small group participation with like-minded people for accountability in ethical living.

Furthermore, it is through a discipleship relationship that a believer learns to consistently apply Jesus' teachings in their life, both privately and publicly. In fact, the primary task of the church is to be a community where discipleship happens on a consistent basis.³³ The Apostle Paul's "one another" language in the New Testament asserts that the application of scripture was never meant to be done in isolation.

In seeking to understand discipleship, it is necessary to look at the biblical use of the term "disciple." In his work, *Following the Master*, Michael J. Wilkins states, "The term 'disciple' was understood in first century Palestine as one who placed themselves under the teaching authority of a master or teacher."³⁴ This application implies a learner submitting to the authority of someone with expertise in various subjects. A disciple,

³² Gordon D. Fee, "On Getting the Spirit Back into Spirituality," in *Life in the Spirit: Spiritual Formation in Theological Perspective*, eds. Jeffrey P. Greenman and George Kalantzis (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010), 38.

³³ Hunter, 161.

³⁴ Michael Wilkins, *Following the Master: Discipleship in the Steps of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 26.

according to the *New Bible Dictionary*, is “the pupil or learner of a teacher or rabbi.”³⁵

Furthermore, a disciple may be a follower of Jesus Christ, John the Baptist or a Pharisee (Matt. 22:15-16; John 1:35), which was understood and utilized by those under the teaching authority of others during their era.³⁶ The term disciple is common to the Synoptic gospels and Acts. The noun, “disciple” (*mathētēs*) is central to Matthew’s gospel and his understanding of the church and mission.³⁷

The church is a critical community for developing disciples. The concept of discipleship was the primary assignment of the early church (Matt. 16:18). Wilkins further explains, “The Apostle Paul, in his epistles, never used the term disciple but instead used synonyms related to it, such as saints, believers, brothers/sisters, Christian, etc.”³⁸

A disciple of Jesus Christ demonstrated qualities such as love, peace, and hope. A call to be a disciple of Jesus Christ was a call to steadfast obedience based on the Word of God (Matt. 19:23-26).³⁹ Although the scriptures endorse this quality in those who followed Jesus, not all believers are, in fact, students of Christ. Jesus’ call to be one of his disciples was also a call to be a learner, one who became like him, the integration of their belief revealed in their character and behavior.⁴⁰

³⁵ I. Howard Marshall et al., eds. *New Bible Dictionary*, 3d ed. (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1996), 277-278.

³⁶ Wilkins, 27.

³⁷ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 73.

³⁸ Wilkins, 38.

³⁹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1959), 79.

⁴⁰ Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* (San Francisco, CA: Harper Collins, 1997), 273.

Chapter Five explores the third component of a Gospel Movement Leader as participating in a relational community of faith. A community of authentic relationships serves as a catalyst God uses to bring about the formation of a believer's character and behavior.⁴¹ Believers cannot experience growth and development separated from others. According to Howard Hendricks, "Spiritual growth is best nurtured and developed in a relational community of faith whereby individuals are known and held accountable to applying Jesus' teachings in their beliefs and actions."⁴² Believers holding each other accountable to applying and practicing the teachings of Jesus is a foundational component to surrendering every area of their lives to please God.

As the author of many of the epistles in the New Testament, the Apostle Paul has a plethora of insight regarding the importance of authentic relationships in communities of faith towards believers' spiritual maturation. Richard N. Longenecker states, "He goes to great length in asserting that the gathering of believers is 'the body,' an illustration of interdependence and connectedness of believers with Christ and with one another (Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:12-27)."⁴³ Paul contends that although there are many members, they are to function as one body, in unity, and in the power of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:4). The common practice of believers operating in isolation is antithetical to the Christological and ecclesiological perspective on oneness in the body of Christ. Consequently, this robs

⁴¹ Howard Hendricks, "Forward," in *Foundations of Spiritual Formation: A Community Approach to Becoming Like Christ*, ed. Paul Pettit (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2008), 11.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 13.

⁴³ Richard N. Longenecker, ed., *Community Formation: In the Early Church and in the Church Today* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), 77.

believers of the inward restoration needed to influence and interact with others in a manner consistent with followers of Jesus.⁴⁴

Scripture challenges believers to show kindness and tender-heartedness, forgiving each other of wrong doing, and calls members of the body to steward relationships well in the context of authentic community (Eph. 4:32). Members of a church stewarding relationships well is biblically and theologically grounded in a Trinitarian framework whereby God's Word, God's Spirit, and God's church resides.⁴⁵ As Paul threads the metaphor of "the body" throughout several of his epistles, he gives contrasting instruction on each member's conduct in a Trinitarian construct (Col. 3: 5-17). In short, the empowering of the Holy Spirit is the fulcrum to living out the "one another" verses as chosen by God in Christ Jesus (Col. 3:16).

John H. Hellerman explains, "The phrase, 'family of God' is equivalent to the metaphor of 'the body,' although its use is more implicit throughout the Apostle Paul's epistles."⁴⁶ Paul's perspective on believers functioning in a community of faith as a family is consistent with his articulation of being members of one another in the body of Christ. Each metaphor provides pneumatological direction in how members are to relate to one another in their behavior, such behavior serving as a reflection of a person's character. Believers who choose to function in isolation, instead of a relational

⁴⁴ Paul Pettit, "Introduction," in *Foundations of Spiritual Formation: A Community Approach to Becoming Like Christ*, ed. Paul Pettit (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2008), 19.

⁴⁵ Diane J. Chandler, *Christian Spiritual Formation: An Integrated Approach for Personal and Relational Wholeness* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 19.

⁴⁶ Joseph H. Hellerman, *When the Church Was a Family: Recapturing Jesus' Vision for Authentic Christian Community* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishers, 2009), 95.

community, may experience feeling stuck or even worse, frustration or anger with the reality of declining in their maturity with Christ and others.⁴⁷

Oftentimes, this can be avoided when believers experience accountability, feedback, and correction towards growth and development in their community of faith. Also, it is the relational bonding, processing life's challenges, and heartaches experienced with others that shapes and refines believers in becoming like Christ in their attitudes and behavior.⁴⁸ Simply put, a relational community of faith is necessary in developing godly leaders.

As the Apostle Paul gives believers imperatives on how to conduct themselves in a community of faith, he also gives equal commands of what not to do. In the Book of Galatians, Paul articulates to believers to not provoke, consume or be envious of one another (Gal. 5:15, 26). Subsequently, these and other injunctions on what not to do are essential characteristics that will disrupt and even destroy a sense of family in God's household. Instead, members of the body of Christ are to build up and encourage one another (1Thess. 5:11). Paul's consistent contrasting of what to do and what not to do as believers is in congruence with God's word, applied with the help of God's Spirit, and practiced among God's people.

Believers deeply connecting with one another in a relational community of faith are to emulate the relationality of God with his Spirit, and his Son, functioning in genuine relationship with one another. Similarly, believers functioning as brothers and sisters in Christ, are afforded the opportunity to be engaged with, deeply understand, and

⁴⁷ Hendricks, 10.

⁴⁸ Allen and Ross, 132.

experience unconditional love through interpersonal connectedness (1 Cor. 13:4-7). The interconnectedness between believers in the body of Christ is profoundly transformational because of the critical need to be known, accepted, and affirmed by others.⁴⁹

God, in community with His Spirit and Son, created humankind for meaningful community (Heb. 10:24, 25). The process for growth and development of Christian African American emerging leaders requires them to be intentionally engaged in relationship with one another to experience the same.⁵⁰ The absence of intentionally engaging with other like-minded followers of Christ will rob believers of experiencing community.

Finally, Chapter Six will highlight the practical application of how a Gospel Movement Leader has the responsibility to live out the moral authority of scripture in their culture as a biblical reformer with a social justice voice (Mic. 6:8; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). The moral authority of scripture is the biblical and instructional grounding in how to address issues such as racial hatred while still maintaining love for all humankind, as Frederick Douglass exemplified in his life. To do otherwise will potentially render these leaders ineffective as reformers of their culture.

Gospel Movement Leaders engaging in a discipleship relationship learn how to personally apply scripture in such a way that they can discern God's will for their lives, make ethical choices on a daily basis, and live a life of integrity before God and among

⁴⁹ Alistair I. McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood: A Christian Theory of the Individual in Social Relationships* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 9.

⁵⁰ James C. Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered: Growing in Christ Through Community* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 23.

others. The integration of scripture application is best accomplished with the help of maturing believers. Thus, Gospel Movement Leaders are biblical leaders walking in the will of God, making biblically-based choices, and following through with taking personal responsibility for their character formation and leadership development.

Gospel Movement Leaders place a high value on participating in a relational community of faith. As they hear and see scripture taught and modelled by others, a relational community of faith provides the setting to practice the scriptures among other growing believers and those outside the household of faith (Prov. 27:17; Gal. 6:10). A relational community of faith, the church, serves as a venue for Gospel Movement Leaders to refine their leadership skills, as Douglass experienced in his church as a leader. For Gospel Movement Leaders, the church provides a biblical and theologically motivated setting in which growth and development takes place through the relational network of others in experiencing affirmation, love, and belongingness.

Conclusion

Leaders, like Frederick Douglass, capable of bringing about societal change must experience personal inward formation of character that shapes their leadership capacity. Also, they must intentionally engage in the process of becoming Gospel Movement Leaders which consist of studying the scriptures, engaging in a discipleship relationship, and are rooted in the participation of a relational community of faith. Like biblical reformers from the past, such as the Apostle Paul and the early church fathers, they are equipped to display courage in the midst of fear, humility that counters hypocrisy, and strength in the face of racial hatred that has historically characterized the United States

since its beginning.⁵¹ As this nation continues to fracture out of control due to the polarization of race, politics, and economics, there is an urgent need for solutions.

One viable solution is to develop a new generation of godly leaders whose lives replicate Jesus' teachings in their conduct. Jesus' teachings through the power of the Holy Spirit, will define what it looks like to be an exemplar of Christ in character and leadership. Also, it gives guidance in how to relate to others who are full of fear and racial hatred. The Apostle Paul gives imperatives for believers to overcome evil with good (Rom. 12:21). He further explains the true mark of a believer as one who love and honors others (Rom. 12:10).

As Christian African American emerging leaders engage in the scriptures through the work of sanctification, they will develop Christological values that shape their sense of injustice, compelling them to address systemic injustice as did Douglass. The work of sanctification is in God's hands, guided by his Holy Spirit and expressed to others inside and outside the household of faith.⁵² In this formative process they will provide biblical and theological solutions to the challenges they face in these contexts with integrity and honesty. Moreover, to do so will reflect a twenty-first century form of reformation whereby societal change takes place through work and spheres of social life as a faithful presence.⁵³

Furthermore, this new generation of godly leaders need to be a part of a discipleship relationship with others. Moreover, this relationship consists of learning

⁵¹ Spencer, Spencer, and Haddad, 12.

⁵² Hunter, 226.

⁵³ Ibid., 255.

biblical principles of assurance of salvation, walking in the power of the Holy Spirit, inductive bible study, church roots, prayer and small group.⁵⁴ Believers engaging in spiritual disciplines, such as, private and corporate worship, contemplative prayer, solitude and meditation, along with scripture studying and outreach, will be rooted and grounded in Christ Jesus. The absence of these disciplines can result in regret, frustration, and feelings of being stuck. Thus, discipleship is a lifelong practice of spiritual maturation over time resulting in inward transformation.⁵⁵

Engaging in a discipleship relationship, along with studying the scriptures, enables believers to reflect aspects of wisdom, discernment, and insight towards difficult situations and circumstances (Eph. 5:18-20).⁵⁶ As godly leaders engage in a discipleship relationship with others they will learn how to conduct themselves, according to Jesus' teachings, regarding emotional topics such as racial inequality, police brutality, and the mass incarceration of African American men. Instead of retaliating with anger and hatred, they will respond in an attitude of love, respect, and care toward others because of their spiritual growth (1 Cor. 12:4-7). Moreover, the imitation of Christlikeness is seen throughout the Gospels and the Apostle Paul's letters in the New Testament.⁵⁷

Gospel Movement Leaders participating in a relational community of faith are able to practice living out the moral authority of scripture among other believers. This

⁵⁴ Greenman and Kalantzis, 16.

⁵⁵ Henry Lee Allen, "Evangelizing Professionals: Workers in the Field," in *Evangelism and Discipleship in African-American Churches*, eds. Lee N. June and Matthew Parker (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 180.

⁵⁶ William Turner, *Discipleship for African American Christians: A Journey Through the Church Covenant* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2002), 81.

⁵⁷ Wilkins, 78.

setting provides the training ground needed to effectively live out the moral authority of scripture outside the household of faith through relational and social networks as a faithful presence.⁵⁸ Also, Gospel Movement Leaders are in need of relational support to receive encouragement, affirmation, belongingness, and feedback, to experience the refining and reshaping of their character and leadership towards maturation.⁵⁹ Successful leaders are those who surround themselves with intimate spiritual companions who will speak truth in love (Eph. 4:25).

Gospel Movement Leaders who gravitate towards isolation, which is antithetical to participating in a relational community of faith, will experience ineffectiveness as a leader.⁶⁰ The Apostle Paul's "one another" verses mandate that believers be in relationality with one another. Leaders who work hard to apply and practice these biblical truths become influencers of their cultural milieu. In short, there is a direct correlation between leaders who intentionally participate in a relationality with others and their effectiveness as leaders.

Therefore, studying the scriptures, engaging in a discipleship relationship, and participating in a relational community of faith are a triad approach towards developing believers into Gospel Movement Leaders who can biblically reform their culture.

Christians are created by God with the need and desire for social connectedness.⁶¹ God

⁵⁸ Hunter, 255.

⁵⁹ Kenneth Boa, *Conformed to His Image: Biblical and Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 416.

⁶⁰ Clinton, 167.

⁶¹ Angela H. Reed, Richard R. Osmer, and Marcus G. Smucker, *Spiritual Companionship: A Guide to Protestant Theology and Practice* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 5.

created his people to exist in community with one another. Diane J. Chandler writes, “In the scriptures we observe the relational dimension within the Holy Trinity, whereby the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit relate intimately.”⁶² Thus, believers in a relationally rich community of faith are to emulate the same.

The integrated approach of studying the scriptures, engaging in a discipleship relationship, and participating in a relational community of faith are the three elements necessary to become Gospel Movement Leaders with a social justice voice. Like Frederick Douglass, whose faith stirred him to address the systemic institution of slavery, this nation is in need of leaders who will respond in like manner in the power of the Holy Spirit, for the sake of the gospel and to the glory of God. As Christian African American emerging leaders’ character and leadership are transformed, they will utilize their unique platform to bring about the needed societal change as biblical reformers driven by their biblically astute and theologically cohesive core beliefs.

⁶² Chandler, 107.

CHAPTER TWO: FREDERICK DOUGLASS, A HISTORICAL FIGURE

Introduction

In examining the current crisis of character and leadership in the African American community, this author declares there is an absence of leaders with the depth of character, exemplary leadership skills, and command of the moral authority established by the scriptures necessary to address the issues of the day. The absence of leaders with these qualities is keenly felt by the African American community overall. Furthermore, it has left its churches with limited capacity to adequately address critical issues such as police brutality, the drug pandemic, and systemic racism of the mass incarceration of African American males on a large scale.¹

Although, there has been nominal engagement by some, these challenges have spiraled out of control and now present a crisis in the nation. The simultaneous crisis of character and leadership in the African American community has necessitated an exploration of Christian African American emerging leaders as Gospel Movement Leaders committed to studying the scriptures, engaging in a discipleship relationship, and participating in a relationally rich community of faith.²

Christian African American emerging leaders engaging in a developmental process will be prepared to handle leadership opportunities, no matter how significant. Unfortunately, the current leadership crisis in the African American community is not new, or even uncommon in the African American experience. At critical junctures in the

¹ Cornel West, "Forward," in *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness: Revised Edition*, Michelle Alexander (New York, NY: The New Press, 2012), x.

quest for freedom and equality each generation, from chattel slavery to the Civil Rights movement, to the present day, has been called upon to engage the struggle to claim their human rights as God's creation. In the 1800's, Frederick Douglass (1818-1895) emerged as one such leader.

The primary issue of Douglass' day was the immoral, unjust, and systemic institution of slavery and the ways it was justified and perpetuated by the Christian church. Frederick Douglass and other enslaved Africans viewed the institution of slavery and the slaveholders who considered themselves Christians as a deeply disturbing paradox.³ The incongruence Douglass identified between the Christianity of Christ and the Christianity of the land would become the impetus for Douglass becoming a biblical reformer in his cultural milieu.⁴ He expressed his Christian understanding of the institution by stating, "I therefore hate the corrupt, slaveholding, women-whipping, cradle-plundering, partial and hypocritical Christianity of the land ... I look upon it as the climax of all misnomers, the boldest of all frauds, and the grossest of all libels."⁵

The brutal institution of slavery was justified by the misinterpretation of the scriptures which allowed slave-owning Christians to assert that Africans were descendants of Ham and thus, cursed in perpetuity (Gen. 9:5). Consequently, this perspective made it socially and culturally acceptable for slaveholders to not only oppress

³ Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass: The Illustrated Edition* (Minneapolis, MN: Zenith, 2015), 54.

⁴ Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, ed. Amazon Digital Services (Rochester, NY: Public Domain, 2012), 67, Kindle.

⁵ V.P. Franklin, *Black Self-Determination: A Cultural History of the Faith of the Fathers* (Westport, CT: Lawrence Hill & Company, 1984), 56.

enslaved Africans, but to create a free labor force for their personal economic gain.⁶ The misinterpretation of scripture resulted in a moral justification for the establishment of systemic racism.

A historically researched and biblically cohesive understanding of scripture served as the foundation of Douglass' biblical and theological opposition to the institution of slavery that propelled him towards his life's career as an abolitionist.⁷ History is a witness to the heinous effect of oppression with various groups of people throughout the centuries. Although slavery was abolished towards the latter part of the nineteenth-century, the plight and the effects of this particularly brutal form of systemic oppression is still felt today and has taken on new forms, first in Jim Crow laws, and more recently, the mass incarceration of African American men.⁸

As we will see below, Frederick Douglass responded to the systemic institution of slavery in his cultural context from his biblical and theological foundations. His biblical and theological foundations created in him a cohesive understanding of the whole of scripture, and provided both moral and practical solutions to the issue at hand.⁹ Thus, his theological treatise rendered him a biblical reformer in his cultural milieu.

⁶ Nancy Koester, *Introduction to the History of Christianity in the United States* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015), 16-17.

⁷ Aida Besancon Spencer, William David Spencer, and Mimi Haddad, eds. *Global Voices on Biblical Equality: Women and Men Ministering Together in the Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008), 9.

⁸ Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness: Revised Edition* (New York, NY: The New Press, 2012), 58.

⁹ Spencer, Spencer, and Haddad, 10.

Furthermore, to address the current systemic forms of slavery, such as housing rezoning to exclude people of color, racial profiling, and the mass incarceration of African American men, requires leaders mirroring Douglass' character and leadership. His character and leadership characterizes a Gospel Movement Leader which consist of studying the scriptures, participating in a discipleship relationship and engaging a relational community of faith.¹⁰ Thus, this process will yield a generation of Christian African American emerging leaders, whose character and leadership reform the cultural landscape.

The Genesis of Slavery

Frederick Douglass and other abolitionists loathed the systemic institution of slavery and committed their lives to annihilating its existence. Although the initial arrival of Africans to the Virginia colonies included both indentured servants and slaves, those that followed were brought forcibly, and subjected exclusively to the lifelong brutality of chattel slavery, by the very same Euro-American Christians who proclaimed the freedom of the gospel.¹¹ In her book, *Introduction to the History of Christianity in the United States*, Nancy Koester writes, "Enslaved Africans were legally classified as chattel, as the horrific system took root in the very genesis of this country."¹² African men, women and children were legally defined as movable, expendable non-real estate property that were not considered human. In short, this legal classification birthed the brutal and horrendous

¹⁰ Mark Lau Branson and Juan F. Martinez, *Churches, Cultures, and Leadership: A Practical Theology of Congregations and Ethnicities* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), 139.

¹¹ Mark A. Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 7-8.

¹² Koester, 16.

institution of slavery in the United States that would last hundreds of years, and affect millions of African Americans.

Christianity and Slavery

Masters exploited Christianity to teach slaves to be appreciative, compliant, and subservient.¹³ Religious faith was used as a form of manipulation by slave owners, in direct contradiction of Jesus' command to love thy neighbor (Matt. 19:19). Many slaveholders professed faith in Jesus, while treating their slaves with the utmost of physical, emotional, and mental cruelty.¹⁴ However, God, in his sovereignty, and through his Holy Spirit, gave discernment to many enslaved African Americans enabling them to hear and receive authentic biblical truth in the midst of the gross misinterpretation and misapplication of scripture by their masters.

Koester further asserts, "The contradictions between American freedom and African bondage, Christian love and chattel slavery, cried out for resolution, but this cry would be drowned out by a louder cry for it to remain for nearly a century by those who endorsed and prospered from it."¹⁵ The aforementioned categories of contradictions soon became the foundation for pluralistic ideologies of Christianity and race. This ideology was quickly manifested among Christian slave owners, who justified enslaving Africans and their descendants from the scriptures. Thus, the enslavement of African Americans became a race issue, grounded in a misinterpretation of the scriptures (Gen. 9:25).¹⁶

¹³ Spencer, Spencer, and Haddad, 10.

¹⁴ Douglas, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass: The Illustrated Edition*, 22.

¹⁵ Koester, 62.

¹⁶ Noll, 74.

The dichotomy between Christian love and chattel slavery worked its way into various churches, positioning brothers and sisters in Christ against each other. Some argued to preserve the institution of slavery from a moral viewpoint, while others spoke of it as a political issue only. Some passionately cried out regarding human rights; others vehemently defended chattel slavery as property rights.¹⁷

Thus, the anti-slavery movement was birthed, and along with it, a backlash of individuals who bitterly and vehemently defended slavery on political, moral, or religious grounds.¹⁸ Despite this debate in the colonies, the term “slave” was intentionally omitted from America’s Constitution because of the widespread tolerance of the institution.¹⁹ The seemingly pro-slavery stance in the Constitution in juxtaposition with the fledgling abolitionist movement would eventually lead the country towards a civil war.

The Civil War and Slavery

Abraham Lincoln assumed the role of President in the year 1860. At this time, he embraced equality and freedom for all men; yet, he endorsed the enslavement of African Americans in the Southern states as a state’s rights issue.²⁰ However, there would be one slave who would alter Lincoln’s perspective, and ultimately the law of the land. The Dred Scott case, involving a Missouri slave who sued his master for freedom, ultimately

¹⁷ Edwin Gaustad and Leigh Schmidt, *The Religious History of America: The Heart of the American Story from Colonial Times to Today: Revised Edition* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2004), 185.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 189.

¹⁹ Noll, 140.

²⁰ David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 216.

defined the African American race as property. This law set in motion an increased demand towards pro-slavery, causing Lincoln to rethink his “equality but slavery” position.²¹

President Lincoln held firmly to his view that the Constitution protected slavery in the Southern states, which pro-slavery apologists applauded.²² Racist whites were known as pro-slavery apologists who unapologetically defended the systemic institution of slavery.²³ Pro-slavery Christians misused the scriptures to justify their atrocious treatment of enslaved people, whom they deemed as property.

In light of Lincoln’s evolving position as “anti-slavery, yet, pro-Constitutional rights of Southern states,” genuine pro-slavery followers considered him an inept president and moved with haste to secede from the Union.²⁴ Moreover, this pro-slavery perspective asserted the protected Southern states’ rights to own African Americans as property. Thus, the Confederate flag rose high in protest of any anti-slavery movements.²⁵

As the war continued, costing time and the deaths of many soldiers, pro-slavery apologists continued to blame Lincoln for his indecisiveness on the issue of slavery.²⁶

²¹ Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass: The Illustrated Edition*, 125.

²² Russell Freedman, *Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass: The Story Behind an American Friendship* (New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012), 62.

²³ Donald, 210.

²⁴ John Stauffer, *Giants: The Parallel Lives of Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln* (New York, NY: Twelve, 2008), 219.

²⁵ Hilary Hanson, “Why the Confederate Battle Flag is Even More Racist than You Think,” *Huffington Post*, June 22, 2015, accessed February 15, 2018, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/06/22/confederate-flag-racist_n_7639788.html.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 257.

Ultimately, they became infuriated with him when he allowed African Americans to fight in the war side by side with white soldiers through the influence of Frederick Douglass. Consequently, pro-slavery apologists expressed their anger towards Lincoln's allowance of African American participants in the war by torturing and putting to death captured Union soldiers.²⁷

The writing of the Emancipation Proclamation to end slavery, which in essence significantly contributed to ending the war, proved to be a heroic and courageous move by Lincoln and his cabinet, but it did little to end pro-slavery attitudes towards African Americans. The backlash against newly freed slaves came in the form of the Ku Klux Klan and Jim Crow laws, initiated by white pro-slavery individuals and organizations to continue the subjugation of African Americans, while impeding and ultimately halting any forms of self-determination and advancement by African Americans during the Reconstruction and Jim Crow eras.²⁸

Frederick Douglass, the Slave

As a result of the various inconsistencies Frederick Douglass observed and personally experienced between the religious faith of slaveholders and their treatment of slaves, he concluded, "Between the Christianity of this land and the Christianity of Christ I find the widest possible difference."²⁹ Like many children born into slavery, Douglass experienced the pain and trauma of its bondage, oftentimes expressed through many of

²⁷ Freedman, 84.

²⁸ Alexander, 29.

²⁹ Gaustad and Schmidt, 187.

the Negro spiritual songs he heard as a child, giving him his initial understanding of the genesis of slavery as the most dehumanizing system ever created for African Americans.³⁰

The atrocities he experienced left an indelible impression on his perspective of those at the helm of a system that demoralized others. Douglass' earliest memory of someone who closely represented the Christianity of Christ towards their slaves was the wife of his first master in Baltimore, Maryland, at the age of ten years. He states, "The frequent hearing of my mistress reading the Bible aloud, for she often read aloud when her husband was absent, awakened my curiosity in respect to this mystery of reading, and roused in me the desire to learn."³¹

Douglass' female master was characteristically different because she initially treated him with respect, and as a human being. Unfortunately, this form of treatment was short-lived when her husband halted the lessons stating, "If you teach a slave to read, learning would spoil the best nigger in the world."³² His exposure to the scriptures at an early age afforded him the opportunity to learn how to study the teachings of Jesus, which began the development of his biblical and theological core beliefs as a Gospel Movement Leader.

Douglass' own religious interest was further stimulated by a white Methodist minister, but it would be an African American man, Uncle Lawton, that ultimately helped him at the age of thirteen, to develop a fuller understanding of the scriptures and the need

³⁰ Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave* (New York, NY: Open Road Media, 2014), 336. Kindle.

³¹ Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass: The Illustrated Edition*, 38.

³² William S. Freely, *Frederick Douglass* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1991), 68.

to have faith in Jesus Christ.³³ A slave's choice to embrace Christianity is, indeed, the result of the power of God during this era, which allowed slaves to see past the gross misinterpretation and misapplication of scripture to justify their condition, and instead, walk away with authentic biblical truth.

Douglass' credits his discipleship relationship with Uncle Lawton for helping to understand and apply the scriptures in his life:

My chief instructor, in matters of religion, was Uncle Lawton. He was my spiritual father; and I loved him intensely. The good old man had told me, that the Lord had a great work for me to do; and I must prepare to do it; and that he had been shown that I must preach the gospel. He said the good Lord would bring it to pass in his own good time and that I must go on reading and studying the scriptures. The advice and the suggestions of Uncle Lawton, were not without their influence upon my character and destiny.³⁴

Uncle Lawton had a profound influence and impact on Douglass as a youth that carried into his adult years. He came alongside Douglass to help him grow towards spiritual maturity in Christ giving him guidance, wisdom, and hope. The decision to embrace the bible as biblical truth was a defining moment for Douglass. He had to separate the bible from the slaveholder, whom he loved in the context of loving all humankind while vehemently abhorring the institution of slavery throughout the rest of his life.³⁵

The scriptures helped Douglass prepare for the work of the Lord, as it does every follower of Jesus seeking to be obedient to his teachings to please God. Douglass's

³³ Frederick Douglass, *The Most Complete Collection of Written Works & Speeches with Illustrations and Audio Narrations* (Lancashire, UK: Northpoint Classics, 2011), 12525, Kindle.

³⁴ Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, ed. Amazon Digital Services (Rochester, NY: Public Domain, 2012), 1748, Kindle.

³⁴ Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass: The Illustrated Edition*, 43.

³⁵ Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave*, 791-793, Kindle.

perspective on the incongruence between Christ and the Christianity of the land was especially substantiated by witnessing slave owners who professed Christian conversion, held prayer and worship meetings for church leaders in their homes, and served them an overabundance of food in the presence of their own starving slaves.³⁶

The dichotomy between the two types of Christianity is viable only if slaves are viewed as property and not human beings created by God. The challenge for anyone dealing with internally polarizing issues, such as the teachings of Christ to love thy neighbor, and hating any oppressive and systemic institution, such as slavery, is the most precarious of internal conflicts to reconcile (Matt. 22:39).

Furthermore, Douglass' decision to embrace genuine biblical Christianity came with clarity of his destiny and purpose, to help eradicate the injustice of slavery as a calling and demonstration of his obedience to Christ.³⁷ Similar to many who received an initial calling, it often takes years to understand, develop, and deploy it in one's life. Perhaps one of the most difficult of situations for Douglass to apply to his newfound faith came during his teen years, when he was forced to watch the horror of a master whipping a slave every Monday as an example to others and quoting scripture afterwards.³⁸

Slaveholder's use of scripture in this way was a blatant abuse of power and authority that reflected the selfish intentions of others. Douglass embracing authentic biblical truth remained foundational in his life as a Gospel Movement Leader, which equipped him to become a biblical reformer of his culture. Failure to undergird one's

³⁶ Edward J. McWalters, Paul Schultz, and Dave Ray, *Heroes of the Faith* (Royal Oak, MI: Core Ministries, 1994), 42.

³⁸ Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave*, 793, Kindle.

leadership efforts with the moral authority that comes from an accurate interpretation of the Scriptures has created the current leadership crisis in the African American community. And only a solution steeped in biblical truth will provide a lasting solution.³⁹

Frederick Douglass, the Abolitionist

Douglass' conversion to Christianity, his calling from God and his passion to see fellow enslaved Africans set free led him to escape slavery and flee to Massachusetts, which to his surprise upheld racist practices, including segregation in the churches.⁴⁰ The existence of such practices in the church juxtaposed against the Apostle Paul's teachings to unconditionally love others proved to be paradoxical. As a free man, Douglass refused to accept the degrading condition of sitting in segregated pews to wait for white members to finish participating in communion and exiting the room before he and other African Americans could do so.⁴¹

The hypocrisy of the separation of African Americans and Euro-Americans in the church directly countered the biblical mandate of unity amongst brothers and sisters in Christ, and demonstrated a gross misinterpretation of scripture (Eph. 4:3). Douglass states, "I am filled with unutterable loathing when I contemplate the religious pomp and show, together with the horrible inconsistencies, which everywhere surround me. We have men-stealers for ministers, women-whippers for missionaries, and cradle-plunderers

³⁹ Spencer, Spencer, and Haddad, 11.

⁴⁰ Douglass, *The Most Complete Collection of Written Works & Speeches with Illustrations and Audio Narrations*, 14713, Kindle.

⁴¹ Phillip S. Foner, ed., *Frederick Douglass on Slavery and the Civil War* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2003), 5.

for church members.”⁴² Consequently, this duplicity motivated Douglass to become a pastor, and eventually, an abolitionist on behalf of African Americans in the Southern states, in hopes that they would experience freedom.⁴³

The harsh reality of racism and segregation in northern Euro-American churches catapulted many African American believers to move further into their destiny. Douglass explains, “In New Bedford I attached myself to a small body of colored Methodists, known as the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Zion and was favored with the affection and confidence of the members of this humble communion; I was soon made a Sunday school leader and a local preacher among them.”⁴⁴ Moreover, it is here that Douglass began to focus on the development of his leadership skills as he served the congregation.⁴⁵

However, when Douglass assumed the role of pastor, his spirit grew restless with every Sunday he witnessed segregation in Euro-American churches.⁴⁶ The blatant expression of racial prejudice from believers created separation in the body of Christ that God never intended. On the contrary, scripture called for all believers to be members of

⁴² Frederick Douglass, *Autobiographies: Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, My Bondage and My Freedom, Life and times of Frederick Douglass* (New York, NY: The Library of American, 1994), 97.

⁴³ Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave*, 162, Kindle.

⁴⁴ Douglass, *Autobiographies: Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, My Bondage and My Freedom, Life and times of Frederick Douglass*, 361.

⁴⁵ Foner, 6.

⁴⁶ Douglass, *The Most Complete Collection of Written Works & Speeches with Illustrations and Audio Narrations*, 14781, Kindle.

the same household, equally valued by Christ, who dwells within, and serves as the chief cornerstone (Eph. 2:19-22).

The African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Zion church came into existence in the year 1821 for the purpose of providing a place of safety and respect for freed slaves in the Northern states, along with helping eradicate the enslavement of African Americans.⁴⁷ The event that led Douglass to participate in this church was the similar demonstration of racial discrimination present in Northern white churches that he endured in the Southern states. Douglass concluded, “I thought they would be sure to treat me as a man and a brother or, at least, had no negative feeling against color, but to my astonishment and mortification, all my charitable assumptions were at fault.”⁴⁸

Scripture endorses the biblical mandate for churches to serve as a relational community of faith. Moreover, the church is called to function as an environment in which brothers and sisters in Christ can come together in unity, moving as one in Spirit and truth, regardless of race, gender, or culture (Eph. 4:4-5). Whenever Douglass became overwhelmed with the practice of segregation in the churches in New Bedford, Massachusetts, the city where he and his family resided as free African Americans, he reflected on the words of his discipler, Uncle Lawton, who spoke of his calling from God to liberate other African Americans.⁴⁹

Similar to any calling of God in the lives of believers, oftentimes, it is realized by engaging with others inside the household of faith (Ps. 119:105; Heb. 10:24-25).

⁴⁷ Koester, 112.

⁴⁸ Douglass, *Autobiographies: Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, My Bondage and My Freedom, Life and times of Frederick Douglass*, 360.

⁴⁹ Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 69, Kindle.

However, it is in this context that Douglass was exposed to the abolitionist movement in the *Liberator*, a local newspaper. The rise of the abolitionist movement as a viable path towards eliminating slavery created tension in his soul as Douglass considered remaining in the pastorate or engaging in the work of freeing millions enslaved brothers and sisters still trapped in the ruthless and soul decimating bondage of slavery.⁵⁰

Challenging any prevalent societal ideology is no small feat and comes at a heavy price. Douglass's career as an abolitionist forced him to leave his family and escape to the United Kingdom because many adversaries desired to either enslave him again or terminate his life.⁵¹ His experience in the United Kingdom proved very useful as Britain preceded the United States in abolishing slavery.

In the United Kingdom, Douglass was met with utmost kindness and affirmation from many parliamentarians joining him in the cause of abolishing the institution of slavery in his home country.⁵² Douglass' experience in the United Kingdom, juxtaposed to the vehement hatred for him and other African Americans in the United States, brought the urgent need for freedom into full view. His experience in Britain helped to refine and reshape his calling as a reformer of his cultural milieu.

Frederick Douglass, the Reformer

Douglass' greatest opportunity to reform the nation by articulating the moral justification for the end of slavery, came through a relationship with President Abraham

⁵⁰ Douglass, *The Most Complete Collection of Written Works & Speeches with Illustrations and Audio Narrations*, 14804, Kindle.

⁵¹ Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 171, Kindle.

⁵² Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass: The Illustrated Edition*, 112.

Lincoln. Upon one of several visits Douglass made to the White House, Lincoln stated, “Here comes my friend Douglass, I am glad to see you.”⁵³ Although Lincoln and Douglass were uniquely different from each other, they shared similar experiences with poverty, and the arduous task of teaching themselves to read. As they interacted over the issue of slavery, they discovered that some of the very same authors shaped their divergent perspectives on the premise of the Civil War.⁵⁴

During Lincoln’s political career as a congressman, Douglass consistently and sharply criticized him for his political posture that Congress had no authority under the U.S. Constitution to determine the existence or nonexistence of slavery in Southern states, although he believed slavery was immorally wrong.⁵⁵ The issue of slavery had been volatile for centuries. After the election of Abraham Lincoln to the presidency, Southern states dug their heels deep and threatened to secede from the Union and thus, the Civil War ensued.⁵⁶ Although Lincoln and Douglass were enemies, the crisis of the Civil War afforded Douglass the opportunity to become Lincoln’s acquaintance and political collaborator, thus, providing a platform for him as a reformer and influencer, both politically and nationally.⁵⁷

Frederick Douglass’ calling from God, first articulated in childhood, and reconfirmed as an adult, was to leverage every opportunity to help his brothers and sisters

⁵³ Freedman, 99.

⁵⁴ Stauffer, xiii.

⁵⁵ Freedman, 46.

⁵⁶ Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass: The Illustrated Edition*, 136.

⁵⁷ Robert S. Levine, *The Lives of Frederick Douglass* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 179.

gain freedom from slavery, came to define his life. The door towards emancipation began to open when Lincoln succumbed to Douglass' urging to solicit slaves to serve in the Union Army during the Civil War; something Lincoln was previously reluctant and hesitant to do.⁵⁸ Many hoped the Civil War would be the fulcrum of liberation for enslaved African Americans.

Consequently, Douglass utilized his reputation and position as a leader to actively mobilize hundreds of thousands of African Americans in the North to participate in the War.⁵⁹ The motivation for Douglass' engagement with Lincoln, the War, and the liberation of his people, stemmed from his biblically-shaped Christian beliefs that were grounded in the moral authority of scripture as a Gospel Movement Leader.

The fight for the abolishment of slavery and equality for enlisted military African American soldiers during the war became a priority as Douglass used his influence with Lincoln and his cabinet on their behalf.⁶⁰ Douglass' influence proved to be instrumental in soliciting and motivating African American men to fight for their freedom. The gathering of the 54th and 55th voluntary infantry regiments from Massachusetts to North and South Carolina, which included Douglass' two sons, Charles and Lewis, who distinguished themselves as heroic, proved justification for the enlistment and deployment of additional African American troops.⁶¹ The men from the Massachusetts

⁵⁸ Donald, 429.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 471.

⁶⁰ Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass: The Illustrated Edition*, 141.

⁶¹ Ibid., 143.

54th and 55th regiments' costly sacrifice and exceptional courage became legendary in fighting for the cause of liberty and equality.

The turning point in Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln's relationship, from enemies to allies and ultimately friends, eventually led to the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation. This document granted freedom to enslaved African Americans on January 1, 1863.⁶² Douglass' attitude toward Lincoln became amicable, as a result of the Proclamation, as he acknowledged it as a revolutionary document; a sacred text declared by a man of bravery and character.⁶³

Douglass and Lincoln's friendship endured the test of time. Unlike any other African American during his era, Douglass engaged with Lincoln at the White House, functioning as an invited advisor, weighing in on various issues plaguing the nation, such as the lingering of the war and Emancipation backlash, along with concerns of Lincoln's reelection.⁶⁴ Thus, Douglass helped shape and redefine the nation as a biblical reformer, through his relationship with Lincoln.

Frederick Douglass' life, as a slave, an abolitionist, and a reformer of his culture, has much to offer to this generation of emerging Christian African American leaders. Douglass stands as a historical figure who confronted systemic racism, persecution, and oppression. The influence and impact of authentic Christianity shaped and developed his core beliefs, enabling him to passionately address the odious institution of slavery.⁶⁵

⁶² Freedman, 72.

⁶³ Stauffer, 246.

⁶⁴ Levine, 202-203.

⁶⁵ Spencer, Spencer, and Haddad, 6.

The studying of the scriptures, engaging in a discipleship relationship with Uncle Lawton, and living out his convictions in a relational community of faith developed Douglass as a Gospel Movement Leader. It transformed his character and developing his leadership capacity, enabling him to embrace his destiny, and of redefining a nation. Douglass' choice to embrace the Christianity of Christ, while abhorring the Christianity of the land functions as a model for contemporary Christian African American emerging leaders.⁶⁶ Christian African American emerging leaders must become biblical reformers of their cultural setting as their character and leadership undergoes a process of becoming Gospel Movement Leaders, similar to what Douglass experienced, as their attitudes and actions become grounded in biblical and theological truths.

As the war continued, costing time, and the deaths of many soldiers, pro-slavery apologists impugned Lincoln for vacillating between equality for all humankind and Southern state's rights for slavery.⁶⁷ Ultimately, they became infuriated with his decision to allow Frederick Douglass to influence him to include African American men to fight in the war. Consequently, the Confederate army retaliated by torturing and putting to death captured Union soldiers.⁶⁸

At the close of the war and the beginning of the Reconstruction era, particularly in Southern states, violent activities reemerged with a vengeance from the Ku Klux Klan and Jim Crow activists. These intentional activities of hatred were initiated by white pro-slavery organizations to continue the subjugation of African Americans. The genesis of

⁶⁶ Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, 1506, Kindle.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 257.

⁶⁸ Freedman, 84.

these activities were to halt any forms of self-determination and advancement of African Americans.⁶⁹ The writing of the Emancipation Proclamation to end slavery, proved heroic and courageous by Lincoln and his cabinet, but it did little to end pro-slavery attitude towards African Americans until today.

Modern Day Slavery

Pro-slavery attitudes and actions have been redefined and adapted for each ensuing generation. Michelle Alexander articulates, “Currently, a new caste system, in the form of mass incarceration of African American men exists, but is cloaked in the shrine of colorblindness by current pro-slavery advocates as silence and avoidance on topics of racism, unjustifiable killing of African Americans by police, and vehement hatred towards people of color by white supremacy groups.”⁷⁰

Christian African American emerging leaders are currently faced with the responsibility to live out the moral authority of scripture in their culture by addressing the racial hatred perpetuated by white supremacy groups and the disregard of their ethnic identity that is created by God. Also, there is a need to speak up for the equal treatment of everyone, regardless of gender, race, or culture. To remain silent, along with some churches, is to remain ineffective as a reformer; silence is interpreted by others as endorsement of white nationalistic and current pro-slavery agendas.

⁶⁹ Alexander, 29.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 55.

Conclusion

The life of Frederick Douglass, as a reformer of his culture, began in his early years, when he was exposed to the scriptures as a slave. Yet, in spite of the cruel treatment by the very slave owners who introduced him to the scriptures, Douglass was able to distinguish between the Christianity of this land, and the Christianity of Christ, and came to a saving grace.⁷¹ Douglass' choice to embrace the Christianity of Christ ultimately shaped his destiny.

His engagement in a discipleship relationship with Uncle Lawton enabled him to discover his calling from God as he learned to study and apply the scriptures. Witnessing the traumatizing effects of slavery throughout his childhood and as a teenager caused him to be impassioned about eradicating slavery. But it was his study and application of the scriptures that provided him with the moral authority to support this life mission and develop a biblically astute and theologically cohesive set of core beliefs that would serve as his foundation in becoming a biblical reformer as a Gospel Movement Leader.⁷²

Frederick Douglass' escape from slavery to the state of Massachusetts brought him face to face with the reality of segregation in the North. The presence of segregation in white churches appalled Douglass and led him to start an African American church free of such practices.⁷³ Douglass' leadership was realized while he served as Sunday school leader and eventually, pastor of AME Zion Methodist. Later, Douglass' exposure

⁷¹ Koester, 112-14.

⁷² Douglass, *The Most Complete Collection of Written Works & Speeches with Illustrations*, 14179, Kindle.

⁷³ Douglass, *Autobiographies: Narrative of the Life, My Bondage and My Freedom, and Life and Times*, 360-61.

to the *Liberator*, an abolitionist newspaper, created an internal conflict between remaining a pastor or engaging in the abolitionist movement to free his brothers and sisters still trapped in the oppressive bondage of slavery.⁷⁴ Thus, Douglass, would eventually leave the pastorate and leverage his role as an abolitionist, national and international orator, and biblical reformer of his culture.

Douglass, the abolitionist, was afforded the greatest opportunity to reform his culture through his relationship with Abraham Lincoln. Although Lincoln started out as an enemy of Douglass, due to Lincoln's belief that the Constitution protected slavery in the Southern states, Douglass respected Lincoln for his bravery and courage to draft the Emancipation Proclamation, which freed enslaved African Americans, and contributed to ending the Civil War.⁷⁵ However, freedom for African Americans did not result in humane and respectful treatment from others.

Douglass' greatest contribution to the war was the mobilizing of thousands of African American men to fight for liberty and equality as soldiers. However, Douglass' engagement with Lincoln and the Civil War did nothing to silence the bitterly racist whites who viewed African Americans as subhuman and saw nothing wrong with slavery.⁷⁶ The racist whites became nemeses of Douglass as he continued to forge ahead in the advancement of freeing other African Americans from the horrific oppression of slavery.

⁷⁴ Freedman, 24-25.

⁷⁵ Stauffer, 246.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

Pro-slavery apologists justified their harsh and brutal treatment towards their slaves from the scriptures. The apologists' use of the scriptures was a misinterpretation and misapplication of biblical truth with the intent to manipulate enslaved African Americans into becoming subservient to their masters, regardless of the harsh treatment imposed on them.⁷⁷ The misuse of scripture categorically contradicted the Apostle Paul's theology of how regenerated believers were to treat one another (Rom. 12:10; 1 Cor. 12:25; Gal. 5:13; Eph. 4:32; Phil. 2:3; 1 Thess. 5:11, 13). The incongruence between authentic biblical truth and the manner in which a number of slave holders severely mistreated enslaved African Americans, while misusing the scriptures, created a chasm between orthodoxy and orthopraxy.

The genesis of pro-slavery apologists misusing scripture provided Southern states with biblical justification for enslaving African Americans for economic gain.⁷⁸ Days after Lincoln won the majority vote for president, the Southern states seceded from the Union, thus, activating the Civil War. Although from Lincoln's perspective, the War was about the rights of property for the Southern slave states. The pro-slavery apologists were vehemently opposed to Abraham Lincoln becoming president because of his belief that all humankind were deserving of equality and freedom, including enslaved African Americans.⁷⁹

Sadly, Lincoln became a martyr soon after his reelection to his second term as president, upon which he released his Emancipation Proclamation document to end

⁷⁷ Spencer, Spencer, and Haddad, 9.

⁷⁸ Koester, 16.

⁷⁹ Douglass, *Autobiographies: Narrative of the Life, My Bondage and My Freedom, and Life and Times*, 767.

slavery, which contributed to ending the War. Lincoln's untimely death occurred by the hands of John Wilkes Booth, a pro-slavery apologist.⁸⁰ In short, the death of Lincoln brought a halt to enslaved African Americans experiencing genuine freedom and equality due to the uprising of pro-slavery organizations.

Frederick Douglass, the slave, experienced a religious awakening by being exposed to the scriptures, taught how to study and apply biblical truth through his discipleship relationship with another slave, and upon becoming a free man, served as pastor of a relational community of faith, AME Zion Methodist church.⁸¹ Serving as a Gospel Movement Leader, enabled Douglass to become a biblical reformer of his culture and a prolific influencer that helped reshape the nation. Douglass foundation as a biblical reformer was propelled by his biblically astute and theologically cohesive core beliefs from the moral authority of scripture. Thus, Frederick Douglass, as a Gospel Movement Leader, is to be emulated by Christian African Americans emerging leaders.

⁸⁰ Donald, 596-7.

⁸¹ Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass: The Illustrated Edition*, 43.

CHAPTER THREE: SANCTIFICATION

Introduction

In her work, *The New Jim Crow*, Michelle Alexander asserts, “One glaring issue of social injustice is the mass incarceration of hundreds of thousands of African American men.”¹ This and a host of other issues such as police brutality, inequality of wages and racial profiling demand a response. Moreover, these issues require solutions from a scripture-based, theological framework not unlike that expressed by reformers from the nineteenth centuries such as Frederick Douglass. Douglass embraced the scriptures as a believer, which served as the foundation for his spiritual growth process, which lead him to influence solutions to the injustices of his era, based on a set of biblically astute and theologically cohesive core beliefs as a Gospel Movement Leader.²

The spiritual growth Douglass experienced as a maturing believer is referred to in scripture as sanctification. Sanctification is defined as the ability to live and please God through the power of the Holy Spirit; to become like Christ through obedience in attitudes and actions in a biblical way.³ The process of sanctification is enhanced with a believer studying and applying the scriptures, which refines and reshapes his or her attitudes, actions, and ability to discern God’s will. Also, it develops a spiritual fortitude in dealing with social ills, such as racial hatred from a biblical perspective.

¹ Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York, NY: 2012), 180.

² Aida Spencer, William David Spencer, and Mimi Haddad, eds., *Global Voices on Biblical Equality: Women and Men Ministering Together in the Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008), 6-7.

³ Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 8.

The sanctification process is critical in the development of Christian African American emerging leaders, as it transforms their character and develops their leadership. Moreover, this process involves a constant commitment to learning how to please God, as well as the courage to bring solutions to current injustices from the moral authority of scripture.⁴ Also, it is formative, enabling leaders to develop in spiritual maturity while influencing others towards the type of ethical living exemplified in Douglass' life.

The inability to develop the necessary character through the process of sanctification will result in the decline of a person's character and ultimately, their leadership.⁵ One example of a failure of character is the silence of evangelicals during recent racial injustices, such as the "Unite the Right" rally that occurred in Charlottesville, Virginia. The failure of character in the lives of leaders can result in the lack of success in their spiritual formation.

The level of spiritual maturity that is necessary to undergird a Gospel Movement Leader requires an inward transformation of character influenced by the power of the Holy Spirit, which enables believers to reject sin, and instead, choose to please God in every area of their lives over time.⁶ Believers who are hesitant in addressing difficult issues in their lives may have a deficit in understanding and applying the scriptures, which can hinder spiritual maturity and foster apathy towards bible study, prayer and fellowship with other believers. If current Christian African American emerging leaders

⁴ R. C. Sproul, *Pleasing God*, 2d ed. (Crawfordsville, IN: Ligonier Ministries, 2013), 19.

⁵ J. Robert Clinton, *The Making of a Leader: Recognizing the Lessons and Stages of Leadership Development* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1988), 167.

⁶ Richard Lints, "Living by Faith Alone: Reformed Responses to Antinomianism," in *Sanctification: Explorations in Theology and Practice*, ed. Kelly M. Kapic (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 38.

remain deficient in their spiritual maturity, it can even lead to fear and render them ineffective in leadership.⁷ The focus of this chapter is the study and application of scripture through the sanctification process, which refines and reshapes believers' attitudes and actions in how they relate to others, discern God's will, and develop biblical and theological solutions to critical issues such as racial hatred.

The Apostle Paul's Perspective from the New Testament

In his work, *Possessed by God*, David Peterson, asserts, "The Apostle Paul's teachings in the New Testament on the topic of holiness is in congruence with the Greek concept of *hagios*, primarily referring to God's way of taking possession of believers in Christ and setting them apart to belong to Him and fulfill His purpose for their lives."⁸ Holiness involves a commitment to a process in which regenerated believers begin reflecting less of the world and more of Christlikeness. Paul argues that as Christ died for sins, believers have the same mandate because of their union with Him through His death, burial and resurrection (Rom. 6:1-6).⁹ In short, the believer is involved in the process of becoming holy, only to the extent that there is a choice to obey God through the process of humble surrender to His power. In essence, this is the sanctification process (1 Thess. 4:1-4).

Paul contends that holiness in a believer produces characteristics of the Father such as love, mercy, and justice towards others, along with believers applying the

⁷ Clinton, 167.

⁸ David Peterson, *Possessed by God: A New Testament Theology of Sanctification and Holiness*, ed. D.A. Carson (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 27.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 64.

scriptures daily through the work of the Holy Spirit and motivation to belong to a Christ-renewed community (Col. 3:5-17).¹⁰ Holiness involves the three persons of the Trinity in that believers are sanctified to God, in union with Christ by the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. Holiness is the apt accomplishment of God's grace and mercy (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10).¹¹ However, this work reflects the believer's act of surrender as put forth by faith. Arthur Pink contends, "The believer is equally indebted to each of the three persons of the Trinity, which his or her holiness proceeds from the Father as it does from the Holy Spirit, and as actually from the Son as it does from either the Spirit or the Father."¹²

As regenerated believers, the goal of the sanctification process is to conform them to the image of God, the Father. The work of transformation by the Holy Spirit consists of reflecting God's glory (Eph. 1:4-6; 12, 14; 2:7; Phil. 1:9-11), and the maturing of His people (1 Cor. 15:49; Eph. 5:27).¹³ In the Old Testament, Micah 6:8 articulates God's desire for how his people are to reflect his glory as acting justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with Him. This same imperative is threaded throughout Paul's letters, referring to God's desire for every believer to whole-heartedly surrender to him, to be a living sacrifice through Christ Jesus, along with confidently walking in their destiny he has designed for them (Rom. 12:1-2; Eph. 2:10).¹⁴ As Frederick Douglass surrendered his

¹⁰ Kelly M. Kopic, ed., *Sanctification: Explorations in Theology and Practice* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 11.

¹¹ Arthur W. Pink, *The Doctrine of Sanctification* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1955), 43, Kindle.

¹² *Ibid.*, 1382.

¹³ Anthony A. Hoekema, *Saved by Grace* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 233.

¹⁴ Peterson, 27.

life to God, he was able to discern God's will for his life to become an abolitionist and reformer of his cultural milieu as a Gospel Movement Leader.

Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, is central to the doctrine of sanctification. Peterson clarifies, "Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, focuses on God's sanctifying activity in Christ, which is being made right by God and dedicated to him through the saving work of his Son (1 Cor. 1:30)."¹⁵ His death on the cross and by grace through faith in him (Eph. 2:8, 9), makes it possible for believers to engage in the sanctification process. Pauline theology emphasizes this process in believer's lives as unashamedly being dependent on God's grace (1 Cor. 14:1; 2 Cor. 7:1; 1 Thess. 5:15; 1 Tim. 6:11).

The third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, is equally involved in producing holiness in believers through the sanctification process. He enables them to practically apply the teachings of Jesus to glorify the Father as He indwells them at the moment of salvation (Rom. 8:11).¹⁶ His power is manifested in and through believers over a lifetime of obedience to God. His Spirit utilizes the scriptures to conform and transform believers to his image and to the likeness of Christ.¹⁷ The Trinitarian process of producing holiness in believers enables them to walk in newness of life through Christ Jesus (2 Cor. 5:17).

In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul asserts that the sanctification process involves the components that are both immediate and lifelong. The sanctification process is immediate in that it begins at the moment of salvation. However, unlike justification as

¹⁵ Ibid., 40.

¹⁶ Pink, 2036, Kindle.

¹⁷ Peterson, 61.

a positional truth, it is a day-to-day process of spiritually growing throughout the lives of believers with the help of the Holy Spirit and the deep study and application of the scriptures.¹⁸

The sanctification process is lifelong in that it is the application of living holy throughout the believer's lifetime. Increased holiness in the life of a believer involves the development of a spiritual knowledge base through scripture, and a growing ability to love God and people in a way that is not dutiful but genuine as an overflow of their inward commitment to Christ (Phil. 1:9-11).¹⁹ Christian African American emerging leaders' Christlikeness will be seen and experienced in their social relationships as they seek to transform their culture through word and deed.

The scriptures enables believers to have an essential identity as Christians formed by Christ and the gospel, and not by their own personalities, backgrounds, or achievements (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 2:20; 4:6, 7; Eph. 1:3-14; 2:10; 5:1, 2, 8).²⁰ The aforementioned process is important because it gives believers a biblical identity as the foundation of their core beliefs. Believers are to see themselves as God sees them. The inward transformation of a person's identity towards Christlikeness is critical to the Christian African American in addressing racial hatred.

Douglass was able to stand up to degrading, devaluing, and disrespectful actions and words from others, because he understood his intrinsic value as an African American created in the image of God. The aforementioned qualities among Christian African

¹⁸ Pink, 4045, Kindle.

¹⁹ Ibid., 4152.

²⁰ Peterson, 42.

American emerging leaders are necessary as they are raised up as godly leaders similar to the second and third century Christians that reformed their culture through their biblically astute and theologically motivated core beliefs as Gospel Movement Leaders.

The Apostle Paul's theological endorsement of the biblical concept of *sola-fide*, by faith alone, is as critical to the doctrine of sanctification as it is to the doctrine of justification. Faith is considered a means to the sanctification process in which believers are continually growing in their understanding of union with Christ (Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:17).²¹ As believers grow in their character and conduct they are being reshaped and refined to reflect the likeness of Christ. It is by faith that believers increase in their understanding that the power given to them by the Holy Spirit enables them to overcome sin and live for God (Rom. 8:13; Gal. 5:16; Eph. 6:16).²² Holiness is to please God, which is an outcome of the sanctification process.

Faith secures believers through Christ, who has become for them wisdom from God, as their righteousness, holiness, and redemption (Rom. 3:25, 27; 1 Cor. 1:30).²³ Union with Christ is possible because of his sacrificial death on the cross (1 Cor. 15:3-5). Faith sanctifies because it responds to the will of God with obedience through the life of believers, which is commanded in his word (2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Heb. 4:12; 11:6).²⁴ God's word requires faith to be implemented and practiced in the lives of believers to accomplish God's best for them (Rom. 8:28; Eph. 2:10; Phil. 1:13). Faith and obedience

²¹ Anthony A. Hoekema, "The Reformed Perspective," in *Five Views on Sanctification*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987), 64.

²² *Ibid.*, 65.

²³ Pink, 2866, Kindle.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 2909.

are inseparable in the lives of believers; the moment they are divergent, their spiritual maturity decreases to a dreary and legalistic form of religion with no response of love towards God.

The role of faith in the sanctification process enables believers to allow the Holy Spirit to produce character qualities such as love, patience, kindness, and self-control (Gal. 5: 22, 23). True faith, by its nature, produces spiritual fruit (Gal. 5:6; 1 Thess. 1:3; 1 Tim. 1:5).²⁵ Subsequently, it is these fruits from the Holy Spirit that believers must acquire in the sanctification process to exemplify the likeness of Christ. The sanctifying process is compelled by the Holy Spirit and is intended to be nurtured by the faith of believers (Rom. 8:14; Eph. 3:16-19; 2 Thess. 2:13).²⁶ Thus, the role of the Holy Spirit is critical to the application of faith, as it produces holiness in believers.

Pauline theology contends that although all believers are regenerated by the Spirit, baptized by the Spirit, indwelt by the Spirit, and sealed by the Spirit, not all believers are filled with the Spirit (Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 1:13, 14; 5:18). The filling of the Spirit is a work of God that occurs repeatedly in the life of believers, and is the source of sanctification as well as spiritual fruitfulness (Eph. 5:18). As a result of being continually filled with the Holy Spirit, believers receive certain ethical virtues consistent with the character of Christ. Paul lists such virtues as compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience while calling believers to put on love, which binds them together in perfect unity (Col. 3:12-14). Douglass experienced love for all humankind in the sanctification

²⁵ Michael Horton, "Let the Earth Bring Fourth..." *Sanctification: Explorations in Theology and Practice*, ed. Kelly M. Kapic (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 145.

²⁶ Diane J. Chandler, *Christian Spiritual Formation: An Integrated Approach for Personal and Relational Wholeness* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 70.

process after being converted to Christ, although he abhorred the slaveholder's heinous mistreatment of slaves.²⁷

As the Holy Spirit achieves his sanctifying work in the life of believers he does so in the context of a community of faith. Believers engaging in a community of faith with others who are filled with the Holy Spirit, are able to practice living out the scriptures in the sanctification process (Eph. 4:15, 16).²⁸ Believers existing in isolation is incongruent to the Trinitarian model of the three persons of the Trinity existing in community. A community of faith is the environment Paul articulated as the context for holiness in his letter to the church in Ephesus (Eph. 4:4-6). Therefore, believers will not experience holiness in their lives isolated from other believers.

Also, the Holy Spirit achieves his sanctifying work confluent with the scriptures. The Spirit's work in the life of believers cannot take place in contradiction to, or without God's word, because they are inextricably joined together.²⁹ The scriptures provide narratives for believers on how to live a life of holiness on a daily basis (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). The Holy Spirit brings a believer's heart into alignment and their behaviors into conformity with the scriptures in a way that reflects the will of God (Rom. 12:1, 2).³⁰ Thus, as the Holy Spirit, works in tandem with the scriptures, and become foundational components in the lives of Christian African American emerging leaders, these leaders experience spiritual maturation over time.

²⁷ Frederick Douglas, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass: The Illustrated Edition*, (Minneapolis, MN: Zenith, 2015), 43.

²⁸ Hoekema, *Saved by Grace*, 195.

²⁹ Sproul, 190.

³⁰ Pink, 2068, Kindle.

The Holy Spirit utilizes the scriptures, in the life of a believer, to guide, comfort, and convict them towards righteousness and not towards condemnation (Rom. 8:1). The scriptures accomplish the work of sanctification in believers by imparting knowledge of God's will, by influencing considerations (2 Cor. 7:1; 12:9; Phil. 2:12-13), by strengthening their faith (1 Tim. 4:6), and by reminding the believers of their identity in Christ (2 Thess. 2:13). The scriptures read in isolation from the Holy Spirit results in a believer having truth without power, which can lead to failure in their journey with Christ.

The Apostle Paul's perspective in the New Testament fully endorses and gives biblical credibility and insight to the sanctification process of believers. The doctrine of sanctification has a Trinitarian foundation consistent with the scriptures. Although, each have a vital role in this process, it is the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit that is at the forefront and actively involved in the transformation of believers. Together with the scriptures, the Holy Spirit seeks to conform an obedient believer more and more to the will of God, the Father and in the likeness of his Son. Therefore, Christian African American emerging leaders who regularly hear, study, and apply the word of God make a critical choice that will enable them to take responsibility to live out the moral authority of scripture as Gospel Movement Leaders in their cultural milieu, similar to Douglass.

Theological Perspective from the Reformed Tradition

According to Arthur Pink, in his classic work, *The Doctrine of Sanctification*, "The doctrine of sanctification directly correlates to the doctrine of justification."³¹ The

³¹ Pink, 43, Kindle.

former describes the daily transformational work of the Holy Spirit as a result of a regenerated believer choosing to turn away from sin, whereby the latter is being made in right standing with God through the work of Jesus Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. In other words, sanctification is rooted in the believer's actions, empowered by the Spirit, and justification is rooted in Christ's actions.³² Simply put, as believers are made right by faith, then they are able to live right through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit (1 Thess. 4:3-7).

Furthermore, Pink contends, "The term sanctification comes from the root word, "to sanctify", which means to consecrate or set apart for God's delight, his glory, and his use."³³ God desires that believers reflect his image and glory. To reflect God's image requires that they are to be holy as He is holy in both character and conduct (1 Pet. 1:16). The author of the chapter "The Reformed Perspective" in the book, *Five Views of Sanctification*, Anthony Hoekema, explains, "The word sanctify means "to make holy," which comes from two Latin words, *sanctus*, holy, and *facere*, to make."³⁴ Thus, it is through the sanctification process that Christian African American emerging leaders are able to live in a manner pleasing to God once they are justified by faith.

In his work *A Theology of the New Testament*, George Eldon Ladd explains, "The verb "to justify" is the Greek word, *dikaioō*, which is associated with the same root as "righteous" (*dikaios*) and "righteousness" (*dikaiōsynē*)."³⁵ Subsequently, this is a critical

³² Peterson, 15.

³³ Pink, 1077, Kindle.

³⁴ Hoekema, *Saved by Grace*, 193.

³⁵ George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament: Revised Edition*, ed. Donald A. Hagner (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 478.

foundational truth for believers, who are made right and have peace with God through Christ Jesus (Rom. 5:1). Ladd further articulates, “Understanding justification provides insight into the Apostle Paul’s eschatological doctrine, which addresses future events involving the return of Christ.”³⁶ In short, this good news implies that believers in right standing with God on earth will also experience the same standing at the final judgment.

Hoekema provides further clarification by stating, “The doctrines of justification and sanctification must never be separated from one another.”³⁷ However, they are distinct from each other and treated as unique. One aspect of a believer’s justification is that of oneness with Christ, while progressively becoming more like Christ, through the process of sanctification.³⁸ The Apostle Paul asserts that God justifies the same person he sanctifies (1 Cor. 1:30). For believers, both the reality of right standing and the work of right living comes from God and through his Holy Spirit.

The doctrine of justification involves God exonerating believers from the guilt of sin, while providing restoration of spiritual union with him through reconciliation.³⁹ The act of discharge from guilt and the entry into relationship with God enables the believer to experience the reality of being justified; being made right with him. Thus, the foundation of justification is the death of Christ, the means by which justification becomes efficacious to the individual is faith.⁴⁰ Faith is the catalyst in which justification

³⁶ Ibid., 484.

³⁷ Hoekema, *Saved by Grace*, 177.

³⁸ Ibid., 178.

³⁹ Thomas C. Oden, *The Word of Life, Systematic Theology: Volume Two* (San Francisco, CA: Harper Publications, 1992), 356.

⁴⁰ Ladd, 490.

and sanctification are realized in the life of the believer. For without the individual act of faith, neither can be applied to an individual's life. The doctrine of justification is an Christological concept that encapsulates the redirecting of the regenerated believer by faith from an unbeliever to a believer through Christ's death and resurrection.⁴¹

Definitive and Progressive

The Reformed tradition asserts that the sanctification process involves the components that are both definitive and progressive. The sanctification process is definitive in that it begins at the moment of salvation, but unlike justification as a positional truth, sanctification is a progressive day-to-day process of spiritually growing with the help of the Holy Spirit and the deep study and application of the scriptures.⁴² Increased holiness in the life of a believer involves the development of a spiritual knowledge base through scripture enabling them to live out the moral authority of scripture as they interact with others (Rom. 12:9-13).⁴³ As Christian African American emerging leaders grow in Christlikeness as Gospel Movement Leaders, their lives will exemplify biblical truth.

The definitive and progressive aspect of the sanctification process enables Christian African American emerging leaders to grow in confidence in their biblical identity formed by Christ and the gospel, and not by negative narratives thrown at them out of racial hatred, such as being inferior, being called monsters, or by other derogative

⁴¹ Stanley J. Greutz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 596.

⁴² Pink, 4045, Kindle.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 4152.

terms.⁴⁴ The biblical identity of these leaders being grounded in scripture serves as the foundation of their core beliefs. Believers are to see themselves as God sees them.

Douglass was able to avoid internalizing the attitudes and actions of slaveholders that violently hated him and his people, because he grew to understand himself as an African American child of God. The same will be true for Christian African American emerging leaders whose identities are grounded in biblical truth while maturing as Gospel Movement Leaders.

Sola-Fide

In his work, *Theology for a Community of God*, Stanley J. Grenz, contends, “The Apostle Paul’s doctrine of justification asserts clearly and concisely his theology of *sola-fide*—that it is by faith alone.”⁴⁵ The role of faith is also prominent in the doctrine of sanctification. *Sola-fide* is foundational in describing sanctification as a continual process of regeneration of a believer’s thoughts and deeds, appropriated through the faith of the justified believer.⁴⁶ The Reformed tradition postulates that when a believer commits sin, fellowship with God is broken.

However, the believer can be once again restored to fellowship with God through confession and repentance (1 John. 1:9). Notwithstanding, a believer’s salvation before God is still secure when fellowship is broken through a sinful act.⁴⁷ Sanctification is a

⁴⁴ Peterson, 42.

⁴⁵ Grenz, 532.

⁴⁶ G. C. Berkouwer, *Faith and Sanctification* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1952), 21.

⁴⁷ John F. Walvoord, “The Augustinian-Dispensational Perspective,” in *Five Views on Sanctification*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987), 219.

process that brings hope to the believer as he or she grows. For, although they may regress, they can be restored through the renewing of the Holy Spirit in their lives and therefore continue towards the aim of spiritual maturation.

The Reformed tradition contends that the process of sanctification involves *sola-fide* along with the believer's responsibility to demonstrate faith through works.

However, when the Apostle Paul warned the believers at Corinth of their spiritual immaturity, it was in conjunction with his affirmation of God's available grace to restore them through repentance, by faith alone, thus, continuing the transformational process of becoming like Christ (1 Cor. 3:1-3).⁴⁸ A believer's justification, along with their sanctification, comes from God, through Christ Jesus. However, the process of growing in maturity requires believers to make choices of obedience on a daily basis.⁴⁹ The act of choosing to do right, and therefore aligning oneself to the moral authority of scripture, is done by faith, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Sola-fide is at the heart of justification but is not antithetical to sanctification.⁵⁰ Faith is at the core of a believer's choice to mature in Christ through a lifelong process. Upon salvation, the sanctification process immediately begins the work of transformation of believer's attitudes and actions into the likeness of Christ. In his classic work, *Faith and Sanctification*, G. C. Berkouwer asserts, "Believers accomplishing Christlikeness through the process of sanctification, by faith, negates doing so by their own auspices,

⁴⁸ Lints, 42.

⁴⁹ Hoekema, "The Reformed Perspective," in *Five Views of Sanctification*, 69.

⁵⁰ Berkouwer, 32.

but rather, it is intended to be accomplished by complete dependence on the Spirit (Gal. 5:16-18; Phil. 2:12-13).”⁵¹

The doctrines of justification and sanctification are intricately woven together, and worthy of attention. In his work, *Saved by Grace*, Anthony Hoekema explains, “The former takes place outside the believer and is a declaration made by God extending to the believer freedom from the guilt of sin; whereas the latter takes place within the believer and progressively renews the believer’s nature.”⁵² Furthermore, this Christological and soteriological truth provides the necessary biblical grounding for godly thinking and living. A widely prevailing view in the Reformed tradition is that justification takes place at the beginning of a believer’s life, while sanctification is the maturation process of developing their core beliefs through the inward transformational work of the Holy Spirit.⁵³ The Trinitarian work of the Holy Spirit enables believers to be holy as God is holy, through faith (1 Pet. 1:16).

The Role of the Holy Spirit

The agent of sanctification is the Holy Spirit.⁵⁴ He is the one who enables believers to stay engaged in the lifelong process of sanctification. He delivers believers as justified sinners from the eternal consequences of sin and renews their entire nature to the

⁵¹ Ibid., 92.

⁵² Hoekema, *Saved by Grace*, 178.

⁵³ Ladd, 563.

⁵⁴ Henri Blocher, “Sanctification by Faith?” in *Sanctification: Explorations in Theology and Practice*, ed. Kelly M. Kopic (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 61.

image of God.⁵⁵ One of the Spirit's key roles is to glorify Christ through the attitudes and actions of the saints (John 16:14). Although it is the Holy Spirit who does the inward transformational work in believers, God, the Father, and the Son are also manifested in believers' lives through their intratrinitarian essence.

The Holy Spirit utilizes the scriptures at the deepest level in the life of a believer, shaping hearts and minds to genuinely become Christlike.⁵⁶ The process of inward regeneration needs to exist at the core of believers who seek to address the injustice of racial hatred. For it was Douglass' conversion and application of scripture that led him to define slavery not simply as a political or economic issue but as a moral evil that needed to be eradicated according to biblical orthodoxy of justice. Douglass concluded:

The slaveholder who wields the blood-clotted cow skin during the week fills the pulpit on Sunday, and claims to be a minister of the meek and lowly Jesus. He robs me of my earnings at the end of each week meets me as a class-leader on Sunday morning, to show me the way of life, and the path of salvation. He who sells my sister, for purposes of prostitution, stands forth as the pious advocate of purity. He who proclaims it a religious duty to read the Bible denies me the right of learning to read the name of the God who made me. He who is the religious advocate of marriage robs whole millions of its sacred influence, and leaves them to the ravages of wholesale pollution. The warm defender of the sacredness of the family relation is the same that scatters whole families, sundering husbands and wives, parents and children, sisters and brothers, leaving the hut vacant, and the hearth desolate. We see the thief preaching against theft, and the adulterer against adultery.⁵⁷

Once the Holy Spirit indwells believers, at the moment of salvation, He desires to produce fruits, such as peace, gentleness, and self-control, through His sanctifying work

⁵⁵ Hoekema, "The Reformed Perspective," in *Five Views of Sanctification*, 61.

⁵⁶ Greenman and Kalantzis, 9.

⁵⁷ Frederick Douglass, *Autobiographies: Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, My Bondage and My Freedom, Life and times of Frederick Douglass* (New York, NY: The Library of American, 1994), 97-98.

(Rom. 8:11; Gal. 5:22, 23).⁵⁸ It is through the understanding of scripture that Douglass comes to assert that the slave owner's behavior was diametrically opposed to the work and fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Another aspect of the Holy Spirit's role in the life of believers involves the motivation to align their lives to the scriptures.⁵⁹ Scripture serves as the standard for believer's character and conduct. The Holy Spirit accomplishes renewal of mind, heart, and soul, through the sanctification process, as believers read the scriptures with a desire to live according to the gospel.⁶⁰ Believers surrendering to the will and power of God's spirit is a moment by moment, daily choice (Eph. 5:18). Believers placing their faith in the person of the Holy Spirit provides them with the ability to choose to live for God, thereby dethroning sin to reign in their lives.⁶¹ Without the Holy Spirit's critical role in the life of believers, they are powerless to please God.

The Holy Spirit's sanctifying work empowers believers to reject their old nature, and instead, walk as new creations with alternate ways of thinking and behaving based on the moral authority of scripture. Walking in their new nature over time will result in mirroring God's image in thought and action, a result often referred to as holiness. The Reformed tradition asserts that sanctification is simply the process of believers becoming more and more holy over time.⁶² Thus, holy living is the work by the Holy Spirit as he

⁵⁸ Pink, 1163, Kindle.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 2068.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 2602.

⁶¹ Hoekema, *Saved by Grace*, 196.

⁶² Peterson, 12.

sanctifies the believer. To bear the image of God's holiness in character and conduct, Christian African American emerging leaders must surrender to the inward work of the Holy Spirit in their lives to become effective Gospel Movement Leaders that biblically reform their culture.

Holiness

In his work, *Saved by Grace*, Anthony Hoekema states, "The chief New Testament word for holy is the Greek *hagiazō*, and its derivatives, which reflects a separation from behavior inconsistent with scripture and devotion to God's service."⁶³ Simply put, believers choosing to align themselves with scripture through the power of the Holy Spirit results in holiness. Holiness, through the power of the Holy Spirit, develops believers with the spiritual fortitude to count the cost in answering God's call to accomplish tasks greater than one's self that involves benefitting others according to God's plan.⁶⁴ The Holy Spirit enables believers to discern God's call through Christ-centered relationships with others towards spiritual maturation (Prov. 27:17). God's plan for Douglass was revealed through his discipleship relationship with Uncle Lawton to seek freedom for the greater good of his people.⁶⁵

Douglass' initial thought of freedom originated after his slave master brought a halt to his reading lessons. He writes,

Mr. Auld forbade Mrs. Auld at once to cease instructing me further; she was teaching me to read. Mr. Auld stated, "If you teach a slave to read learning would

⁶³ Hoekema, *Saved by Grace*, 193.

⁶⁴ Derek Tidball, "Holiness: Restoring God's Image: Colossians 3:5-17," in *Sanctification: Explorations in Theology and Practice*, ed. Kelly M. Kapic (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 28.

⁶⁵ Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 1748, Kindle.

spoil the best nigger in the world.” I now understood what had been to me a most perplexing difficulty—to wit, the white person’s power to enslave black people. It was a grand achievement, and I prized it highly. From that moment on, I understood the pathway from slavery to freedom.⁶⁶

Holiness involves the demanding task of unadulterated obedience in accomplishing God’s will in believer’s lives. Moreover, it includes a life time of believers surrendering their will as the fulcrum for treating others as they would like to be treated according to the scriptures.⁶⁷ Believers will not experience God’s call without relinquishing their innate desire to go their own way.

In his chapter, *Gospel Holiness*, in the book, *Sanctification*, Ivor J. Davidson proclaims, “The Reformed tradition claims that the theology of sanctification cannot be understood unless God’s nature and actions are at the forefront of this process rather than believer’s misinterpretation and misapplication of scripture as seen in the mistreatment of slaves during Douglass’ era.”⁶⁸ Thus, God’s attribute of holiness is to be emulated in the believer’s care and concern for the oppressed, the downcast, and the disenfranchised of society. Believer’s attitudes and conduct are transformed by the scriptures which serve as the moral authority to reform one’s culture, and address issues such as racial hatred, bigotry, and prejudice, as Douglass emulated throughout his life.⁶⁹

The scriptures serve as God’s instruction manual in how to treat others with love, honor, and service by acting justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly (Mic. 6:8; Rom.

⁶⁶ Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, 538, Kindle.

⁶⁷ Ivor J. Davidson, “Gospel Holiness,” in *Sanctification: Explorations in Theology and Practice*, ed. Kelly M. Kopic (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 189.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 194.

⁶⁹ Pink, 189, Kindle.

12:9-12). Moreover, this is a critical component of the sanctification process because salvation alone does not eradicate a believer's desire to confront injustices such as the heinous mistreatment of others.⁷⁰ Holiness is consummated by the believer choosing to obey God's word over time, which leads them into a fuller understanding of God's call for their lives. A believer's sinful nature is diametrically opposed to holiness, and if left unattended, will rob the individual of having the spiritual fortitude to do what is morally right according to scriptures.⁷¹

Holiness creates a new character in believers, requiring them to deny their self-centered tendencies in light of their new life in Christ.⁷² As a new creation believers are able to express love, in three dimensions: toward God, toward their neighbor, and toward creation.⁷³ The aforementioned triad dimension enables believers, such as Douglass, to confront social ills, such as racial hatred, from an Christological framework. Thus, this framework is grounded in the moral authority of scripture and provides theologically motivated solutions in addressing issues of social injustices.

The Wesleyan Tradition

The editor of the book, *Five Views of Sanctification*, Stanley Gundry writes, "The Wesleyan and Reformed tradition agree that the Bible teaches a sanctification that is past, present, and future; it is past because it begins in a position of separation from sin already

⁷⁰ Pink, 956, Kindle.

⁷¹ Hoekema, *Saved by Grace*, 193.

⁷² Peterson, 64.

⁷³ Hoekema, "The Reformed Perspective," in *Five Views of Sanctification*, 86.

gained in Christ's completed work; it is present in that it describes a process of cultivating a holy life, and sanctification has a future culmination at the return of Christ, when the effects of sin will be fully removed."⁷⁴ The biblical and theological principles are essential truths to all Protestant traditions. The sharp disagreement between the Wesleyan and Reformed traditions exists with the tension between God's sovereign work in holiness and the believer's obedient participation in how to deal with the problem of sin.⁷⁵ However, both traditions are biblically and theologically sound in defense of their theological orthodoxy regarding sanctification.

The Wesleyan tradition asserts that through God's grace, salvation is available to every unbeliever, which the unbeliever has the freedom to choose accordingly.⁷⁶ Moreover, this implies that humankind has free will to decide to accept or reject God's offer of salvation. The Wesleyan view counters the Reformed doctrine of election, which asserts that God has predetermined who will be saved and who will not. Laurence W. Wood, contends, "John Wesley maintained that the Apostle Paul taught that all justified believers are sanctified, and thus he made a distinction between sanctification, which begins at the moment of salvation; entire sanctification is the experience of being made perfect in love, which advocates Christian perfection."⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Stanley N. Gundry, ed., *Five Views of Sanctification* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987), 7.

⁷⁵ Donald L. Alexander, ed., *Christian Spirituality: Five Views of Sanctification* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 9.

⁷⁶ Melvin E. Dieter, "The Wesleyan Perspective," in *Five Views of Sanctification*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987), 12.

⁷⁷ Laurence W. Wood, "The Wesleyan Perspective," in *Christian Spirituality: Five Views of Sanctification*, ed. Donald L. Alexander (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 96.

The topic of second blessing assumed by the Wesleyan tradition creates tension with the Reformed tradition in terms of how a believer obtains holiness. Wesley goes on to postulate that God's divine love can be experienced immediately by believers who have undergone a recommitment of dedicated obedience in following him, which is referred to as a second blessing.⁷⁸ Pink counters Wesley's theological position by stating, "The testimony of scripture is that all men are vile and polluted; that they are, root and branch, source and stream, heart and life, not only disobedient, but unholy, and therefore unfit for God's presence."⁷⁹

The Wesleyan tradition disagrees with Pink and asserts that humankind is not vile or polluted but made in God's image through his love. Moreover, this love is supremely unconditional. However, John Wesley would insist that his orthodoxy of God's supreme and unconditional love was not endorsing the absence of sin, but more of the work of the Holy Spirit's refining and reshaping believers into new creations in Christ.⁸⁰

Furthermore, the confusion centers on being cleansed from sin but still sinning, especially with new believers. The Wesleyan tradition asserts that perfection is possible among regenerated believers and is distinct from and subsequent to justification.⁸¹ Therefore, they would claim that sin no longer reigns in maturing believers and that there is no such thing as an old nature. In his classic work, *Pleasing God*, R. C. Sproul explains, "The Wesleyan doctrine of Christian perfection is a poisonous doctrine of

⁷⁸ Ibid., 97.

⁷⁹ Pink, 597, Kindle.

⁸⁰ Wood, 98.

⁸¹ Hoekema, *Saved by Grace*, 215.

perfection that counters the truth of sanctification being a gradual process and progress made possible through the indwelling Holy Spirit.”⁸² Thus, the dispute with the Wesleyan and Reformed tradition is how the Holy Spirit’s power is revealed in believer’s lives.

John Wesley makes the distinction between the children of God who are experiencing less maturity than others, the new believer, and those experiencing more maturity than others. He provides lucidity for believers who are walking intimately with God through the power of the Holy Spirit.⁸³ In short, this implies that there are different levels existing in the Christian journey.

Wesleyan tradition clarifies by asserting that the doctrine of justification involves believers being liberated from the dominion of sin, and sanctification beginning after sins have been forgiven. Wood further postulates, “Entire sanctification endorses believers experiencing the gift of perfect love and the sinful person is cleansed from the power of sin.”⁸⁴ Moreover, this articulates two different trajectories for believers instead of both, the doctrines of justification and sanctification, being available at the same time for believers, as the Reformed tradition asserts.

The Reformed tradition rebuts the Wesleyan tradition of a sinless perfection in believers in which believers who are whole-heartedly committed to applying Jesus’ teachings are without sin, whether inwardly or externally.⁸⁵ The Apostle John makes clear that anyone who says they have no sin, the truth is not in them (1 John. 1:8). The Wesleyans would defend their orthodoxy by articulating that the sin nature in believers,

⁸² Sproul, 15-17.

⁸³ Wood, 102.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 111.

⁸⁵ Pink, 4157, Kindle.

who are completely surrendered to the authority of Christ in their lives, is replaced by God's divine love for them, which creates a reality of a sinless nature.⁸⁶

In other words, the heart, soul, and mind of a maturing believer is so completely filled with God's love, that there isn't any room for sin. In short, the essence of God's perfect love for him and others encapsulates the sanctification process.⁸⁷ Although, there is disagreement among the Reformed and Wesleyan traditions on how the process of sanctification begins and unfolds, both traditions agree that it is an essential component of the Christian life.

Although most of John Wesley's theology rested on the central doctrines of the Reformation and earlier Christian tradition, his biblical convictions of Christianity gave significant recognition that God's divine love is reflective of maturing believer's faith on a daily basis.⁸⁸ Moreover, this premise gave definition to his theological concepts. He did agree with Reformed tradition that humankind was totally sinful and entirely dependent on God's grace but diverged from them concerning the doctrine of human freedom.⁸⁹ These theological principles are the pillars of Wesley's theology. Despite their clear differences concerning how sanctification is accomplished in the life of the believer, both Reformed and Wesleyan traditions would agree on the centrality of the sanctification process in the life of believers towards spiritual maturation.

⁸⁶ Wood, 114.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 115.

⁸⁸ Dieter, 12.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 14.

Conclusion

In the exploration of addressing scripture through the doctrine of sanctification, scripture plays a critical part towards maturing Christian African American emerging leaders' character and leadership. In the example of Douglass, research confirmed that exposure to the scriptures played a vital role in defining and propelling his calling as a biblical reformer of his culture as a Gospel Movement Leader. The moral authority of scripture provided the foundation of his character and leadership formation.

The biblical concept of sanctification is rooted and grounded in the scriptures and lived out through its application as moral authority in the lives of believers. Moreover, it was the study and application of scripture that gave Douglass the spiritual fortitude to confront the inconsistency between the Christianity of Christ and the Christianity of his culture, even at the risk of great peril.⁹⁰ Subsequently, it is this same level of spiritual fortitude that is needed in the lives of Christian African American emerging leaders today.

The sanctification process, through the moral authority of the scriptures, produces an understanding of justice as defined by scripture. Moreover, utter dependence of the Holy Spirit provides the courage, integrity, and strength to challenge the status quo, similar to the second and third century Christian leaders, who transformed the Roman Empire into a Christian society through their words and deeds.⁹¹ Indeed, challenging mass incarceration, or police brutality from the moral authority of scripture will require

⁹⁰ Douglass, *The Most Complete Collection of Written Works & Speeches with Illustrations and Audio Narrations*, 14713, Kindle.

⁹¹ Efrain Agosto, *Servant Leadership: Jesus and Paul* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2005), 38.

nothing less than this level of transformation of character and leadership in the lives of Christian African American emerging leaders.

The Apostle Paul articulates sanctification as holiness, the Greek word *hagiasmos*, denoting believers' holiness comes through union with Christ in his death and resurrection (Rom. 6:1, 2, 4, 6, 10; 1 Cor. 1:30).⁹² This holiness is revealed throughout a believer's character and conduct. This biblical and theological concept affirms believers belonging to Christ are declared sanctified (1 Cor. 1:2).⁹³ The process of holiness results in Christlikeness. Douglass exemplified unconditional love towards all humankind, but felt great disdain towards the horrific mistreatment of slaves from slaveholders. He was able to unconditionally love others because of union with Christ through which he joins believers to himself by the Holy Spirit, through faith (Rom. 8:28-30).⁹⁴

The Apostle Paul admonishes believers to walk by faith and not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7). Believers maturing in Christ by faith will prevent sin having mastery over their lives (Rom. 6: 6, 14).⁹⁵ Douglass was able to withstand feeling hatred towards slaveholders because as he matured he had control over his sinful nature, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Sanctification is an outcome of a believer's faith.⁹⁶ It is the scriptures applied

⁹² Hoekema, "The Reformed Perspective," in *Five Views of Sanctification*, 63.

⁹³ Lints, 42.

⁹⁴ Brannon Ellis, "Covenantal Union and Communion: Union with Christ as the Covenant of Grace," in *Sanctification: Explorations in Theology and Practice*, ed. Kelly M. Kopic (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 102.

⁹⁵ Hoekema, *Saved by Grace*, 196.

⁹⁶ Berkouwer, 26.

by faith in the life of believers, through the enabling power of the Holy Spirit, which formulates holiness in character and conduct through the sanctification process.

The Apostle Paul admonishes believers as new creations in Christ to walk in their calling from God as biblical reformers in their culture (2 Cor. 5:7). Believers maturing in Christ by faith will count the cost, risk peril, and speak boldly in the face of great oppression, similar to Douglass (Rom. 6: 6, 14).⁹⁷ Subsequently, this does not imply that believers will not encounter opposition, but through the Holy Spirit, they will receive a spirit of power, love, and self-discipline to be less fearful of moving forward in their destiny (2 Tim. 1:7). Sanctification is an outcome of a believer's faith. In short, it is the scriptures applied by faith in the life of believers, through the enabling power of the Holy Spirit, which enables Gospel Movement Leaders, like Douglass, to impact and influence their culture from their God-given calling.

The Reformed tradition asserts that the doctrine of sanctification is definitive with it starting at the moment of conversion, similar to justification.⁹⁸ Moreover, this point-in-time event is true for every regenerated believer. Sanctification is also progressive, which states that sanctification is a gradual lifelong process.⁹⁹ Similar to Douglass, as Christian African American emerging leaders experience inward and external transformation over time, they become more characteristic of Jesus' teachings, which provides them the spiritual fortitude to address issues of racial hatred, bigotry, and prejudices. Thus, it is

⁹⁷ Hoekema, *Saved by Grace*, 196.

⁹⁸ Hoekema, "The Reformed Perspective," in *Five Views of Sanctification*, 72.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 62.

through sanctification that these emerging leaders are better equipped in becoming Gospel Movement Leaders.

Hoekema explains, “Holiness in the New Testament means two things: (1) separation from the sinful practices of this present world and (2) consecration to God’s service.”¹⁰⁰ Subsequently, this holiness is revealed through a believer’s character and conduct. Moreover, this biblical and theological concept affirms that a professing believer in fact belongs to Christ (1 Cor. 1:2).¹⁰¹ In short, the process of holiness results in Christlikeness.

The biblical concept of faith has a major role in the sanctification process. Sanctification is *sola-fide*, by faith alone, because it occurs in Christ, through dependence on Him. Believers are conformed to His image by the Holy Spirit’s ordained union with Him. The aforementioned union is what enhances a believer’s relationship with Christ to be experienced as valid and true. Believers are sanctified by faith because it appropriates the commands of God in their lives, and produces obedience in attitudes and behavior (John 17:17; Heb. 4:2; 1 Pet. 1:22). Thus, it is through faith, in union with Christ, Christian African American emerging leaders experience spiritual maturity, and are able to discern and act on their calling as Gospel Movement Leaders, similar to Douglass.

The Wesleyan tradition holds the scriptures as foundational to its theology along with the vital role of faith and the Holy Spirit in believers’ pursuit of holiness in the sanctification process. At the core of its doctrine of entire sanctification, or Christian

¹⁰⁰ Hoekema, “The Reformed Perspective,” in *Five Views of Sanctification*, 63.

¹⁰¹ Lints, 42.

perfection, expresses a concern for ethical faith.¹⁰² Moreover, this ethical faith is expressed in believer's character and conduct, similar to the Reformed tradition. However, the Wesleyan and Reformed tradition drastically diverge on the topic of how and to what degree God's grace overcomes and reverses the loss of humankind's sin.¹⁰³ Both traditions agree that God's love is an important part of this process (John 3:16). The end result of Christian perfection is not an inner spirituality but works of love, asserting that the essence of sanctification is love in action.¹⁰⁴

The role of the scriptures is a critical component in becoming a Gospel Movement Leader. It serves as the foundation in the life of believers who become biblical reformers of their culture, such as Douglass exemplified during his era (Matt. 7:24-27). However, if scripture is not accurately and consistently interpreted, it can be misused for the purpose of subjugation, domination, and oppression of those without power, status, or rights, as seen in Douglass' life.¹⁰⁵ When scripture is utilized in its proper interpretative context, it transforms leaders inwardly by demonstrating love for God and others. In short, the scriptures are the foundation of Gospel Movement Leaders as biblical reformers.

As a Gospel Movement Leader, Frederick Douglass' life consisted of exposure to the scriptures as the basis of his sanctification process.¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, the moral authority of the scriptures compelled him to address the vehement hatred he received as

¹⁰² Dieter, 11.

¹⁰³ Hoekema, "The Reformed Perspective," in *Five Views of Sanctification*, 23.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁰⁵ Spencer, Spencer, and Haddad, 9.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

an African American leader, as sin. His actions were fueled by Christ's love for even the enslaved African American, although he grossly disapproved of slaveholder's heinous treatment towards them.¹⁰⁷ Gospel Movement Leaders are compelled by Jesus' teachings to reform their culture as they are in process of becoming like Christ. Thus, Christian African American emerging leaders must saturate their minds and hearts with the moral authority of scripture to be transformed through the power of the Holy Spirit in the sanctification process as Gospel Movement Leaders who biblically reform their cultural milieu.

As Christian African American emerging leaders saturate their minds and hearts with scripture, they will have the biblical resources needed to address such societal ills as racial hatred. The scriptures will enable them to withstand derogative narratives thrown at them, such as being inferior, referred to as monsters, or blatant derogative racial terms. Instead of internalizing these terms, they will reject them while renewing their minds and hearts with biblical truth (Rom. 12:1-2). In short, Christian African American emerging leaders will be characterized as Gospel Movement Leaders equipped with the necessary skill set to address racial hatred as biblical reformed from their transformed identities as a result of them being grounded in biblical truth.

¹⁰⁷ Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass: The Illustrated Edition*, 43.

CHAPTER FOUR: DISCIPLESHIP

Introduction

In his classic work, *the Divine Conspiracy*, Dallas Willard articulates a scenario that easily describes the current reality for some Christian African American emerging leaders. He asserts, “A pilot was practicing high-speed maneuvers in a jet fighter. She turned the controls for what she thought was a steep ascent—and flew straight into the ground. She was unaware that she had been flying upside down.”¹

Similarly, emerging leaders find themselves lacking the necessary spiritual fortitude to provide solutions to life’s challenges, augmenting the feeling that life is upside down. Feelings of being out of control can be hastened by inadequate finances, job inequality, or processing the numerous recent acts of racial hatred against the African American community. In order to enable Christian African American emerging leaders to fly right side up and excel in their character and leadership, they must become Gospel Movement Leaders. Gospel Movement Leaders are characteristic of studying the scriptures, engaging in a discipleship relationship, and participating in a relationally rich community of faith. The absence of these three elements in the lives of leaders can result in hurtling toward certain disaster, controlled by fear, loss of love for God and others, and having no desire for Bible study.

As explored in the third chapter, the biblical principle of studying the scriptures, as the foundation of the sanctification work in believers, enables them to live and please

¹ Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* (San Francisco, CA: Harper Collins, 1997), 1.

God by being obedient, in attitude and conduct, as seen in the life of Frederick Douglass as a Gospel Movement Leader.² The progression of sanctification consist of believers studying and applying the scriptures, which refines and reshapes their attitudes and actions in how they relate to others, in their ability to discern God's will or call on their lives, and develops the spiritual fortitude in how to deal with social ills, such as racial hatred. The second element in the transformation of Christian African American emerging leader's character and leadership involves intentional focus on engaging in a discipleship relationship.

What the early church fathers referred to simply as Christian growth, it is more commonly called discipleship today.³ However, exploring the etymology of the term, disciple, will provide insight on the process of becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ. In his book, *Following the Master*, Michael J. Wilkins suggests that, "The Greek term for a disciple, *mathētēs*, refers to a learner, someone who puts themselves under the teaching authority of a great teacher or master."⁴ Subsequently, this definition implies that the learner has a posture of submission to the one disseminating knowledge. A disciple, according to the *New Bible Dictionary*, is "a pupil, learner, or adherent of a particular outlook in religion or philosophy."⁵

² Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 8.

³ Thomas O'Loughlin, *The Didache: A Window on the Earliest Christians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 13.

⁴ Michael J. Wilkins, *Following the Master: Discipleship in the Steps of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 26.

⁵ I. Howard Marshall et al., eds. *New Bible Dictionary*, 3d ed. (Downers Grove, IL: 1996), 277.

Wilkins further explains, “The term disciple has its roots in the written literature of Greece in the classical period and is used consistently to denote three types of people: a learner, an adherent, and a pupil.”⁶ The aforementioned definition validates an early usage of the term. To understand its purpose requires knowledge of the cultural milieu in which it is utilized by the teacher or master.⁷ Jesus and his followers, were familiar with and utilized the term, disciple, as one who surrendered to his teachings.

The verb, “make disciples,” *mathēteuō*, is central to Jesus’ overall mandate to his followers as he ascended to heaven (Matt. 28:16-20; Mark 16: 14-18; Luke 24:36-49; John 20: 19-23).⁸ The church was a critical community for the development of disciples. Moreover, this includes nurturing believers in their spiritual growth as they apply Jesus’ teachings, fellowshiping with other like-minded believers, along with meeting each other needs, as the primary assignment of the early church (Matt. 16:13-20; Mark 8:27-30; Luke 9: 18-21).

Wilkins further explains, “The Apostle Paul, in his epistles, never used the term disciple but instead used synonyms related to it, such as saints, believers, brothers/sisters, Christian, etc.”⁹ Paul’s use of these synonyms created a sense of belonging for all believers, especially Gentiles (Eph. 2: 11-13). However, a fuller exploration of the use of the term disciple in the Synoptic gospels will provide lucidity on how Christian African

⁶ Michael J. Wilkins, *Discipleship in the Ancient World and Matthew’s Gospel*, 2d ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1995), 11.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁸ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 73.

⁹ Wilkins, *Following the Master: Discipleship in the Steps of Jesus*, 38.

American emerging leaders participating in a discipleship relationship will transform their character and leadership as they become Gospel Movement Leaders.¹⁰

Biblical Discipleship

It is imperative to explore a biblical perspective in which Jesus' followers exemplified the life of a disciple in the Gospels. A follower of Jesus Christ demonstrated the quality of being a disciple by leaving everything to follow him (Matt: 10:37-38; Luke 14:26). A call to be a disciple of Jesus Christ was a call to resolute obedience in applying the teachings of Christ in one's life, at great personal cost (Matt. 19:23-26; Mark 10:17-27; Luke 18: 18-27).¹¹ Although the scriptures endorse this obedience in those who followed Jesus, not all believers were, in fact, disciples of Christ because of their lack of willingness to surrender everything to do so (Luke 9: 57-62). Many people followed Jesus and were called to a life of total commitment, but as his words became more challenging and difficult there were few who rose to the challenge of total surrender (John 6:60-66).

Jesus' call to be one of his disciples was also a call to be an apprentice, one who became like him. The integration of faith into all aspects of their lives was the evidence of their commitment.¹² Such a choice guarantees eternal life with him (John 14:6).¹³ Eternal life can be perceived as a license to live a life inconsistent with Jesus' teachings by simply praying the prayer of salvation and nothing more.

¹¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York, NY: Touchstone, 1959), 79.

¹² Willard, 41.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 12.

To become an apprentice of Jesus one must learn how to surrender their old ways, be shaped and formed by his teachings, and replicate his attitudes and conduct as their own beliefs.¹⁴ A call to be an apprentice of Jesus was costly (Luke 14:27). In the Old Testament, Abraham was called by God to leave his country, his relatives, and his father's house to a place the Lord eventually showed him in time (Gen. 12:1). In the Synoptic gospels, the authors cohesively recorded that to become a genuine disciple of Jesus required the same level of sacrifice (Matt. 8:18-22; Mark 4:35-41; Luke 9: 57-62). Thus, aligning Christian African American emerging leaders to the standard of scripture is the fulcrum to transforming their character and leadership, which must take place in their discipleship relationships.

For Douglass, the cost of embracing Christ meant extending forgiveness through love towards slaveholders for their mistreatment and misinterpretation of scripture to oppress, manipulate, and subjugate enslaved African Americans for personal economic gain; it meant forgiving them for separating families, including his own, as well as raping African American women, which produced fair-skinned African Americans, such as himself. Douglass stated, "I loved all humankind, slaveholders not excepted; though I abhorred slavery more than ever."¹⁵ Through God's unconditional love towards him, he was able to extend the same to slaveholders by separating their personhood from their hideous conduct towards slaves and specifically address the injustice of the latter as a Gospel Movement Leader. Uncle Lawton reading, modelling, and practicing the

¹⁴ O'Loughlin, 11.

¹⁵ Frederick Douglass, *Autobiographies: Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, My Bondage and My Freedom, Life and times of Frederick Douglass* (New York, NY: The Library of American, 1994), 231.

scriptures with Douglass in their discipleship relationship prepared him to exemplify qualities of Christ, such as love, mercy, and forgiveness (Rom. 12: 9; Eph. 4: 32).¹⁶

Jesus' call to follow him and obey his teachings was considered radical because it required the transformation of attitudes and actions, rather than just a profession of faith.¹⁷ Some who were challenged to follow Jesus declined to pay such a high cost (Matt. 8:18-22; Luke 14:25-33; John 21:15-19). Jesus required those following him to acknowledge him as Lord and serve him.¹⁸ Moreover, this form of radical discipleship was so extreme that it caused Jesus' followers to appear as if they hated their family in comparison to their love for him (Matt. 10:37-39; Luke 9:57-62). In his book, *The Cost of Discipleship*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer states, "The manner of discipleship for Jesus' followers required an adherence to the law of Christ and the cross, which included suffering, the badge of true discipleship."¹⁹

Furthermore, this badge of suffering in following Christ was resisted by some, such as the rich young ruler (Matt. 19:16-26; Mark 10: 17-27; Luke 18:18-27). Jesus' call to suffering required his followers to deny themselves (Matt. 16:21-28; Mark 8: 31-9:1; Luke 9:22-27). Wilkins further clarifies, "The characteristic of suffering was a sharp distinction between Jesus' disciples and those of the Pharisees and Rabbis."²⁰ Douglass

¹⁶ Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, ed. Amazon Digital Services (Rochester, NY: Public Domain, 2012), 1748, Kindle.

¹⁷ Bonhoeffer, 91.

¹⁸ George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament: Revised Edition*, ed. Donald A. Hagner (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 105.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 87.

²⁰ Wilkins, *Following the Master: Discipleship in the Steps of Jesus*, 27.

faced this same call to suffer as he endured being whipped for the color of his skin, treated as inferior, and considered three-fifths of a person. Nevertheless, it is this same commitment to suffering in Jesus' name, which serves as the fulcrum for Christian African American emerging leaders experiencing transformation of inward attitudes as they encounter racial hatred from others.

Counter to cultural norms, Jesus' brand of discipleship demanded the inclusion of the disenfranchised in his ministry (Luke 5:12-13, 27; 7:2; 8:1-2). In his work, *Servant Leadership*, Efrain Agosto explains, "Disenfranchised people during Jesus' era were the marginalized, the abject poor, the socially rejected, including outcast women and the sick of society."²¹ His Christological discipleship-teaching periscope would be a costly one for them as they learned to disciple others different from themselves.²²

Following Jesus and embracing his ministry focus was not for the faint-hearted or the weary (Luke 12:48-53). Jesus' compassion and concern for women, in particular, encapsulated the sacrifice needed by his disciples in their cultural milieu to be considered a true follower of Christ.²³ Christian African American emerging leaders can draw a significant lesson from this biblical dynamic. Furthermore, it provides an apology for the position that the gospel demands an end to the disenfranchisement and injustices perpetrated against the African American community.

Jesus' brand of discipleship also embraced the critical component of community. Specific emphasis was given on the larger group of followers whom Jesus considered

²¹ Efrain Agosto, *Servant Leadership: Jesus and Paul* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2005), 35.

²² Wilkens, *Following the Master: Discipleship in the Steps of Jesus*, 209.

²³ Merrill C. Tenney and Walter M. Dunnnett, *New Testament Survey* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 181.

genuinely committed disciples, apart from the Twelve (Acts 6:1-2, 7; 9:10, 26; 14:21-22; 15:10; 16:1).²⁴ Moreover, it is through this context that the process of discipling others is lived out locally, regionally, and globally through the power of the Holy Spirit (Act 1:8; 2:42-47).

Additionally, it is through the Holy Spirit's power demonstrated through the lives of Jesus' followers that enables believers to make disciples of all nations in his name (Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 19:10).²⁵ Thus, it is the ground breaking, counter-cultural reality of people from different backgrounds establishing a personal faith in Christ and engaging in a discipleship relationship with others which serves as the foundation for transformed character and leadership. (Acts 11:25-30; 16:1-5; 18:1-4, 24-28).

Discipleship Among Early Church Fathers

The early church fathers were the next generation of Jesus' disciples embracing his call to a costly and sacrificial commitment.²⁶ This theological concept is foundational in the development of the Christian church. The use of the Jewish scriptures, known in the Greek translation today as the Septuagint, was revered as authority by Clement of Rome, who wrote his first letter addressing problems to the church of Corinth regarding their behavior being incongruent with the scriptures.²⁷

²⁴ Wilkins, *Following the Master: Discipleship in the Steps of Jesus*, 208.

²⁵ Marshall et al., 12.

²⁶ Gerald L. Sittser, *Water from a Deep Well: Christian Spirituality from Early Martyrs to Modern Missionaries* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2007), 22.

²⁷ O'Loughlin, 26.

The scriptures served as a moral authority upon which to align the conduct of Jesus' followers. According to his book, *The Apostolic Fathers*, Bart Ehrman, explains, "The *Didache*, a first century Christian manual, provided ethical instructions for the church and its members regarding how believers were to love God and others, as the Synoptic gospels explains, such as praying for those who persecute others, not committing adultery or murder, along with loving your enemies (Matt. 5: 3-10; Luke 6: 20-23)."²⁸ In short, the scriptures are God's ethical standard for right living.

The audience of Ignatius of Antioch's letters were believers from communities in Southeast Asia Minor, admonishing them to embrace their differences as brothers and sisters in Christ.²⁹ The Apostle Paul's second letter to his son in the ministry, Timothy, contained a similar declaration (2 Tim. 2: 1-7; 14-15; 4:1-5). Ignatius' admonition through his letters was hastened by desiring to minimize any aspect of disunity among the church communities.³⁰ Also, preserving the unity of the Spirit in the church body was congruent with the Apostle Paul's theology (Eph. 4:3).

The developmental aspects of studying the scriptures together while being honest, respectful, and forgiving of one another were a part of the early church fathers' conduct as Jesus' disciples. Ignatius himself often articulated the Christian life as believers participating in discipleship as followers of Christ.³¹ Wilkins contends, "As Ignatius

²⁸ Bart D. Ehrman, ed. *The Apostolic Fathers: I Clement, II Clement, Ignatius, Polycarp, and Didache*, trans. Bart D. Ehrman (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 406.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 204.

³⁰ Laurie Guy, *Introducing Early Christianity: A Topical Survey of Its Life, Beliefs, and Practices* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 48.

³¹ Wilkins, *Following the Master: Discipleship in the Steps of Jesus*, 314.

served as the bishop of Antioch, seen through his letters, he clarified that conversion results from faith, which initiates the life of discipleship, along with equally emphasizing endurance in the journey of discipleship as evidence of belief.”³² Faith and endurance are essential components of spiritual maturity as believers are being discipled and as they disciple others (Rom. 5:1; Heb. 11:6; 12:1-3).

Along with establishing biblically and theologically sound orthodoxy from scripture, the early church fathers were, no doubt, concerned about the spirituality of those that were genuine followers of Jesus. The *Didache* rendered clear directives on the details of a discipleship relationship by instructing them on church order as a means of teaching Christians what it means to be a faithful, mature follower of Christ, both in attitudes and actions.³³ The early use of a discipleship relationship among the early church fathers serves as a model for Christian African American emerging leaders as they engage in a discipleship relationship.

Persecution and Martyrdom

The first martyr who experienced death at the hands of an enraged mob, was Stephen, one of the seven deacons recruited to serve the Greek speaking Jewish widows being overlooked in the daily serving of food in the church of Antioch (Acts 6:1-6; 7:54-60). In her book, *Introducing Early Christianity*, Laurie Guy states, “In the first two centuries the surrounding neighbors of Jesus’ followers perceived Christianity as a threat

³² Ibid., 324.

³³ O’Loughlin, xvi.

to the well-being of society, prompting a mob of violence.”³⁴ Thus, these mobs of violence led to persecution of followers of Jesus.

The gospel writer, Luke, records in Acts the first persecution of Jesus’ followers occurring the same day as the first martyr, foreshadowing the level of hatred to occur in the next few centuries. Guy further explains, “The definition for the Greek word, *martyr*, is witness, understood by the early church as one giving testimony along with having immediate access to heaven by experiencing death for the faith.”³⁵ The concept of martyrdom left an indelible impression in the minds and hearts of the early church fathers.

Polycarp narrates his letter of martyrdom as an account of numerous parallels to Jesus’ death (Polycarp *Mar.* 1-4).³⁶ Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection served as an example for many to follow (Phil. 1:21). Dissimilar to some, Polycarp held back his determination to be martyred while anticipating and predicting such an event to his followers (Polycarp 1.2).³⁷ His commitment to dying as Jesus did was exemplary of embracing the costly sacrifice of doing so (1 Pet. 3:8-22; 4:12-19). Martyrdom, in its authentic form, was a desire for Christian perfection, against the flesh, against the world, and against Satan, which other forms of spirituality took its place as it ceased to exist (Col. 3:5-11; 1 John 2:15-16).³⁸

³⁴ Guy, 51.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 57.

³⁶ Ehrman, 369.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 359.

³⁸ Guy, 80.

The suffering of the saints and their horrific persecution resulted in expanding the Christian movement through the payment of a costly price: their lives.³⁹ Jesus' disciples were often warned of this occurring throughout his earthly ministry (Matt. 5:44; 10:23; 16:25). The Apostle Paul warned his brothers and sisters in Christ of the imminent reality that persecution and suffering for Jesus' sake was a necessary aspect of discipleship (2 Tim. 3:12).⁴⁰

Paul's instructions on how to treat those who persecuted believers were consistent with Jesus' instructions to his disciples regarding the same (Matt. 5:9-12; Rom. 12:14-21). Jesus and Paul's disciples, as the persecuted ones, were able to free themselves from hating their persecutors because of studying and applying the scriptures, as they engaged in a discipleship relationship.⁴¹ Douglass was able to accomplish the same towards slaveholders during his era.

Similar to Jesus, Paul was revered as one who experienced persecution, as a follower of Jesus Christ. Clement of Rome described in detail Paul's plight of imprisonment, being persecuted and suffered as one of the greatest models of endurance in light of his afflictions (*I Clement* 5:6-7).⁴² As a result, he is honored as one of the many heroes of the faith. His exemplary faith, even unto death, became a model of worthy suffering for the cause of Christ to those of the early church fathers.⁴³

³⁹ Sittser, 28.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁴¹ Gerd Theissen, *Social Reality and the Early Christians: Theology, Ethics, and the World of the New Testament*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992), 154.

⁴² Hawthorne et al., 692.

⁴³ Ehrman, 45.

Also, Douglass suffered greatly whereby as a free person he received the threats of being sent back into enslavement or put to death by the hands of slave catchers for economic gain. Paul's exemplary faith and suffering for the cause of Christ is a model today for Christian African American emerging leaders who are recipients of racial hatred. Similar to Paul and Polycarp, Christian African American emerging leaders must develop the spiritual fortitude to withstand prejudice, intolerance, and bigotry as they follow Christ, even in the midst of persecution and suffering, as exemplified by Douglass (Polycarp *Phil.* 9.1).⁴⁴

Theology of Discipleship

A discipleship relationship entails believers desiring a deeper commitment to Jesus and personal application of his teachings to refine and reshape their attitudes, conduct, and calling, as demonstrated between Frederick Douglass and his discipler, Uncle Lawton. Moreover, this intentional commitment is marked by focusing on a believer's call to love God and others, develop proven character, and to witness in word and deed both inside and outside the household of faith.⁴⁵

Specifically, this call requires believers to sacrifice their own will for the will of the Father. Guy further explains, "The desert believers emulated Jesus' ascetic lifestyle as one who wandered around, connecting with the poor, embracing a life of suffering, and remaining an unmarried celibate throughout his life (Luke 6:24; 9:22, 58)."⁴⁶ Emulating

⁴⁴ Hawthorn et al., 692.

⁴⁵ Sittser, 73.

⁴⁶ Guy, 135.

this lifestyle ensures minimizing distractions and temptations so that believers may focus on their calling.

The first century disciples expressed their commitment to following Jesus by leaving their homes and families, their occupations, and all their possessions as well as displaying a change of behavior, different from others in Roman society.⁴⁷ The characteristics of this lifestyle distinguished Jesus' disciples from disciples of others during the first century as well (Matt. 5:20; 6:16; 7:21-23). The *Didache* referred to everyone who displayed themselves as an itinerant charismatic in their behavior, moving from one place to the next for the sake of the gospel as "apostles" (*Didache* 11.3).⁴⁸ The ascetic and monastic lifestyle became an attempt to live out Jesus' teachings in a literal way achieving purity and holiness as an expression of Christlikeness (Luke 9:23).

Paul's ascetic lifestyle, coupled with his profound demonstration of unrelenting faith in Christ cheered on the early church fathers who were persecuted by their enemies. The letter of Ignatius to the Romans reveals him endorsing suffering joyfully because of Paul's example. His example confirmed his commitment in being a genuine follower of Christ (Ignatius *Rom.* 4:3).⁴⁹

The Synoptic gospels articulate the resting place of the kingdom of heaven belonging to those who endure persecution with gladness for the sake of righteousness (Matt. 5:3-10; Luke 6:20-23). In his letter to Ephesus, Ignatius desired that he be found worthy of the same level of persecution as Paul received (Ignatius *Eph.* 12:1-2).⁵⁰ Thus,

⁴⁷ Theissen, 60.

⁴⁸ O'Loughlin, 168.

⁴⁹ Ehrman, 275.

⁵⁰ Hawthorn et al., 692.

being persecuted and suffering for the sake of the gospel was a strong component of being a follower of Jesus for the early church fathers, as it was for Paul and his disciples.

Discipleship for the early church fathers implied following Jesus, even if it meant martyrdom.⁵¹ The scriptures became their moral authority which determined their attitudes and behavior in how they related to others. To suffer and be persecuted, like Jesus and the Apostle Paul, was a worthy and honorable achievement by apostolic fathers such as Clement, Ignatius, and Polycarp.⁵²

In Matthew's gospel, he clarifies that those who did so with joy would receive a great reward in heaven (Matt. 5:12). The ascetic and monastic lifestyles of the desert saints reflected a genuine desire for behavior characteristic of humility and love, the highest of Jesus' values as his disciples.⁵³ Similarly, many enslaved African Americans during the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries, such as Douglass, suffered horrific atrocities at the hands of slaveholders while holding on to the hope of one day becoming free, in their lifetime and beyond.

Discipleship in African American Churches

Jesus' commandment to make disciples of all nations extends to every church, including churches in the African American community (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:14-18; Luke 24:36-49; John 20: 19-23).⁵⁴ In this manner, discipleship moves from being a

⁵¹ Wilkens, *Following the Master: Discipleship in the Steps of Jesus*, 332.

⁵² Hawthorn et al., 692.

⁵³ Sittser, 90.

⁵⁴ V. Simpson Turner, "A History of African-American Evangelistic Activities," in *Evangelism & Discipleship in African-American Churches*, eds. Lee N. June and Matthew Parker (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 22-26.

commitment to Christ, to a mentoring relationship between a mature and a younger believer, to focused attention on developing a deeper Christian commitment in the life of the younger believer. The current challenges facing the African American community require a quality of discipleship exemplified in the commitment level of the Apostle Paul, the early church fathers, and the desert saints who relinquished everything to follow Jesus.

When Christian African American emerging leaders engage in a discipleship relationship through their churches, the fuller mandate of Jesus' call and mission to all his disciples will be known and experienced throughout these communities. James Hunter, in his book, *To Change the World*, states, "Beyond the worship of God and the proclamation of his word, the central ministry of the church is one of formation; of making disciple...it is not Sunday school, a Wednesday night prayer meeting, or a new book one must read".⁵⁵ Thus, a discipleship program in African American churches is the impetus to Christian African American emerging leaders participating in making disciples (Matt. 28:19, 20).

There is a genuine desire of African American pastors to have their flock experience transformation through their church community. There is a desire to see the development of a spiritually mature generation of Christ-centered leadership.⁵⁶ What is required to see this accomplished is more than desire. There must also be practical implementation of discipleship permeated throughout the church, from pastors to the

⁵⁵ James Hunter, *To Change the Word: The Irony, Tragedy, & Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 236.

⁵⁶ Tom Skinner, "Personal Reflections on Evangelism Among African Americans," in *Evangelism & Discipleship in African-American Churches*, eds. Lee N. June and Matthew Parker (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 31.

newest members. The pastor must personally recruit members, sharing the vision of evangelism and discipleship while training them in it.⁵⁷ Without this level of commitment and endorsement from the pastor, other programs and events will take the place of this task.

Unfortunately, there are very few African American churches that have sustainable discipleship programs. Historically, many of these churches have embraced evangelism and missions since before the twentieth century.⁵⁸ However, very few churches have incorporated the second part of the Great Commission: to “make disciples” (Matt. 28:19, 20). Evangelism is incomplete if it does not flow naturally into discipleship; an oversight which leaves the church body in a state of disobedience and spiritual infancy.⁵⁹ The lack of discipleship enables believers to stay in a “sin-confess-sin” pattern because they will not know how to address their sin nature through confession, repentance, and forgiveness (1 John. 1:9).

The aforementioned pattern is pervasive among believers who only have received the scriptures as raw data. Being taught a theology of discipleship, in relationship with a seasoned believer, enables maturing believers to understand and practice their role in the mission of the church.⁶⁰ The Apostle Paul’s command to his son in the faith, Timothy, to

⁵⁷ Willie Richardson, “The Church’s Role,” in *Evangelism & Discipleship in African-American Churches*, eds. Lee N. June and Matthew Parker (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 49.

⁵⁸ Turner, “A History of African-American Evangelistic Activities,” in *Evangelism & Discipleship in African-American Churches*, 27.

⁵⁹ Richardson, 54.

⁶⁰ Ladd, 113.

make disciples of others, is an example of Jesus' teachings to his disciples (Lk. 6:40; 2 Tim. 2:2).

Many churches are not engaging in discipleship programs because either church leaders have not been trained, or it is not a priority.⁶¹ The absence of discipleship can result in a believer returning to a lifestyle of disobedience (Eph. 2:1-3). A lifestyle of disobedience deprives believers of character and leadership maturity as well as commitment to a discipleship relationship. In short, the absence of discipleship programs in African American churches adversely affect believer's spiritual maturation (1 Cor. 3:1-3).

Furthermore, it is very common to watch believers redefine Jesus' teachings without the true markers of one who is a genuine and an authentic follower of him. Wilkins clarifies, "These true markers are abiding in Jesus word (John. 8:31-32), loving the brethren (John 13:34), and bearing fruit (John 15:8), which often is referred to as Christian growth."⁶² Instead, they profess faith among communities of believers but in other areas of their lives there is no evidence of faith at all. Willard articulates, "The incongruence between a believer's profession of faith and actions is characteristic of a form of sin management in which transformation and character plays no part of the redemptive message to the world."⁶³

Regenerated believers left in a state of sin management will eventually default back to their former lifestyle as unbelievers. Believers engaging in a discipleship

⁶¹ Lloyd C. Blue, "The Pastor's Role," in *Evangelism & Discipleship in African-American Churches*, eds. Lee N. June and Matthew Parker (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 70.

⁶² Wilkins, *Following the Master: Discipleship in the Steps of Jesus*, 134.

⁶³ Willard, 41.

relationship are more than simply finishing the new members' class, baptismal class or stewardship training in the church. It is learning with others to love and live in obedience to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and growing to be like him by becoming confident in salvation.

Believers who engage in a discipleship relationship learn to depend on the power of the Holy Spirit to think and live right, scripture studying and application, private and corporate prayer, church roots, and engaging in a small group for accountability.⁶⁴ Moreover, if ignored, there is a possibility that believers will be devoid of integrating their beliefs and behavior in ways that pleases God. Jesus intended for discipleship to take place in the context of a community of faith. Also, this environment provides a powerful opportunity to grow in Christlikeness alongside other believers who unconditionally love, extend grace, and speak truth to one another (Matt. 16:18; 28:19; John 21:17).⁶⁵

According to William Turner in his book, *Discipleship for African American Christians*, he explains, "There are some African American pastors who have made discipleship a priority and implemented in their churches by teaching their church Covenant."⁶⁶ Often these Christian educators postulate that discipleship takes place in the context of Sunday school classes, through auxiliary clubs, prayer sessions, and through the Christian education department. Turner argues that "Discipleship is demonstrated

⁶⁴ Joseph C. Jeter, "Help Wanted: Missionaries for the Harvest," in *Evangelism & Discipleship in African-American Churches*, eds. Lee N. June and Matthew Parker (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 160.

⁶⁵ Bonhoeffer, 277.

⁶⁶ William C. Turner, Jr., *Discipleship for African American Christians: A Journey through the Church Covenant* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2002), 2.

through observing church covenant commitments such as communion, baptism and other gatherings.”⁶⁷

Although, this perspective has its place, it does not take into consideration the younger generation’s desire for an individualized transformational relationship, as demonstrated between Jesus and the Twelve, and Douglass and Uncle Lawton. The Apostle Paul, the early church fathers, and desert saints exemplified transformation of character and leadership. It was their costly and sacrificial commitment to Jesus’ teachings, which enabled them to become Gospel Movement Leaders in their cultural milieu through scripture studies, engagement in a discipleship relationship, and participation in a relational community of faith.

Discipleship on Campus

The Impact Movement, as a campus organization, seeks to come alongside African American churches by developing African American emerging leaders as disciples of Jesus Christ to be sent back to these churches. Prior to the year, 2015, the ministry experienced a significant decline in resources. As a result of hiring a new president, the national focus of the organization shifted to an in-depth, individualized discipleship relationship program for emerging leaders across the nation, with a focus on character formation. Exploring and engaging the Impact Movement’s commitment to engaging African American emerging leaders in discipleship relationships will serve as an aid in strengthening the African American church’s understanding, commitment, and capacity to make disciples (Matt. 28:19-20).

⁶⁷ Turner, *Discipleship for African American Christians: A Journey through the Church Covenant*, 130.

Participating in a discipleship relationship with others is a critical component of spiritual growth, because without it believers are left in spiritual infancy (1 Cor. 3:1). When believers engage in a discipleship relationship, as they are being nurtured in their spiritual growth, they are in a training process to do the same with others (2 Tim. 2:2).⁶⁸ The nurturing of believer's spiritual maturation is a formative process, in which their attitudes are transformed inwardly and change is seen externally.

Furthermore, this aspect of formation is, in essence, about changed lives in the context of a community of faith that seeks to live out the teachings of Jesus as his disciples.⁶⁹ As Frederick Douglass was disciplined by Uncle Lawton, his attitude transformed from vehemently hating slaveholders to loving them as God loves humankind. Also, what was equally true of Douglass was his revulsion of their horrendous treatment of slaves.

When believers are taken through a biblically enriched discipleship relationship with others, this contributes to their overall formation holistically.⁷⁰ Emerging leaders involved in the Impact Movement, who are participating in a discipleship relationship, are better prepared to transition smoothly from the utopia of a college campus and into a church setting as a maturing adult. A discipleship program of this nature teaches them that the moral authority of scripture has the final word on any issue, attaining the skillset

⁶⁸ Kenneth Boa, *Conformed to His Image: Biblical and Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 367.

⁶⁹ Hunter, 236-237.

⁷⁰ Christopher C. Mathis, "Practicing Evangelism and Discipleship at Home and at College: Evangelizing and Discipling Youth and College Students," in *Evangelism & Discipleship in African-American Churches*, eds. Lee N. June and Matthew Parker (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 148.

to access and apply scripture when needed, as well as obtaining foundational truths that set the stage for continual development as a leader.

The way in which emerging leaders are spiritually developed is of utmost importance because it often determines how they will impact and influence their community and culture.⁷¹ Believers exposed to spiritual development create a solid and enduring foundation in their relationship with Jesus Christ (Matt. 7:24-27). Emerging leaders are nurtured spiritually by building into them biblical principles rendering them discernment to make ethical choices, walking in God's will, and living a life of integrity (Ps. 15:2).⁷²

Emerging leaders involved in the Impact Movement tend to display characteristics of Jesus' disciples, such as being faithful, available, and teachable, as well as possessing character traits and knowledge of Jesus' disciples as they study the scriptures (2 Tim. 2:2).⁷³ The Apostle Paul instructed his disciple, Timothy, to invest in others who display these same qualities; qualities that requires them to pass on what they've learned from others. The Impact Movement's emerging leaders choose to voluntarily place themselves in environments to learn Jesus' teachings concerning discipleship.⁷⁴ Similar to the early church fathers emulating Jesus' disciples, these emerging leaders are to imitate those who come alongside them to help them in their spiritual growth (Heb. 13:7).

⁷¹ Ibid., 139.

⁷² Boa, 367.

⁷³ Blue, 72.

⁷⁴ Willard, 112.

The process of growing spiritually has the potential to occur in members of the African American churches as well. Turner, further argues that, “It is taking place in churches, but through the various forms of expressing the church covenant.”⁷⁵ As church members learn the biblical framework of each component of a churches’ covenant, they receive principles of discipleship.

Discipleship principles through a churches’ covenant are mostly experienced in a churches’ educational department through such events as weekday Bible studies, affinity classes, fundraising dinners, retreats, etc.⁷⁶ Turner fails to incorporate any element of sacrifice or personal scripture study. In addition, this leaves African American churches exactly where they began: with a passive discipleship program that is overly dependent on consuming content and weak on personal accountability or action.

Campus organizations, such as The Impact Movement, are flourishing in discipling emerging leaders on campuses because very few African American churches are engaging in discipleship relationships. Ladd clarifies, “Although there are many methods in discipling others, the Greek word, *mathētēs*, denotes complete surrender to Jesus’ teachings and his authority as obedient followers of him.”⁷⁷ The Impact Movement’s discipleship program involves mature believers teaching younger believers how to live a life of obedience and surrender to Jesus’ teachings.

⁷⁵ Turner, *Discipleship for African American Christians: A Journey through the Church Covenant*, 69.

⁷⁶ Norvella Carter, “Wives and Mothers: Key Players in Evangelism and Discipling,” in *Evangelism & Discipleship in African-American Churches*, eds. Lee N. June and Matthew Parker (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 125.

⁷⁷ Ladd, 105.

To accomplish being a committed disciple of Jesus, it is helpful to have a discipler, mentor, or coach to help guide and direct them in understanding how to pray, study the scriptures, witness, and participate in a church. To assume that someone can ascertain how to be a disciple of Jesus by participating in large group settings alone, is unrealistic because it must be taught and modeled by others as Jesus did with his followers, the apostle Paul with his disciples, the early church fathers and the desert saints with their disciples.⁷⁸

The call for discipleship to be a vital part of the African American church experience is critical and urgent. Its communities, and the broader society, is in need of leaders who can rise to the challenges of the day and transform their culture as Gospel Movement Leaders. History stands as a witness that when Gospel Movement Leaders, such as Frederick Douglass, are raised up as leaders with transformed character and leadership ignited by their responsibility to live out the moral authority of scripture in their cultural milieu, nations are impacted and influenced through relational presence.⁷⁹

The emerging leaders participating in the Impact Movement are well on their way towards transformation because of their choice to place themselves in a community of faith on campuses in which they participate in discipleship relationships. As they continue to grow towards understanding how to live their faith through Jesus in a holistic way, they will be a light to those existing in darkness (Matt. 5:14-16).⁸⁰ Once Christian

⁷⁸ O'Loughlin, 64.

⁷⁹ Richardson, 49.

⁸⁰ Bosch, 81.

African American emerging leaders engage in discipling others themselves, they will continue to be transformed in their character towards Christlikeness.

Believer's applied teachings of Jesus' will impact how they think and how they behave, which will communicate to the world they are followers of Jesus.⁸¹ Emerging leaders, that are committed disciples of Christ, will be a message of hope to a world full of brokenness and despair as well as the spiritual fortitude needed in dealing with racial hatred. Making disciples requires being intentional towards the hard work of believer's stewarding well what has been entrusted to them to be fit for any calling and service of Christ (Luke 9: 57-62).⁸² The emerging leaders that are currently involved with the Impact Movement on campuses, will be those individuals who will disciple and train others in their churches in the future.

There is great potential for some of these emerging leaders to become pastors and implement discipleship relationships in their churches by preaching Christ-centered sermons of it from the pulpit, which makes it a priority.⁸³ For these leaders to do so requires a deeper understanding of God's mandate. In short, it is imperative that the mandate to "make disciples" comes from those in leadership in the church to bring about the needed change to disciple members in the African American churches (2 Tim. 2:2).

The Impact Movement is committed to engaging Christian African American emerging leaders to participate in discipleship relationships, which will give back to the churches by raising up disciplined individuals. The African American church can greatly

⁸¹ Willard, 114.

⁸² Hunter, 227.

⁸³ Blue, 66.

benefit from emerging leaders being developed as Gospel Movement Leaders that will be transferable to those around them with the hopes of engaging their churches by actively participating in fulfilling the Great Commission locally, regionally, and globally (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8). Thus, the Impact Movement's core value of discipleship relationships is a viable alternative to the current reality of many African American churches minimally engaging in the same.

Conclusion

Engaging in a discipleship relationship is a part of a developmental framework, which will enable Christian African American emerging leaders to grow in their character and leadership in becoming Gospel Movement Leaders. A disciple is understood as one who is being grounded in Jesus' teachings.⁸⁴ Grounding believers in a biblically astute and theologically cohesive process to become Gospel Movement Leaders serves as an essential foundation to the process of being transformed in believer's character and conduct privately and publically. The absence of biblical discipleship robs a believer of contentment and godly virtues for holy living, which many are not currently experiencing.⁸⁵

When biblical truth is applied in the life of believers it serves as the foundation for Christian growth towards becoming committed disciples (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). A disciple of Jesus is an apprentice who is whole-heartedly surrendered to his authority and bears

⁸⁴ Bosch, 36.

⁸⁵ Richardson, 57.

the fruit of obedience based on his teachings.⁸⁶ Subsequently, this implies that the believer has made a commitment to not go the way of their own choosing but instead, to adhere to the commands of Christ. The call of an apprentice to Jesus is, in fact, a call to discipleship that requires unadulterated obedience to the word of God (Matt. 19:23-26).⁸⁷

The Synoptic gospels serve as a blueprint in how to accomplish programs of discipleship in the lives of others, as Jesus did with his Twelve. Wilkins writes, “His call to them was a call to surrendering to his Lordship, a call to the kingdom of God and a call to believe in his name for eternal life.”⁸⁸ Jesus’ disciples were set apart from other known disciples during the early centuries in Palestine. As they engaged in the process of being disciplined by Jesus, they were to, in turn, make disciples of others (Matt. 28:19-20). Moreover, this biblical mandate extended to the church is demonstrated as the outpouring of the manifestation of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:8; 2:1-4; 42-47).

The early church fathers demonstrated a commitment in participating in discipleship relationships, as exemplified by Jesus and the Apostle Paul with their disciples.⁸⁹ However, this commitment was identified by the costly aspect of experiencing persecution and suffering as followers of Jesus. As second generation Christians, Clement of Rome, Ignatius, and Polycarp helped clarify Christianity during the second century in which suffering and martyrdom was met with joy, they were counted in as heroes of the faith along with the Apostle Paul.⁹⁰ Jesus called those blessed

⁸⁶ Willard, 287.

⁸⁷ Bonhoeffer, 87.

⁸⁸ Wilkins, *Following the Master: Discipleship in the Steps of Jesus*, 111.

⁸⁹ O’Loughlin, 80.

⁹⁰ Hawthorne et al., 692.

who endured persecution and suffering for his name sake (Matt. 5:10-12). Guy clarifies, “The *Didache* gives instructions to the early churches regarding the congruence between discipleship and church order.”⁹¹

However, these instructions from the *Didache* would not influence many African American churches on the topic of discipleship today. Although there is a desire amongst many African American pastors to develop spiritually mature, Christ-centered believers, it is not done through discipleship relationships.⁹² The lack of discipleship in these churches has instead, created generations of believers whose profession of faith is incongruent with their behavior. Thus, the need is for evangelism with discipleship to be a priority of the church along with the pastors and his leaders modeling how to do so (Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16: 15; Luke 19:10; Acts 1:8).⁹³ The lack of discipleship in the African American church has caused campus organizations to fill in the gap.

A discipleship relationship is a necessary component of Gospel Movement Leaders because they possess the spiritual companionship of a mature believer who teaches them biblical truth, train them in how to apply the scriptures in everyday life, as well as allowing scripture to transform their character.⁹⁴ This growth process enables leaders to access scripture in discerning God’s will, making ethical choices, and becoming men and women of integrity over time. Also, a discipleship relationship involves the discipler holding the disciplee accountable for doing what is right before

⁹¹ Guy, 30.

⁹² Skinner, 35.

⁹³ Blue, 66.

⁹⁴ Boa, 377.

God (Ps. 15:2). In short, a discipleship relationship provides spiritual companionship that helps Gospel Movement Leaders become successful biblical reformers of their cultural milieu.

The discipleship relationship equips Gospel Movement Leaders with the spiritual fortitude to withstand relational pressures and different forms of temptations (1 Cor. 10:13; 1 John 4:4). As they are taught biblical standards from their discipler, they learn how to avoid compromising in the area of relational purity (1 Thess. 5:22). Moreover, it is in a discipleship relationship that Gospel Movement Leaders can experience victory in this area of their lives over time. However, if a person compromises their biblical standards in the area of relational purity, the discipler is able to help them be restored by explaining to them the process of repentance, forgiveness, and restoration through the power of the Holy Spirit and the scriptures (Col. 1:14; 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 John 1:9).

Christian African American emerging leaders that develop as successful biblical reformers of their cultural milieu are able to study the scriptures and apply them to life's challenges. As they are modelled in how to be disciplined, they are able to disciple others (Matt. 28:19; 2 Tim. 2:2). As these emerging leaders become biblical reformers as Gospel Movement Leaders, they will reach back and train the next generation behind them. Simply put, Christian African American emerging leaders who become Gospel Movement Leaders will raise up and train the next generation of the same.

A campus organization, such as the Impact Movement, has the potential to be a catalyst in seeing discipleship relationships exist in African American churches. As Christian African American emerging leaders participate in these relationships on their campuses, they will learn how to emulate the same with others (Matt. 28:19-20). The

training process of discipling others, as a result of being disciplined, has the potential for them to accomplish the same as they graduate from college and participate in local churches of their choice.

Once these emerging leaders commit to a local church these trained believers are able to pass on what has been entrusted to them as the Apostle Paul did with Timothy, his disciple (2 Tim. 2:2).⁹⁵ The participation of Christian African American emerging leaders participating in discipleship relationships provides the spiritual fortitude needed to face life's challenges. As Gospel Movement Leaders, who will biblically reform their culture from their biblically astute and theologically cohesive core beliefs, they will be better trained to successfully develop ensuing generations imitating the same.

⁹⁵ Mathis, 148.

CHAPTER FIVE: COMMUNITY OF FAITH

Introduction

Thus far, Chapter One has set the stage in identifying a crisis in the African American community, and a void of character and leadership in the face of near crushing need. Chapter Two looked at the life of Frederick Douglass who played a critical role in the emancipation of slaves by making the case against chattel slavery based on the moral authority of scripture as a Gospel Movement Leader.¹ Also, he is introduced as a historical prototype, who was exposed to the scriptures by listening to his Master's wife reading them out loud, although he could not do so as a slave.² The introduction of the scriptures into his life created a biblical foundation that brought about a solid spiritual conversion as a youth.

Through a series of events Douglass encountered Uncle Lawton, an enslaved African American man, who disciplined him by teaching him how to apply the scriptures in any situation and how to discern God's will involving his destiny. Also, Uncle Lawton taught him how to unconditionally love slaveholders in spite of their heinous mistreatment of himself and others as slaves.³ His observation of these slaveholders and their professed faith resulted in Douglass noting the profound incongruence between the Christianity of Christ and the Christianity of the land, which served as the impetus to him

¹ Aida Besancon Spencer, William David Spencer, and Mimi Haddad, eds. *Global Voices on Biblical Equality: Women and Men Ministering Together in the Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008), 2-3.

² Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, ed. Amazon Digital Services (Rochester, NY: Public Domain, 2012), 56, Kindle.

³ Frederick Douglas, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass: The Illustrated Edition* (Minneapolis, MN: Zenith, 2015), 43.

seeking freedom from chattel slavery; the classification of enslaved African Americans as real estate property rather than humankind created in the image of God. As a freed man he abandoned white churches full of hypocrisy to establish a relational community of faith with other African Americans reflective of the Christianity of Christ prior to becoming an abolitionist to eradicate slavery.⁴

Chapter Three explored the first step as a Gospel Movement Leader. It brought clarity towards the necessity of Christian African American emerging leaders engaging in the scriptures through the sanctification process. In addition, this process refines and reshapes believer's attitudes and actions as they become more Christlike to please God. Theologians of the Reformed tradition asserts that engaging in the formation of becoming such a leader is progressive and lifelong, resulting in believers adhering to the will of God out of obedience, and epitomizing Christlikeness over time through the application of Jesus' teachings.⁵

As African American emerging leaders engage in the sanctification process they are better equipped to become biblical reformers of their culture as Gospel Movement Leaders, similar to Douglass. The inability to develop the necessary character through the sanctification process will result in the failure of one's leadership.⁶ The work of sanctification in a believer's life is formative, enabling leaders to develop into spiritually mature followers of Christ who will impact and influence their culture through relational and social engagement.

⁴ Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 158, Kindle.

⁵ Anthony A. Hoekema, *Saved by Grace* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 62.

⁶ J. Robert Clinton, *The Making of a Leader: Recognizing the Lessons and Stages of Leadership Development* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1988), 167.

Chapter Four explored the second element to become a Gospel Movement Leader. This involves leaders engaging in a discipleship relationship, which enables them to see and embrace concepts like obedience to the Lord, walking in the power of the Holy Spirit, scripture application modeled to mature in different levels of their spirituality. As leaders avail themselves to become Gospel Movement Leaders, they will emulate mature character and leadership, similar to Douglass, as a biblical reformer bringing spiritual reformation to their cultural milieu.⁷

A third component to become a Gospel Movement Leader consists of Christian African American emerging leaders participating in a relationally rich community of faith. Simply put, it is the shaping and refining of believer's attitudes and conduct through the practice of living out the moral authority of scripture among other like-minded committed followers of Christ, which develops spiritual maturation for themselves and others.⁸ Angela H. Reed and her colleagues, in their book, *Spiritual Companionship*, writes, "What we need most today are spiritual companions along the journey. Without them we are hindered in developing intimacy with God and with others, which can impact the formation of a believer's character."⁹

God, in community with his Son and the Holy Spirit, created humankind for community. Such a community serves as a catalyst that God uses to bring about the

⁷ Spencer, Spencer, and Haddad, 8-9.

⁸ Medi Ann Volpe, *Rethinking Christian Identity: Doctrine and Discipleship* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 4.

⁹ Angela H. Reed, Richard R. Osmer, and Marcus G. Smucker, *Spiritual Companionship: A Guide to Protestant Theology and Practice* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 4.

formation of Christian's character and behavior.¹⁰ Believers cannot experience growth and development by functioning in isolation from others (1 Cor. 12: 21). Spiritual growth is best nurtured in a relational community of faith whereby individuals are known, deeply loved, and held accountable to applying Jesus' teachings in their beliefs and actions.

A relational community of faith provides a developmental environment whereby emerging leaders can explore possibilities, sharpen their skills, and develop a broader understanding of how to reform their culture. Douglass' exposure to the scriptures as a youth, his discipleship relationship with Uncle Lawton, his discipler; and his participation in a relational community of faith, provided the developmental framework in him becoming a biblical reformer of his culture as a Gospel Movement Leader. For example, as Douglass engaged white churches in the north, he became cognizance that the Christianity practiced by slave-owning congregants was contrary to the scriptures.¹¹

Exploring the Apostle Paul's theology on community highlights the role of authentic relationships and how they enhance the shaping of character as a conduit towards growth and maturity of believers, and can assist them in understanding and walking into their destiny. Looking specifically at Paul's theological treatise on the body metaphor and interaction with house codes will provide the necessary understanding of the role of family in particular, and community in general, in the first century.¹² Paul's

¹⁰ Howard Hendricks, "Forward," in *Foundations of Spiritual Formation: A Community Approach to Becoming Like Christ*, ed. Paul Pettit (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2008), 11.

¹¹ Frederick Douglass, *Autobiographies: Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, My Bondage and My Freedom, Life and times of Frederick Douglass* (New York, NY: The Library of American, 1994), 361.

¹² Klyne Snodgrass, *The NIV Application Commentary: Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 293.

theology on the role of the church as community will elucidate a broader perspective on the development of Christian African American emerging leaders as Gospel Movement Leaders.

The Apostle Paul's Perspective from the New Testament

As the author of the majority of the epistles in the New Testament, the Apostle Paul has a plethora of insight and wisdom regarding the importance of authentic relationships in community of faith and their role in the maturation process of believers. He goes to great length to articulate the concept of the gathering of believers as “the body.” Also, he uses the illustration to communicate the interconnectedness of believers with Christ and with one another (Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:12-27).¹³

Pauline theology asserts that although there are many “members,” they are not to function as independent parts, but as one “body,” in unity and in the power of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:4). Believers operating in isolation, avoiding personal connection with other believers, and rejecting the accountability and authority of spiritual leaders, is antithetical to the Christological and ecclesiological perspective on oneness in the body of Christ. Believers existing in isolation rob themselves of emulating the Christlikeness in others who are committed to applying and practicing Jesus' teachings.¹⁴

Scripture challenges believers to steward relationships well in the context of authentic community (Eph. 4:32). Stewarding relationships well in the context of

¹³ Richard N. Longenecker, ed., *Community Formation: In the Early Church and in the Church Today* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 77.

¹⁴ Paul Pettit, “Introduction,” in *Foundations of Spiritual Formation: A Community Approach to Becoming like Christ*, ed. Paul Pettit (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2008), 19.

authentic community is biblically and theologically grounded in a Trinitarian framework whereby God’s Word, God’s Spirit, and God’s people, the church, resides.¹⁵ As Paul threads the metaphor of “the body” throughout several of his epistles, he gives contrasting instruction on each member’s conduct in a Trinitarian construct (Col. 3: 5-17). The empowering of the Holy Spirit is the fulcrum to living out the “one another” verses as chosen by God in Christ Jesus (Col. 3:16).

The phrase, “family of God” is equivalent to the metaphor, “the body,” although its use is more implicit throughout the Apostle Paul’s epistles. His perspective on believers functioning as a family, is consistent with his articulation of being members of one another in the body of Christ.¹⁶ Each metaphor provides pneumatological direction in how members are to relate to one another. Thus, it is through this interaction that believers’ character becomes apparent.

The Apostle Paul’s “Body” Metaphor

According to *The NIV Application Commentary*, Klyne Snodgrass explains, “The Greek term for body, *sōma*, is a foundational feature of the Apostle Paul’s theology as he makes a variety of different theological points.”¹⁷ In the book of Ephesians, the term “body” is used as a qualifier of Christ in relation to the church (Eph. 1:22-23). Snodgrass further explains, “Paul’s focus is neither on the church nor on the body, but on Christ,

¹⁵ Diane J. Chandler, *Christian Spiritual Formation: An Integrated Approach for Personal and Relational Wholeness* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 19.

¹⁶ Joseph H. Hellerman, *When the Church Was a Family: Recapturing Jesus’ Vision for Authentic Christian Community* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishers, 2009), 95.

¹⁷ Snodgrass, 78.

who is Lord of all things.”¹⁸ Paul’s Christological and ecclesiological theology establishes the fact that Christ is the reason believers are members of the body, the church. In several of his earlier letters he clarifies that the church is regarded as a body because its members are to be in community, together, with each other (Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 10:17; 12:22-27).¹⁹

Functioning in community with each other as believers also includes freedom to be uniquely different from each other in unity (Eph. 4:3). Greater emphasis is placed on the notion of the church functioning as a body in which Christ is the head in Paul’s letters to Ephesus and Colossae.²⁰ Consequently, it is critically important for believers to understand that Christ is head of a community of faith, the church, as one with full authority over their lives. For example, when Paul uses the Greek word, *ekklēsia*, which is often translated as “church,” it refers to the universal church, emphasizing his desire to bring together Jews and Gentiles in unity.²¹

Similarly, the same universal emphasis needs to be true for believers in this nation between the majority and minority cultures, especially in light of the current polarized racial tension. The tension between those from the majority and minority cultures outside the church has the same destructive effect inside the household of faith. The Apostle Paul

¹⁸ Ibid., 79.

¹⁹ Kenneth L. Barker and John R. Kohlenberger, *Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Abridged Edition*, eds. Verlyn Verbrugge and Richard Polcyn (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 6.0.23.

²⁰ Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid, eds. *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 78.

²¹ Merrill C. Tenney and Walter M. Dunnnett, *New Testament Survey* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 319.

gave clear imperatives on how brothers and sisters from different ethnic, gender, and cultural backgrounds were to serve one another through love (Gal. 2:11-14; 5:13).

According to Paul's imagery of the body, believers were to emulate Christlikeness to each other in the household of faith, in a redemptive way, to the world. However, the racial tension between Euro-Americans and African Americans reaches back to the seventeenth and eighteenth century whereby the systemic institution of slavery was founded on the misinterpretation of scripture and used to subjugate Africans and their descendants.²² Paul's admonishment to believers to be devoted, accepting, and forgiving of one another becomes a critical mandate to be lived out in the twenty-first century as a catalyst to demonstrating unity in diversity through Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 12:10; 15:7; Eph. 4:32). Therefore, to bring healing between believers and unity from different ethnic backgrounds today, the body of Christ must function as Paul mandates throughout his epistles.

Stanley Grenz articulates in his book, *The Moral Quest*, explaining, "The Apostle Paul's theology utilizes 'the body' concept as the community of faith being the primary context for living as believers."²³ Although believers are called to be members together in the body, sadly, this relational dynamic is not experienced on a consistent basis. And yet, God has created his people in his image, as interdependent members, who experience the most benefit from being together.²⁴

²² Nancy Koester, *Introduction to the History of Christianity in the United States* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015), 16-17.

²³ Stanley J. Grenz, *The Moral Quest: Foundations of Christian Ethics* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 124.

²⁴ Kenneth Boa, *Conformed to His Image: Biblical and Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 415.

Paul exemplified the truth of believers experiencing connectivity with each other in his own beliefs and conduct while clarifying this narrative to others (Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12:14-26). In both of these Pauline epistles, imagery of the body is that of “one body, many members,” of “diversity within unity.”²⁵ He goes to great length in clarifying biblical truths on how believers are to accomplish this praxis as a relational community of faith. Thus, as Christian African Americans engages with other like-minded believers in the body of Christ their attitudes and conduct conforms to the image of God.

Throughout Paul’s epistles there are a number of “one another” verses which provides a construct for engaging a community of faith that emulates Christlikeness, in the power of the Holy Spirit. In the book of Romans, Paul’s instruction to believers to be devoted, giving preference, being of the same mind, and accepting one another in the family of God are examples (Rom. 12:10, 16; 12:16; 15:7). Later in the book of Ephesians, Paul champions the role of the Holy Spirit as the one who will enable believers to actually reflect these characteristics in their ethical living (Eph. 5:18). In order for relationships in a community of faith to be authentic, believers must defer to one another’s interests as more important than their own along with speaking the truth in love, as the Holy Spirit transforms them from self-centeredness to other-centeredness (1 Cor. 13:4-7; Eph. 4:25; Phil. 2:3).

Furthermore, as the Apostle Paul gives believers imperatives on how to conduct themselves in a community of faith, he also gives equal commands on what not to do. In the book of Galatians, Paul admonishes believers to not provoke, consume or be envious of one another (Gal. 5:15, 26). His instructions on what not to do are essential to

²⁵ Hawthorne et al., 79.

implementing because failure to abide by them will disrupt and even destroy a sense of family in God's household. Instead, members of the body of Christ are to build up and encourage one another (1Thess. 5:11). Furthermore, Paul's consistent contrasting of what to do and what not to do is congruent with the whole of God's word, applied with the help of God's Spirit, and practiced among God's people to accept, forgive, and serve one another (Rom. 15:7; Gal. 5:13; Eph. 4:32).

Household Codes

Another aspect of the Apostle Paul's admonishment to the churches concerning relational dynamics came in the form of house codes. According to Gerald F. Hawthorne et al, in their book, *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, "Paul utilized this literary form to address relationships within Christian households."²⁶ Moreover, these codes provided needed instructions on how brothers and sisters in Christ were to conduct themselves in alignment with the moral authority of scripture by honoring, valuing, and respecting one another for the glory of God.

Believer's conduct with each other, inside the household of faith, required an alternate way of relating to each other, antithetical to Roman society. Roman society house codes were incongruent with scripture revealed in how they misused power to oppress the poor, the weak, and those without any authority.²⁷ Paul's ecclesiological motivation for these codes were to accentuate clarity of how different members were to

²⁶ Hawthorne et al., 239.

²⁷ Agosto, 14-17.

reflect the relationship between Christ and the church (Eph. 5:21-6:9; Col. 3:18-4:1).²⁸

According to the *New Bible Dictionary*, “The Greek word, *oīkós*, denotes a household, was familiarly used by Roman and Hellenistic Jews, as well as the Jewish world of the first century, as a unit of society.”²⁹ The existence of households was commonly utilized and accepted in the first century (Rom. 16:10-11; 14-15; 1 Cor. 1: 16, 16:19; Philem. 2). The utilization of Christians practicing Pauline house codes created a caring community full of acceptance, being known, and sense of belonging, which was dissimilar with Roman culture.³⁰

Christian households were attractive to those outside the household of faith because of their Christ-centered actions towards each other. The implementation of house codes by Christian households created communities of caring believers. Moreover, these households were relationally loyal, socially inclusive, and possessed a social justice voice to those dominated and oppressed by Roman hierarchical groups.³¹

A Christian household served as a relationally rich community of faith in the first century. The Apostle Paul’s use of household imagery strengthens the idea of the people of God as a living and growing family whose relationships are characterized by mutual love, care, protection and a sense of identity and belonging for believers.³² The gathering

²⁸ Hawthorne et al., 239.

²⁹ Marshall et al., 363.

³⁰ Snodgrass, 294.

³¹ Hellerman, 63.

³² Hawthorne et al., 418.

of believers, as a church, in people's homes, is not commonly seen in the twenty-first century.

Paul's ecclesiological principles of Christian households included brothers and sisters from diverse backgrounds, culture, and ethnicities functioning as a family unit. The relationality of believer's conduct towards one another is to be one of the most significant attributes of a church body. House codes are increasingly realized among current communities of faith as Pauline theology is taught, studied, and applied through biblically sound teaching in the life of believers (Eph. 4: 17-24; 5:1-2; Col. 3:5-11).³³

Christianity can emphasize its influence through the use of believer's homes in this century, as were true in the first century. Guy contends, "The New Testament gives clear evidence on the implementation of house churches based on households of people becoming believers, which grew to numbers beyond any one person's given house (Acts 2:46; 12:12; 20:8; Rom. 16:5, 23; 1 Cor. 16:19; Col 4:15; Philem. 2)."³⁴ The expansion of house churches marked the acceleration of Christianity in Jerusalem and beyond (Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 1:8).

Current churches that practice Pauline house codes functions as communities of love, affirmation, respect, and belongingness. Communities with these qualities can be attractive to this generation of Christian African American emerging leaders as they develop towards becoming Gospel Movement Leaders. The interdependent relationality of believers sharing all they have with one another, studying and applying Jesus'

³³ Boa, 420.

³⁴ Laurie Guy, *Introducing Early Christianity: A Topical Survey of Its Life, Beliefs, and Practices* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 23.

teachings together, as well as holding each other accountable can be a credible setting for those disillusioned by the lack of these qualities in current communities of faith.³⁵

The Apostle Paul further accentuates the idea of relationship in the context of a community of faith through the “one another” verses articulated throughout his epistles. The “one another” passages, when applied and practiced among believers, are the impetus for the growth and development of character formation (Col. 1:28). Believers functioning in isolation, separated from others, are not able to fully experience the reality of these truths in their lives.³⁶

The community of faith, the church, is the eschatological community of love, which is designed by God to be the place where his people are inwardly transformed through authentic relationships. Christian African American emerging leaders are in need of experiencing present day Pauline house codes in their communities of faith. Participating in these communities augments their relationality with others as their conduct is aligned to the moral authority of scripture as they become reformers of their culture as Gospel Movement Leaders.

The Church as Community

Following Pentecost, the first headquarters of the Christian church in Jerusalem consisted of new believers enjoying a sense of community, sharing, and fellowship (Acts 2:43-47). Communities of this nature welcomed outsiders, regardless of their background, and overcame divisions of gender, ethnicity, and class that characterized the

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Pettit, 21.

Roman world.³⁷ Although this new Christian community encountered challenges, they dealt with them together in the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 6:1-6). The mark of genuine and authentic participants in communities of faith is the impetus for believers relating to each other with humble servanthood motivated by divine love.³⁸ The quality of divine love becomes transformational in the hearts of believers and reflected in their conduct towards each other.

In his book, *Water from a Deep Well*, Gerald Sittser writes, “Community of faith members became attracted to proximity of fellow believers’ families, friends, neighbors and coworkers as they considered the teachings of Jesus’ through relational infrastructure.”³⁹ As was true with Jesus’ disciples, they desired to reflect Christlikeness among those they related to. Communities of faith personified Jesus’ teachings by becoming people of authenticity and proven character.⁴⁰ The transformation of an individual believer’s character had an impact among those around them.

Sittser further explains, “The Christian community provided a high degree of social stability, which caught the attention of people who lived throughout cities of Rome that seemed to teeter on the verge of social chaos, such as Antioch, the second hub of Christianity.”⁴¹ Christian African American emerging leaders desire similar social

³⁷ Gerald L. Sittser, *Water from a Deep Well: Christian Spirituality from Early Martyrs to Modern Missionaries* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2007), 56.

³⁸ Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 637.

³⁹ Sittser, 56.

⁴⁰ Grenz, *The Moral Quest*, 195.

⁴¹ Sittser, 60.

stability in their communities of faith in light of the current racial tension that exist in the nation.

House churches, as centers of relationally rich communities, served as environments for believers to receive instructions on interpersonal skills from scripture. The *Didache* was utilized by second century Christians to obtain astuteness on how believers were to fellowship, encourage, and help each other grow towards maturity in Christ.⁴² As second generation Christians felt loved, cared for, and known by others, they did the same for new converts.

House churches, as relationally rich communities, facilitated believers becoming interdependent and caring families inclusive of others.⁴³ Christian African American emerging leaders, who engage in relationally rich communities of faith, will experience healing from their toxic, traumatized, or broken past. As healing occurs, they will develop the spiritual fortitude needed to deal with life's challenges and painful realities, such as racial hatred, bigotry, and discrimination. In short, Christian African American emerging leaders, who participate in communities of faith, become effective Gospel Movement Leaders who impacts and influences their culture as biblical reformers.

A Theological Perspective from the Protestant Tradition

Abbie Smith says that emerging adults especially need to belong: "College-aged people change majors seven times, change churches ten times or abandon church

⁴² Thomas O'Loughlin, *The Didache: A Window on the Earliest Christians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 11.

⁴³ Guy, 48.

altogether because they are flighty. They do so because they don't know where they belong."⁴⁴ A relational community of faith is antithetical to isolation. And yet, emerging leaders are a part of a generation in which they no longer look to religious institutions to shape their spirituality. Authentic biblical communities of relationships with people who will unconditionally love, respect, and affirm each other is the type of community Christian African American emerging leaders will need for character and leadership formation.

John Wesley, of the Methodist movement, stands out as one who creatively captured and utilized small groups as relational communities of faith, which brought renewal to the church.⁴⁵ Relational communities of faith proved to be the necessary context for individuals to experience intimacy with one another along with affecting how members treated others, inside and outside the household of faith. Reformers such as Martin Luther, highlighted and contributed to helping others understand the relational view of God during the Reformation era.⁴⁶

Luther's theological perspective accentuated God's personhood as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in which all three co-existed together in relationship. All three persons of the Trinity are relationally engaged with humankind through forgiveness of sins, restoration and reconciliation to God because of Christ' death on the cross, burial, and resurrection from the dead.⁴⁷ The relational aspect of the Trinity gives credence to

⁴⁴ Abbie Smith, "Emerging Adults and Belonging," quoted in Holly Catterton Allen and Christine Lawton Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation: Bringing the Whole Church Together in Ministry, Community and Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 49.

⁴⁵ Reed, Osmer, and Smucker, 84.

⁴⁶ Chandler, 34.

⁴⁷ Reed, Osmer, and Smucker, 14.

God's view of relationships with him as well as prioritizing each other as brothers and sisters in Christ. God's own personhood sets the standard of conduct in which believers are to emulate with each other (Col. 3:16, 17).

In her book, *Christian Spiritual Formation*, Diane Chandler explains, "Other Reformers such as John Calvin, postulated the relational capacity of humankind being in right relationship with God through the restorative process of Christ as the second Adam and as the incarnate word of God."⁴⁸ Christ's relational and restorative qualities serves as the fulcrum to believers functioning in community with each other in a way that glorifies Christ and honors the Father. The impetus to imitating the relational view of God allows believers to be kind, compassionate, and forgiving to each other in a community of faith (Col. 3:12, 13). The aforementioned Reformers captured believers' vibrant relationship with God and authentic connectivity with each other as the utmost of God's created ordinances.⁴⁹

Karl Barth, likewise accentuated the relational view of God from the perspective of the husband-wife oneness in God's creation order as unique.⁵⁰ As a component of God's ordinances found in the Pentateuch, this relationship reflects levels of in-depth intimacy unlike any other human relationship. Chandler further explains, "A similar theological perspective dominated several other Protestant writers, such as Søren Kierkegaard, Paul Ramsey (a protégé of Kierkegaard) and Emil Brunner, all of whom

⁴⁸ Chandler, 35.

⁴⁹ Jonathon Morrow, "Introducing Spiritual Formation," in *Foundations of Spiritual Formation: A Community Approach to Becoming Like Christ*, ed. Paul Pettit (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2008), 41.

⁵⁰ Chandler, 35.

included the emotional dimension of relationality with God.”⁵¹ In short, this emotional dimension functions as a critical part of relationality in the marriage relationship along with experiencing vulnerability, a safe place, and the ability to bond in relationships as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, another Protestant theologian, gives credence to the household of faith as a platform for believers to experience the presence of God in connection with one another.⁵² In other words, without each other, there will be an absence of God’s Spirit, who uses others in the refining process of turning self-oriented focus to being others’ focus (Prov. 27:17; Phil. 2:3). Subsequently, this refining process is vital in reflecting the image of Christ to other individuals, to the family, to each other corporately as the body, and to society. Thus, as Christian African American emerging leaders participate in the body of Christ they are able to accomplish the fullness of what God intended for growth and development as they become Gospel Movement Leaders (Col. 1:24-29).

The Protestant writers brought theological credibility to the Trinitarian construct of a relational view of God.⁵³ God’s relationality in a community of faith is the crucible for the transformation of believer’s beliefs and behaviors. The Reformers articulated the vital role of relationality in their theological concepts, and this author submits that it is currently needed in the lives of Christian African American emerging leaders today.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York, NY: Touchstone, 1959), 117.

⁵³ Chandler, 41.

Cross-Cultural Community

The Apostle Paul, throughout his epistles, placed significant value on how believers from different ethnic, gender, and cultural backgrounds are to relationally connect as brothers and sisters in Christ (Eph. 4:1-6). Nevertheless, this connectedness, in the midst of diversity, provides the essence of God's supreme reign in the hearts and minds of his people when there is genuine and authentic relationality demonstrated in a community of faith.⁵⁴ Relationality is accomplished through the power of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection and experienced by those in the household of faith as an attractive transformational presence towards others who question the validity of faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. However, when brothers and sisters from diverse ethnic, gender, and cultural backgrounds take a step of faith to link together towards engaging on the topic of race, the unveiling of ethnic biases, prejudices, and racism can be exposed through awareness and the process of healing can take place through reconciliation.

As a part of a covenant relationship established between the two Christian organizations, The Impact Movement (Impact) and Campus Crusade for Christ (CRU), the latter has requested that Impact take as many field workers as possible through a cross-cultural training experience to equip them to effectively minister to people of color across the nation. LeRoy Johnson, president and CEO of Diversity, Inc., was brought in to facilitate the two day training. The majority of the participants and facilitators were campus field staff from Impact and CRU in the Mid-Atlantic region. Participants included ten people from the majority culture and ten people from the minority culture.

⁵⁴ Mark Lau Branson and Juan F. Martinez, *Churches, Cultures and Leadership: A Practical Theology of Congregations and Ethnicities* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), 12.

During the first day, the facilitator set specific norms clarifying that the topic for the training was race. The remainder of the day was devoted to pressing in hard on those of the majority culture through various questions posed to them in order to raise their awareness of systemic racism in this country. The environment was intentionally designed to create a context in which members of the majority culture experienced a glimpse of what people of color experience every moment of every day. Once the facilitator accomplished this goal, he went to every majority culture person and asked for forgiveness if anyone was offended by the initial exercise. Those from the minority culture were uncomfortable at times, as well as deeply affirmed and valued at other times.

The facilitator intentionally created an environment in which to discuss the topic of race by raising people's awareness through exercises that catapulted them towards admitting their own biases, attitudes, and prejudices. He accomplished this task by entering into the room without any introduction of himself. He used silence to highlight internal judgments, attitudes, and biases participants would likely form about him based on his rudeness.

He intentionally wore a black suit to intimidate those from the majority culture. Whenever he asked a question or clarified a point, he would do so with a strong tone, spoken in a high octave voice, and continuously interrupted those from the majority culture who attempted to contribute to the discussion. His intentionally rude actions created a purposeful environment of hostility, intimidation, and distrust towards members of the majority culture.

The facilitator treated those from the minority culture in an opposite fashion. Whenever he would press in hard towards someone of the majority culture, he would

invite someone from the minority culture to contribute towards the discussion, and affirm that person's position. He never spoke in harsh or negative tones to minority culture participants.

Although many from the minority culture were uncomfortable in how the facilitator treated majority culture participants, it felt affirming to have someone address the issue of racism with majority culture people. Before revealing the purpose of the exercise to everyone and offering reconciliation to those of the majority culture, he accomplished raising awareness towards racism. Moreover, this resulted in each person of the majority culture acknowledged that they are racist, and appreciated experiencing how those from the minority culture consistently feel the impact of racism daily.

The cross-cultural training exercise was successful because, in part, it created a relationally rich community of faith.⁵⁵ Every participant that showed up had made a commitment to follow the Lord and live out the teachings of Jesus' in their private and public lives. The reality of each person's commitment created an equal playing field for participants to engage in.

As a result, each person grew in their awareness of racism, whether it was from the perspective of the majority or minority culture.⁵⁶ Every participant trusted the president and CEO of Impact as a man of God, who invited the facilitator of the exercise. The facilitator was able to enter a room of trust, respect, and affirmation of each other until he changed the dynamic with his purposeful actions.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Reed, Osmer, and Smucker, 4.

⁵⁶ Hellerman, 1.

⁵⁷ James C. Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered: Growing in Christ Through Community* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 23.

It is a well-known truth that engaging in community can be very messy. When the facilitator pressed in harshly towards different participants from the majority culture, it disrupted a sense of comfortability with each other as well as creating feelings of anger and rage.⁵⁸ Oftentimes, these types of emotions drives members of community away, and allow them to remain in a state of separation from others. When this occurs, believers' beliefs and behaviors are less formative.⁵⁹ During the debrief session, one participant expressed his disdain towards the facilitator to the point that he felt like doing something physical towards him in a negative way.

A number of participants from the minority culture felt overwhelmed and uncomfortable when their brothers and sisters from the majority culture were treated harshly by the facilitator. The relationally tense dynamic mirrors the connectivity of members of the body of Christ, as they often identify with the emotions of others in community.⁶⁰ Unfortunately, there is a paradox between this truth and the current reality that the most segregated hour of the week is still eleven o'clock Sunday mornings. However, to bring about radical transformation and bring brothers and sisters together in a church setting from a diverse backgrounds, believers need to learn to function as the family of God towards each other.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Alistair I. McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood: A Christian Theory of the Individual in Social Relationships* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 9.

⁵⁹ Holly Catterton Allen and Christina Lawton Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation: Bringing the Whole Church Together in Ministry, Community and Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 48.

⁶⁰ Miroslav Volf, "Community Formation as an Image of the Triune God: A Congregational Model of Church Order and Life," in *Community Formation: In the Early Church and in the Church Today*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 233.

⁶¹ Hellerman, 95.

The task of coming together from different ethnic backgrounds can be very difficult. A majority of churches in the United States tend to prefer worshipping in a community of faith very specific to their ethnic and cultural beliefs and methods.⁶² Many members tend to prefer participating in what is familiar and comfortable.

There are some who are fearful to engage in a relational community with those different from themselves.⁶³ And yet, the Apostle Paul asserts that believers are to function as one body, regardless of racial differences (1 Cor. 12:12; Gal. 2:11-21; Eph. 2:11-22). If members of the body withdraw and protect their homogeneous habits and behaviors, there will be fewer gatherings similar to what Impact and CRU were able to accomplish, specifically on the topic of race.

Spiritual transformation consistently occurs in the context of a relationally rich community of faith.⁶⁴ Every participant of this exercise experienced this type of challenge to their character formation. The impetus of this change is God's word, God's Spirit, and God's people functioning in tandem with each other in community.⁶⁵

Isolation and individualism are antithetical to a relational context that results in growth and development. Yet, community can be complicated and the path towards growth has its challenges. As with the aforementioned exercise, when the socio-relationality of the community transitioned from positive to negative, connectivity among

⁶² Branson and Martinez, 17.

⁶³ Allen and Ross, 37.

⁶⁴ Pettit, 22.

⁶⁵ Hendricks, 11.

participants waned.⁶⁶ However, in the end, the intentional act of reconciliation served as a catalyst towards communal restoration.

The cross-cultural training exercise represents an alternative perspective for brothers and sisters in Christ from different ethnic backgrounds to come together in unity (Eph. 4:3). The prescribed cross-cultural training exercise serves as a viable option because of the continued reality that in the twenty-first century, the most segregated hour of any given Sunday among most churches is still at eleven o'clock.⁶⁷ However, the Impact Movement and CRU, which currently exist in a covenant relationship, established an egalitarian platform in which to engage in the emotionally volatile issue of racism.

Participants engaging in the issue of race took place outside of the church setting. They were able to capitalize on the foundation of being brothers and sisters in Christ as the premise of the exercise. However, the practice of the aforementioned organizations does not, in any way, negate the feasibility of churches serving as conduits for similar platforms.

Conclusion

The requirement for Christian African American emerging leaders to become biblical reformers, who impacts and influences their culture, involves the process of becoming Gospel Movement Leaders.⁶⁸ Gospel Movement Leaders consist of studying

⁶⁶ McFadyen, 114.

⁶⁷ Martin Luther King, Jr., "The Most Segregated Hour in America," Meet the Press-TV Interview, April 30, 1960, accessed August 28, 2017 on YouTube, <https://google.com/search?q=most+segregated+hour+in+america+quote&oq=most&aqs=chrome.1.69i57j35i39j012.3375j0j4&sourceid=chrome-mobile&ie=UTF-8>.

⁶⁸ Spencer, Spencer, and Haddad, 2.

the scriptures, engaging in a discipleship relationship, and participating in a relationally rich community of faith. As Christian African American emerging leaders commit to availing themselves to becoming characteristic of this type of leader, they obtain the necessary spiritual fortitude in engaging relationally and socially with others regarding the issues of their culture from the moral authority of scripture, as Frederick Douglass exemplified in his day.⁶⁹

Christian African American emerging leaders participating in relational communities of faith will develop proven character and leadership. Proven character developed in the lives of these leaders will provide hope for the prevailing leadership crisis existing in the African American community today (Rom. 5: 3-5). In short, it is these types of godly leaders needed to eradicate the current character and leadership crisis that exist in the African American community and in various sectors of society.

In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul specifically provides clarification on the role of a relationally rich community of faith. A relationally rich community of faith does not rest on biblical intellect and skills alone. The difficult work of character formation while engaging with others determines how believers live out connectedness with each other (1 Cor. 13:1-2; Gal. 5:22-23).⁷⁰

A relationally rich community of faith aids in the transformation of believer's attitudes and conduct with one another. In time, believer's transformed behavior will overflow to those outside the household of faith (Matt. 5: 16). The practical application of

⁶⁹ James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, & Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 253.

⁷⁰ Reed, Osmer, and Smucker, 44.

the Apostle Paul's imperatives provides a basis for how the family of God should conducts themselves with each other, and in doing so, refines and reshapes the beliefs and actions of individual members of the body of Christ (Eph. 4:32; Phil. 2:2-3; Col. 3:12-16; 1 Thess. 5:14-15).⁷¹

The Apostle Paul's elucidates further on the topic of the church, the household of God. In describing the members of this household, Paul provides prodigious instruction on the conduct and relationships proper to this institution, the church, in his use of the pattern of order known as household codes.⁷² How believers conducted themselves among each other was of critical importance as they exemplified the application of Jesus' teachings to the pagan world around them.

According to the *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, "The Greek word, *oikeïos*, consisted of members of the immediate family, and included others, such as slaves, freedmen, servants and laborers."⁷³ Also, these households were a relationally rich and diverse communities of faith. In short, relational communities of faith created space for everyone to be welcomed and a part of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12: 12-13).

A metaphor consistent with Paul's theology includes the imagery of the "body" denoting his desire to communicate to the universal church that people from all different backgrounds are welcomed as members.⁷⁴ The body imagery is inclusive of everyone as a part of the relational community of faith. Living in community made up of diverse

⁷¹ Boa, 431.

⁷² Hawthorne et al., 417.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Tenney and Dunnett, 319.

members, the church must demonstrate to each other divine love from the Father, which enables the church to carry out its prophetic witness to the world.⁷⁵ Active demonstration of the divine love of the Father extends believers' influence and impact their society through relational connection. The manner in which believers conduct themselves with those in the body of Christ serves as a prerequisite to emulating the same relational dynamics towards those outside the household of faith.⁷⁶

Grenz clarifies, "The Apostle Paul emphasized the church as a relational community of faith existing as a collective group of believers' fellowshiping and bound together by the love present among them through the power of God's Spirit."⁷⁷ God's divine love revealed among the believers is unconditional in that it bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things (1 Cor. 13:4-7). God's love demonstrated by his people in this way becomes an attractive environment for Christian African American emerging leaders as they become realigned to the biblical priority of participating in communities of faith (Heb. 10: 24-25).

Also, the Apostle Paul emphasized believers gathering together for mutual encouragement and edification as priority in each other's spiritual development (Rom. 12:10; 14:19; 15:14; 1 Cor. 12:25; Gal. 6:2; Eph. 3:2).⁷⁸ Paul admonished believers to mutually encourage and edify one another because he understood that these attributes ignited inward transformation towards Christlikeness. Inward formation develops

⁷⁵ Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 655.

⁷⁶ Snodgrass, 87.

⁷⁷ Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 637.

⁷⁸ Boa, 431.

believers that reform their culture and society from both orthodoxy and orthopraxy, as exemplified by Paul.⁷⁹

Similarly, in the Protestant tradition, the Reformers championed the scriptures along with emphasizing the relationality of God from a Trinitarian construct.⁸⁰ For believers to experience genuine authentic biblical community, God's Word and God's Spirit must be present among God's people. The transformation of one's beliefs and behavior is accomplished in the context of a relationally rich community of faith. When participants from two different faith-based ministries came together to discuss the controversial topic of race, they were able to do so because of the relational community of committed believers present.

Although the discussion got messy at times between the participants, God designed believers to go through life together because in his eyes they are family.⁸¹ God's family creates a crucible for character formation. The process of becoming Christlike in one's attitudes, beliefs and behaviors is accomplished in communities of faith. Thus, Christian African American emerging leaders participating in relational communities of faith will experience spiritual growth and development towards becoming Gospel Movement Leaders.

Life together in the family of God consist of sharing hearts together, staying and experiencing pain together as well as growing up with one another.⁸² Impact Movement

⁷⁹ Spencer, Spencer, and Haddad, 5.

⁸⁰ Chandler, 36.

⁸¹ Hellerman, 162.

⁸² Pettit, 22.

chapters on various campuses across the nation are providing this type of community for Christian African American emerging leaders. Isolation is antithetical to Christian maturity, but through active participation in a relationally rich community of faith characteristics of encouragement, support, teaching, love, exhortation, and prayer develops.⁸³ The Apostle Paul gives clear imperatives regarding the role of members in the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12-26). Thus, Christian African American emerging leaders must participate in a relational community of faith which will transform their character and leadership.⁸⁴

As emerging leaders experience family they will feel less loneliness, and more of being known and affirmed by relationships in authentic biblical communities.⁸⁵ Douglass practiced living out his faith among fellow believers from a relational and societal posture. Similarly to Douglass, Christian African American emerging leaders will possess the spiritual fortitude to engage in societal ills such as racism from the secure foundation of the community of faith. Then, like this predecessor, they will reform the course of history by socially and relationally engaging with others as they experience the transformation of their character and leadership as Gospel Movement Leaders.

Gospel Movement Leaders participating in a relational community of faith is connected to the right environment to practice applying how to relate to others as the Apostle Paul mandates throughout his letters in the New Testament (Eph. 4:32; Phil. 2:1-4; Col. 3:12-15; 1 Thess. 5:11). Leaders who function in isolation will experience decline

⁸³ Boa, 426.

⁸⁴ Clinton, 167.

⁸⁵ Morrow, 41.

in their character formation because it is antithetical to the scriptures. Instead, God desires his people to exemplify love, care, belongingness, and accountability in living out Jesus' teachings.

As believers live out Jesus' teachings among each other, they come together for fellowship, worship, scripture studying, and outreach to those outside the household of faith. Leaders who grow in spiritual maturity, their attitudes and actions becomes characteristic of pleasing God in all they do. In short, a relational community of faith is the supportive network Gospel Movement Leaders must have as they engage in addressing societal ills, such as racial hatred, similar to Douglass.

CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY

This research has established that the current reality of race relations between African Americans and Euro-Americans is in a state of decline. The deterioration of race relations has led to the continuing existence of racial bigotry, hatred, and violence felt by African Americans from those that consider them less than human. Moreover, this corrosion of race relations mirrors Frederick Douglass' era, in which he was compelled by his love for all humankind to provide solutions from the moral authority of scripture.

Unlike his day, the African American community is faced with a crisis of leadership in addressing such vehement hatred directed towards them. The absence of clearly defined leadership towards this issue has been felt since the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. Moreover, this absence of leadership has allowed the resurgence of Klu Klux Klan and Jim Crow activities from the past masquerade in color blindness today.¹ As race relations spiral out of control, this current crisis demands a response.

The genesis of race relations between African Americans and Euro-Americans reaches back to the seventeenth century, when Africans were brought to the new world and enslaved by the slave holders as free labor for economic gain.² The immoral, unjust, and systemic institution of slavery was a societal ill that created a critical need for leadership in the African American community. In short, this crisis of leadership would be addressed by Frederick Douglass during his era, evoking many in the African

¹ Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness: Revised Edition* (New York, NY: The New Press, 2012), 37.

² Mark A. Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 8.

American community today to ask the question, who will arise to meet the current critical need for similar leadership.

Frederick Douglass exemplifies a leader of transformed character, who was called by God to engage with the issue of slavery from his biblically astute and theologically cohesive core beliefs.³ Douglass' core beliefs were developed by studying the scriptures, engaging in a discipleship relationship, and participating in a relationally rich community of faith. Furthermore, Douglass was able to impact and influence his culture, as a biblical reformer, by mobilizing thousands of African American men to enlist in the Civil War to fight for freedom and equality, along with serving as an advisor to Abraham Lincoln.⁴ In short, Douglass' conversion to Christ in his youth, along with being taught how to study the scriptures through a discipleship relationship, and serving as a pastor as a free man, provided him the spiritual grounding to reform his culture as a Gospel Movement Leader.

A Gospel Movement Leader, is one who engages in a developmental process to become a biblical reformer of their culture. It is through their biblically astute and theologically motivated core beliefs that they are formulated and grounded by studying the scriptures, engaging³ in a discipleship relationship with others, along with participating in a relational community of faith. Moreover, Douglass as a Gospel Movement Leader was able to bring solutions to existing social ills in his culture.

Douglass took responsibility to address such issues as racial hatred, bigotry, and blatant discrimination, as he lived out the moral authority of scripture through his

³ Nancy Koester, *Introduction to the History of Christianity in the United States* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015), 10.

⁴ Frederick Douglas, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass: The Illustrated Edition* (Minneapolis, MN: Zenith, 2015), 142.

Christian worldview with a social justice voice. The scriptures served as the foundation of the life of a Gospel Movement Leader. As the scriptures becomes an intricate part of the spiritual DNA of Gospel Movement Leaders, they are able to reform their culture as biblical reformers from their biblically astute and theologically cohesive core beliefs. Thus, Gospel Movement Leaders, as biblical reformers, provides solutions to crisis of leadership problems, as Douglass emulated during his era.

Currently, the African American community is faced with a similar crisis. It is a crisis of leadership in providing solutions to critical issues of the day. Mass incarceration, inferior schools, and high unemployment among black youth, blatant racial discrimination, and intense police brutality are several examples.⁵ Consequently, this crisis of leadership demands a response. This author submits that one response to the aforementioned crisis is the transformation of Christian African American emerging leader's character and leadership as Gospel Movement Leaders, similar to Frederick Douglass.

Furthermore, this developmental process involves the three elements of scripture study, engaging in a discipleship relationship, and participating in a relational community of faith. As these emerging leaders engage in becoming Gospel Movement Leaders they will develop the spiritual fortitude needed in addressing current injustices through the moral authority of scripture that formulates their biblically astute and theologically cohesive core beliefs as biblical reformers of their culture.

⁵ Cornel West, "Forward," in Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness: Revised Edition* (New York, NY: The New Press, 2012), x.

With the aforementioned components of a Gospel Movement Leader in mind, this final chapter will comprise of a summary that captures the central themes of previous chapters and make the case for the value of Christian African American emerging leaders becoming a generation of Gospel Movement Leaders that addresses the leadership crisis problem in the African American community providing solutions to societal ills, such as racial hatred, based on the moral authority of scripture, as Douglass exemplified in his cultural milieu.

Studying the Scriptures

In addressing the concept of a developmental process needed to mature African American emerging leaders in their character and leadership to become Gospel Movement Leaders, the scriptures are a vital foundational component of a process of growth and maturity. Specifically, the scriptures serve as the basis for the Holy Spirit's work of sanctification. At the heart of the Holy Spirit's work is a Trinitarian framework involving the inward transformation of a regenerated believer through a gradual and lifelong process of becoming Christlike in their character over time.⁶

The process of sanctification begins with believers studying and applying the scriptures. the scriptures refines and reshapes believer's attitudes and actions in how they relate to others, discern God's will, and develop spiritual fortitude to deal with social ills, such as racial hatred in a manner pleasing to God. While the believer is exposed to scripture, the Holy Spirit works in tandem with the scriptures to accomplish the inner work of transformation in the mind and heart of a believer. The scriptures, through the

⁶ Anthony A. Hoekema, *Saved by Grace* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 30.

power of the Holy Spirit, changes believer's thoughts and desires to reflect God's standards and desires.⁷

Believers who do not consistently study and apply the scriptures will regress to their old nature because they will lack basic knowledge of biblical standards and principles (Gal. 5:16-26). The Apostle Paul, throughout his New Testament epistles, articulates the importance and criticalness of scripture in the life of a believer (2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16, 17). The scriptures enables them to effectively navigate the battle replacing their former attitudes and conduct with ways that please God (Col. 3:5-17).

Sanctification is a manifestation of the ability to live and please God in actions, over time. The scripture serves as the standard for believer's conduct. It is by the Holy Spirit's regeneration and sanctifying work that believers are moved to not only read the scriptures, but desire to live according to Jesus' teachings.⁸ When faced with a decision, a believer can first access biblical principles acquired through ongoing study of scripture, and then choose to surrender, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to the will and standard of a moment by moment choice (Eph. 5:18). Believers yielding control of their lives to the Holy Spirit enables them to choose to live for God, thereby overcoming sin.⁹

Furthermore, sanctification starts at the moment of conversion, similar to justification.¹⁰ And yet, it is simultaneously a gradual lifelong process as believers surrender their lives to applying and practicing Jesus' teachings. Moreover, this

⁷ R. C. Sproul, *Pleasing God*, 2d ed. (Crawfordsville, IN: Ligonier Ministries, 2013), 190.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 189.

⁹ Hoekema, *Saved by Grace*, 196.

¹⁰ Anthony A. Hoekema, "The Reformed Perspective," in *Five Views on Sanctification*, ed. Stanley Gundry (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987), 72.

progressive perspective endorses the concept of spiritual formation as believers study, apply, and practice biblical truth.¹¹ Sanctification, as a progressive process, provides hope for believers, that whenever they regress they can return to walking with Jesus through a restorative process of repentance. Without consistent exposure to preaching, teaching and personally studying the scriptures, believers will cease to mature in their Christian life.

The scriptures through the work of sanctification play a vital role in the maturation of Christian African American emerging leaders becoming biblical reformers as Gospel Movement Leaders. For by study of the scriptures emerging leaders will come to recognize where and how cultural practices run afoul of biblical standards, much like Douglass did. For it was only when Douglass was exposed to the scriptures that he was able to identify the chasm between the Christianity of Christ and the Christianity of the land. Douglass writes, “The frequent hearing of my mistress reading the Bible aloud, for she often read aloud when her husband was absent, awakened my curiosity in respect to this mystery of reading, and roused in me the desire to learn.”¹²

It was through his exposure to the scriptures that Douglass understood his pathway from being released from the shackles of slavery to freedom. Embracing the concept of studying the scriptures, is a central practice for The Impact Movement, a campus ministry. Moreover, this campus ministry utilizes these methods such as inductive bible study, or manuscript study, to develop Christian African American emerging leaders in the moral authority of scripture in which they must base their perspectives and actions as biblical reformers of their cultural milieu. Thus, when Impact

¹¹ Ibid., 77.

¹² Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass: The Illustrated Edition*, 38.

students struggle to formulate thoughts about and responses to racial aggressions on campus, they first wrestle with biblical notions of justice, agape love for all humankind, and the place of ethnic identity in the Christian faith.

Through the hearing, studying and practicing of the scriptures with other believers, these three elements becomes the foundational core of believer's lives (Matt. 7:24-27). Christian African American emerging leaders, such as those involved in The Impact Movement, possess a spiritual base upon which the development of inward transformation takes place in their attitudes and conduct. As these emerging leaders grow in assurance of their salvation, they become confident in who they are as children of God.

Assurance of salvation provides believers with solid spiritual grounding. Spiritual grounding enables them to withstand and counter others who present themselves with the misinterpretation of scripture to justify their inhuman behavior, such as slaveholders did to oppress, subjugate, and dominate enslaved African Americans during Douglass' era. Also, as these emerging leaders are grounded in the scriptures, it formulates their spiritual DNA, which will enable them to address and counter modern-day slavery, such as being treated as inferior, labeled as monsters, along with being threatened and harassed by white supremacy group's evil actions towards them.

Christian African American emerging leaders who are grounded in the scriptures experience a reshaping and redefining of their ethnic identity in their process of spiritual formation. The scriptures become the truest thing about them because it is what God, himself, says about them in his word. As emerging leaders embrace their ethnic identity as African American children of God, this sets the stage to withstand all forms of attack

against their self-image as they engage in addressing racial hatred, bigotry, and prejudices from others.

As Christian African Americans emerging leaders grow in their identity in Christ, they become less likely to allow others to redefine them through their narrow-minded and racist narratives. Similar to Douglass, who encountered similar discrimination during his era, the scriptures will enable them to create their own narratives of their ethnic identity based in biblical truth. In short, Christian African American emerging leaders, whose identity is grounded in biblical truth; live out truth among others.

Engaging in a Discipleship Relationship

Christian African American emerging leaders engaging in a discipleship relationship is another component necessary in becoming a Gospel Movement Leader. A disciple is understood as one who is grounded in Jesus' teachings.¹³ Grounding emerging leaders in a biblically astute and theologically cohesive developmental process is critical to transforming their character and conduct, both privately and publically.

The absence of biblical discipleship alters the growth process, which can result in disobedience, loss of love for God and others, poor prayer life, and no desire to apply or study the scriptures.¹⁴ A disciple of Jesus is an apprentice who is whole-heartedly surrendered to his authority and bears the fruit of obedience based on his teachings.¹⁵

¹³ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 36.

¹⁴ Willie Richardson, "The Church's Role," in *Evangelism & Discipleship in African-American Churches*, eds. Lee N. June and Matthew Parker (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 57.

¹⁵ Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* (San Francisco, CA: Harper Collins, 1997), 287.

Subsequently, this implies that the believer has made a commitment to not go the way of their own choosing but instead, adherence to the commands of Christ. Thus, a call to be a discipleship of Christ requires being intentionally focused on and surrendered to the word of God (Matt. 19:23-26).¹⁶

A discipleship relationship is more than just teaching and training. It involves spiritual companionship between a discipler with a disciple whereby the discipler models how to apply the wisdom, insight, discernment, and understanding from scripture towards life's challenges, difficult decisions, as well as comfort and healing to a believer's pain and brokenness.¹⁷ A discipleship relationship also includes modelling being a follower of Jesus as a way of life. In short, a discipleship relationship is the application and practice of utilizing scripture in the midst of everyday life's choices towards spiritual maturation.¹⁸

Jesus' commandment to make disciples of all nations extends to every church, including churches in the African American community (Matt. 28:18-20). Solving the current challenges such as police brutality, massive incarceration of African American men and blatant discrimination, require intentional commitment levels like that of the Apostle Paul, who sacrificed even unto death, or Douglass who risked his life first to read, then escape slavery, and eventually challenge the entire system of chattel slavery. This author submit that this level of fortitude and sacrifice can be developed in the

¹⁶ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1959), 87.

¹⁷ Kenneth Boa, *Conformed to His Image: Biblical and Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 374.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 375.

context of a discipleship relationship, not unlike Douglass' relationship with his spiritual father, Uncle Lawton.

There is a genuine desire of African American pastors to have their flock and communities experience transformation through their church. There is a commitment to see the development of a spiritually mature generation of Christ-centered leadership engaged in reforming their culture as Gospel Movement Leaders.¹⁹ What is required to see this accomplished is more than desire. Desire needs to be accompanied with practical implementation of discipleship relationships. William C. Turner, in his book, *Discipleship for African American Christians*, explains, "There are some African American pastors who assert that they have made discipleship a priority and implemented it in their churches."²⁰ However, any successful leadership training must include studying the scriptures and discipleship as elements towards the development of biblical reformers as Gospel Movement Leaders.

Christian educators postulate that discipleship relationships are intertwined with other events in the church, such as Sunday school classes, auxiliary clubs and prayer sessions, along with the educational department of churches.²¹ Also, similar pastors argue that these relationships are demonstrated through observing church covenant

¹⁹ Tom Skinner, "Personal Reflections on Evangelism Among African Americans," in *Evangelism & Discipleship in African-American Churches*, eds. Lee N. June and Matthew Parker (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 31.

²⁰ William C. Turner, Jr., *Discipleship for African American Christians: A Journey through the Church Covenant* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2002), 2.

²¹ Roland G. Hardy, "Christian Education: Making the Process Work," in *Evangelism & Discipleship in African-American Churches*, eds. Lee N. June and Matthew Parker (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 93.

commitments such as the Lord's Supper, baptism and other gatherings.²² Although, this perspective has its place, it does not take into consideration the younger generation's desire for individualized transformational relationships demonstrated between Jesus and the Twelve. The absence of discipleship relationships in African American churches create unattractive environments for Christian African American emerging leaders.

The Impact Movement is addressing this need on a national level. Individualized discipleship is at the heart of their methodology. Students are challenged through one-on-one small group relationships to become astute studiers and appliers of scripture to questions of personal integrity, career choices, and their contribution to the community at large. Most transformative is the access to an intentional relationship with a stronger, older believer who can model both right choices and repentance from wrong choices.

Also, what is hugely significant is the commitment of the mentor to challenge and the commitment of the student to be challenged in a growing spiritual maturity. Twenty-five years of these practices have produced generations of emerging leaders for whom, this advice and suggestions shaped individualized destinies. Similarly, Douglass character and destiny was shaped by his discipler, Uncle Lawton.²³

The scriptures has a transformational role in the lives of Christian African American emerging leaders, but a discipleship relationship allows these leaders to see scripture modelled as they place themselves in environments to hear, read, and study, as Douglas experienced with Uncle Lawton. In the discipleship relationship, the discipler helps the disciplee to apply the scriptures in different areas of their lives. As the disciplee

²² Turner, 130.

²³ Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 1748, Kindle.

does so, they learn how to discern God's will for their lives, how to make ethical choices based on the moral authority of scripture as well as accountability to be responsible to live out the teachings of Jesus in their culture as a biblical reformer and Gospel Movement Leader. Simply put, it is not enough just to know the raw data of scripture; someone has to teach a disciplee what to do with the data to apply it in their lives, which produces spiritual maturation.

Similar to Douglass, the scriptures enables believers to love all humankind, regardless of their heinous treatment towards those different from them. Douglass chose to unconditionally love slaveholders who whipped, treated as property, and even put to death African Americans, because he was compelled by his biblically astute and theologically motivated core beliefs.²⁴ He was able to embrace love, rather than hate, because of his transformed character and leadership through a discipleship relationship. The Impact Movement decision to prioritize their students engaging in a discipleship relationship with others will successfully develop biblical reformers as Gospel Movement Leaders in this generation.

Participating in a Community of Faith

In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul specifically provides clarification on the role of a relationally rich community of faith. A relationally rich community of faith does not rest on being present and connecting to each other alone. Moreover, it involves the persistent work of the formation of a believer's character, which is revealed in the

²⁴ Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass: The Illustrated Edition*, 43.

behavior of how believers interact with one another (1 Cor. 13:1-2; Gal. 5:22-23).²⁵ A relationally rich community of faith aids in the transformation of believer's attitudes and conduct with one another, which will overflow to those outside the household of faith. As Christian African American emerging leaders participate in this type of environment, the Apostle Paul's imperatives provides a basis for how they can be included in the family of God to practice living out the scriptures among others, and in doing so, refines and reshapes their beliefs and actions (Eph. 4:32; Phil. 2:2-3; Col. 3:12-16; 1 Thess. 5:14-15).²⁶

The Apostle Paul's explains further on the topic of the church, the household of God. In describing the members of this household, Paul provides prodigious instruction on the conduct and relationships proper to this institution, the church, in his use of the pattern of order known as household codes.²⁷ How believers conducted themselves among each other was of critical importance as they exemplified the application of Jesus' teachings to the pagan world around them.

The Greek word for household, *oikos*, consisted of members of the immediate family, and included others, such as members of extended family members, which potentially included slaves, laborers, tenants, etc.²⁸ Christian African American emerging leaders are in desperate need of experiencing trust, love, being known and cared for by

²⁵ Angela H. Reed, Richard R. Osmer, and Marcus G. Smucker, *Spiritual Companionship: A Guide to Protestant Theology and Practice* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 44.

²⁶ Boa, 431.

²⁷ Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid, eds. *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 417.

²⁸ Ibid.

other maturing believers. In short, believers participating in relational communities of faith, as a part of the intimate family of God, brings healing to their brokenness, trauma, and pain.

A metaphor consistent with Paul's theology includes the imagery of the "body" denoting his desire to communicate to the universal church that people from all different backgrounds are welcomed as members.²⁹ The body imagery is inclusive of everyone as a part of the relational community of faith. Living in community made up of diverse members, the church is afforded an opportunity to demonstrate love for God and others, which provides a platform for it to display the light of Christ to the world (Matt. 5:14-16).³⁰

The manner in which believers conduct themselves with those in the body of Christ serves as a prerequisite to emulating the same relational dynamics towards those outside the household of faith. Believers demonstrate Christ's love for others by caring for the sick, giving to the poor, as well as embracing people from different races, genders, and cultures.³¹ Relational communities of faith provides leadership training for Christian African American emerging leaders becoming successful biblical reformers as Gospel Movement Leaders in their culture.

The Apostle Paul emphasized the church as a relational community of faith existing as a collective group of believers' fellowshiping and bound together by the love

²⁹ Merrill C. Tenney and Walter M. Dunnnett, *New Testament Survey: Revised* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 319.

³⁰ Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 655.

³¹ Klyne Snodgrass, *The NIV Application Commentary: Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 87.

present among them through the power of God's Spirit.³² God's divine love revealed among the believers is unconditional in that it does not keep account of other's mistakes. Also, God's love extends grace where needed as well as forgiving others (1 Cor. 13:4-7).

The primary purpose for believers connecting together is to create a context of spiritual growth in which they can reciprocally encourage and edify one another (Rom. 12:10; 14:19; 15:14; 1 Cor. 12:25; Gal. 6:2; Eph. 3:2).³³ Paul admonished believers to jointly encourage and edify one another because he understood that these attributes ignited inward transformation towards Christlikeness. Inward formation produce Christian African American emerging leaders, similar to Douglass, as reformers of their culture and society from both orthodoxy and orthopraxy, as exemplified by Paul.³⁴

Furthermore, for believers to experience genuinely authentic biblical community, God's word and God's Spirit must be present among God's people. The transformation of believers' beliefs and behavior is accomplished in the context of a relationally rich community of faith. God's family creates a crucible for character formation. The process of emulating Christ in a person's attitudes, values and conduct is accomplished in communities of faith.³⁵ Thus, Christian African American emerging leaders participating in relational communities of faith provides the needed environment for their inward transformation of character.

³² Grenz, 637.

³³ Boa, 431.

³⁴ Spencer, Spencer, and Haddad, 5.

³⁵ Holly Catterton Allen and Christina Lawton Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation: Bringing the Whole Church Together in Ministry, Community and Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 132.

The Impact Movement serves as a relational community of faith for Christian African American emerging leaders once they become regenerated believers as college students. These communities of faith grow to function as surrogate families whereby emerging leaders feel loved, known, cared for as well as a sense of belonging. There is a deep spiritual bond that forms the longer they stay together, oftentimes after graduation. As they hear, see modelled and practice living out the scriptures towards one another, they experience spiritual maturation. Thus, this relationally rich community of faith develops them towards becoming biblical reformers of their culture as Gospel Movement Leaders.

The practice of Christian African American emerging leaders in their local communities of faith serves as a critical environment for long term sustainability as developing leaders. The influence and impact of a relational network of support comprised of affirmation, love, and belongingness are God-given needs designed to be only met by connectedness with others. Successful leaders are not lone rangers, nor do they function in isolation. The relationality of a community of faith provides a safe haven for emerging leaders to process their emotional pain, trauma, and brokenness that comes with addressing issues of racial hatred. Once restorative healing takes place in a relational community of faith, their spiritual companions in community provides the strength to continue in the journey as Gospel Movement Leaders.

Frederick Douglass impacted and influenced his culture as a Gospel Movement Leader characteristic of studying the scriptures, engaging in a discipleship relationship, and participating in a relational community of faith. His character and leadership was transformed by his biblically astute and theologically motivated core beliefs that was

formulated and grounded by the moral authority of scripture. As a Gospel Movement Leader he was a biblical reformer that created solutions to the societal ill of slavery during his era. Similar to Douglass, Christian African American emerging leaders must participate in the same process of becoming a Gospel Movement Leader which will provide solutions to the current societal ill of racial hatred in this country.

Conclusion

Similar to Douglass' era, the racial tension between Euro-Americans and African Americans has strengthened due to acts of hatred by those who deem African Americans as an inferior race. History is a witness to the increasing violence directed towards African Americans since the campaign of this nation's current President. David Duke, one of his closest friends and a former imperial wizard of the Ku Klux Klan who is committed to helping return the dominance of white supremacy to this country, asserts, "The protesters (white nationalists at the 'Unite to Right' rally in Charlottesville, Virginia) were going to fulfill the promise of Donald Trump to 'take our country back.'"³⁶ Since the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., the African American community has experienced a crisis of leadership to address societal ills, such as the racial tension in this country that is spiraling out of control, evidenced by the aforementioned quote by Mr. Duke.

Racial tension between Euro-Americans and African Americans dates back to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when African American people were considered

³⁶ Janice Williams, "White Nationalist Rally Picked Charlottesville for a Reason, Virginia Town Has Long History KKK Activity and Racism," Newsweek, August 12, 2017, accessed September 20, 2017, <http://www.newsweek.com/white-nationalist-rally-charlottesville-virginia-650108>.

chattel slaves, which meant they were the sole property of slaveholders along with being upheld by the Constitution as three-fifths of a person. The unfortunate reality is that many slaveholders were Christians that justified the existence of the systemic institution of slavery from the scriptures. Moreover, this moral evil extended to viewing their slaves as chattel for personal economic gain. Alexander asserts, “The concept and practice of slavery exist today, but in an adaptive way, such as existence of the mass incarceration of African American men.”³⁷

The role of the scriptures is a critical component in becoming a Gospel Movement Leader. It serves as the foundation in the life of believers who become biblical reformers of their culture, such as Douglass exemplified during his era (Matt. 7:24-27). However, if scripture is not accurately and consistently interpreted, it can be misused for the purpose of subjugation, domination, and oppression of those without power, status, or rights, as seen in slaveholders during Douglass’ era.³⁸ When scripture is utilized in its proper interpretative context, it transforms leaders inwardly by demonstrating love for God and others. Simply put, the scriptures is the spiritual foundation of Gospel Movement Leaders’ core beliefs as biblical reformers.

A discipleship relationship is a necessary component of Gospel Movement Leaders because they possess the spiritual companion of a mature believer that teaches them biblical truth, trains them in how to apply the scriptures in everyday life, as well as speak with a prophetic voice against social injustice issues.³⁹ This growth process enables

³⁷ Alexander, 58.

³⁸ Spencer, Spencer, and Haddad, 9.

³⁹ Boa, 377.

leaders to access scripture in discerning God's will, making ethical choices, and become men and women of integrity over time. Also, a discipleship relationship involves the discipler holding the disciplee accountable towards doing what's right before God (Ps. 15:2). In short, a discipleship relationship provides spiritual companionship that helps Gospel Movement Leaders become successful biblical reformers of their cultural milieu.

Gospel Movement Leaders participating in a relational community of faith is connected to the right environment to practice applying how to relate to others as the Apostle Paul mandates throughout his letters in the New Testament (Eph. 4:32; Phil. 2:1-4; Col. 3:12-15; 1 Thess. 5:11). Leaders who function in isolation will experience decline in their character formation because it is antithetical to the scriptures. Instead, God desires that his people exemplify love, care, belongingness, and accountability in living out Jesus' teachings among each other as they come together for fellowship, worship, scripture studying, and outreach to those outside the household of faith.

As leaders grow in spiritual maturity their attitudes and actions becomes characteristic of pleasing God in all they do. A relational community of faith is the supportive network Gospel Movement Leaders must have as they engage in addressing societal ills, such as racial hatred, similar to Douglass. Also, it provides the training ground needed for leaders to practice unconditionally loving others, regardless of differences.

History is a witness to the impact and influence of Frederick Douglass on this nation. He addressed the societal ill of slavery compelled by his love for Jesus through conversion as a slave, receiving God's call while engaging in a discipleship relationship, and a renewed commitment to eradicating slavery as he participated in a relational

community of faith as a free man. Douglass' participation in these three elements developed him into a Gospel Movement Leader, which transformed his character and leadership into a biblical reformer based on the moral authority of scripture. As a Gospel Movement Leader he answered the leadership crisis of his day.

The three elements characteristic of a Gospel Movement Leader defined Douglass as a biblical reformer of his culture by his intentional desire to become free from the heinous systemic institution of slavery. His conversion to Christianity compelled him to love all humankind, although he vehemently hated the mistreatment of slaves by their slaveholders. It was through his discipleship relationship with Uncle Lawton that he discovered God's call to free himself as well as free other enslaved African Americans.

As Douglass participated in a relational community of faith he developed his leadership skills as a biblical reformer and influenced the nation as an advisor to President Lincoln during the Civil War. His impact and influence on this nation is still felt today. Similarly, Christian African American emerging leaders must become Gospel Movement Leaders with the same fervor and passion as Douglass to impact and influence this nation by providing biblical solutions to the continuous problem of racial hatred.

The current leadership crisis involving the issue of race demands a similar response. This author contends that as Christian African American emerging leaders become Gospel Movement Leaders characteristic of studying the scriptures, engaging in a discipleship relationship, and participating in a relational community of faith, similar to Frederick Douglass, they will offer solutions to the current crisis of leadership in the African American community. As they do so, they will obtain the spiritual fortitude needed from the moral authority of scripture to address and provide resolutions to

societal ills, such as racial profiling, police brutality, and the mass incarceration of African American men, from their biblically astute and theologically cohesive core beliefs.

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