I. Introduction

The church that God intends should be a light in the world where people are lost in darkness, a hope to the world where people are desperate in despair, and an agent to transform the world where people are morally and spiritually declining. The church that God intends should place a priority on raising mature disciples of Christ in order to fulfill the Great Commission of Christ. It is no exaggeration to say that the future of the church and world evangelization depends on discipleship training. The question is: “How is the church doing?”

Barna laments, “Almost every church in our country has some type of discipleship program or set of activities, but stunningly few churches have a church of disciples.”¹ There are thousands of churches that have discipleship training programs, but not many disciples of Christ are produced. That is “the crisis at the heart of the church” today.²

What is wrong with the discipleship ministry of the church today? Do the current practices of discipleship training produce transformation of life? If not, what is the problem? How can we improve discipleship training in the church?

To answer these questions, I will examine and evaluate the current

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practices of discipleship training for adults by using the three lenses of the Bible, adult learning theory, and house church discipleship training model. In conclusion I will make suggestions for the improvement of the practices of discipleship training.

II. Biblical Reflection on Discipleship Training

1. Word Study: Disciple, Make Disciples, and Discipleship

The word *disciple*, *mathetes/mathetria* in Greek, normally refers to a follower of a great teacher or master. In the first-century Greco-Roman world, this word designated adherents who had committed themselves to the teaching and beliefs of their teacher.\(^3\) *Disciple*, in Greek usage, denoted “an indissoluble personal relationship between disciple and teacher (*didaskalos*) in which the disciple imitates or emulates the teacher.”\(^4\) In the Gospels, in contrast to the crowds, the disciples of Jesus refer to those who obeyed Jesus’ call to follow him, either the twelve (Matt. 10:1-4; Mark 3:13-19) or a wider circle of disciples (Luke 6:13-17; 7:1-12, 17-20). By the time of the early church, disciples of Jesus meant believers or Christians who confessed Jesus as the Savior (Acts 6:7; 9:26; 11:26; 14:21-22).

The expression *make disciples* is the English translation of the Greek verb *matheteuo*. This verb was used just before his ascension, when Jesus commanded his disciples to multiply the followers of Christ (Matt. 28:18-20). To make disciples is the core of the Great Commission. The term encompasses the whole process and actions that make people disciples of Christ.

The word *discipleship* is a modern term derived from the verb *matheteuo*. It refers to the kind of life every follower of Jesus is to live or the process of a person’s growing in intimate relationship with Christ. Jesus’ call to discipleship demands a high cost (Luke 14:25-33), and the ultimate goal of discipleship is to become like Jesus.

Every Christian is therefore a disciple of Christ. This means that

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