

All Honor to The King- Challenges to Purify the Modern Church

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Introduction:

The effectiveness of transforming hearts through conventional discipleship philosophies of influencing minds, wills, and emotions within the modern Church is presented.

However, God transformed my life, and the lives of fellow Believers who love God, walk in the light, and walk in fellowship by revealing His unconditional love. Not when we merely embraced God's love, but when we were gripped by it, it was a great delight to bow to and honor Jesus Christ as Lord.

Therefore, it is proposed that effective discipleship must guide Believers to be empowered by God's love, to establish abiding relationships with Him, and to embrace the identity of God's Children.

And, when Believers are effectively disciplined, the hallmark of their lives will be genuine love for God and others. As the number of true Disciples grows, Brotherhoods will develop, transforming the culture and purifying the modern Church, bringing great honor to the Lord Jesus Christ.

God's Revealed Love to Me:

Because of my broken family, there was little adult interaction with my parents. Being a mean, grungy little boy who failed in school, teachers kept me at arm's length. To my benefit, I have not been very disappointed because I have so few expectations of adults, schools, or the Church. With little adult influence, I knew very little about anything, but God revealed His love to me, and He began to develop a friendship with me. God was slowly changing my heart, and when I was 11, amid many failures and sins, I began attending a local Bible Church. Sadly, other than a few Bible stories, I didn't find the needed challenges or love. I generally felt like an outsider, and in many ways still do. However, my friendship with God continued to grow, and He has sustained me through various trials for over half a Century.

When I reached 14, there was still little adult influence in my family, school, neighbors, and Church. Sadly, sins had crept into my life, but God dramatically revealed His unconditional love for me. The Grip of His love made it a joy to bow to Jesus Christ as the Lord of my life.

In the early years, my Church peers, who had attended Church their whole lives, would explain various Biblical teachings. Sadly, by the time we graduated from high school, most of them rejected the faith, pursuing sin and selfish desires. Because of their direction in life and where God was guiding me, there was little friendship with my peers through high school.

In college, God led me into a campus ministry that focused on discipleship. There was one-on-one mentoring, team discipleship, and we made valiant efforts to share the Gospel and encourage young Believers in the faith. The Church we attended during those years identified and practiced Biblical philosophies that made it the most dynamic local Church I have ever attended. Many in that Church demonstrated love and genuine hospitality. Between my ministry peers and that local Church, I developed

a vision for how the modern Church could glorify the Lord Jesus Christ through love, Brotherhood, and sacrificial love.

For the 50 years following graduation, I have consistently attended Bible-teaching evangelical Churches. Sadly, it has been difficult to find genuine love, and many sins have continued to creep in, even open sins, into much of the Church.

[Revelations of God's Love](#) describes more details of how God revealed His love for me. He gave me a glimpse of His power, authority, and holiness. *When we stand before the Lord Jesus Christ, there will be no room to argue or attempt to justify sins.* Being completely immersed in His love, He gave me the power and desire to confess, repent, and forsake my sins. When I have failed and repented, God's love has strengthened His grip on me. *The grip of God's love empowered me to bow to Jesus Christ as Lord, not out of obligation, fear, ritual, or religion, but as opportunities to express love back to Him.*

When I was younger and embraced the Lord Jesus Christ's sacrifice for my sins, God built a friendship with me. When His love gripped me, our relationship began to transition from friendship to a close, abiding relationship with Him. My constant awareness of Him has been the delight of my life. He has often prompted me to pursue some actions while avoiding others. When I don't listen, He uses the consequences and reproofs of life to transform my life, and His forgiveness strengthens the grip of His love on me. I have come to believe that one of God's highest purposes for Believers is to develop close abiding friendships with Him that will affect our relationship for eternity.

Great Expectations:

I didn't know much when I began attending Church, but as time went on, it was difficult to understand why so many of my peers from stable Christian homes rejected the faith before they graduated. They had all "received" Jesus when they were younger and were baptized. Who was I but a grungy, mean little kid whom the Lord Jesus Christ revealed His love to and built a close friendship with? While my earlier experiences with Church peers were dismal, involvement in a successful college ministry and attending a dynamic local Church enabled me to develop great expectations and hope for the modern Church.

All the local Churches I have attended have taught that Church leaders were spiritually mature and deserved great respect. Sadly, shortly after college, a continual parade of failures of Church leaders began. About a third of those whom I knew who pursued full-time ministry suffered major moral failures. Most lost their ministries, their marriages, and their families. There was one suicide. A Pastor, one who continues to be a friend, is interested in Church statistics. He reported that studies indicate that about half of all men in Church leadership struggle with major moral battles. Apparently, a high percentage of men and leaders are addicted to pornography. It is not known how accurate these statistics are, but they are consistent with the growing number of failed marriages, remarriages, and other failures within the modern Church. From where I came from, I never expected perfection, but decades of downward spirals within the Church have eroded my optimism.

Worse, as bad as many sins have been allowed to creep into the Church, most have not been widely addressed, which has allowed many sins to be openly practiced. More concerning is that some Church leaders attempt to Biblically justify them. It doesn't take much discernment to understand how sad all of this makes God.

Untapped Potential of the Church:

For over half a Century, I have had no or very feeble relationships with most Christians within the modern Church. What has been happy-sad is that I have friends who don't claim a Christian identity, but their loyalty, faithfulness, and dependability put most Christian "friends" to shame.

For many years, fellowship and friendships were commonly confused, and a common definition for fellowship was "two fellows in the same ship". I later came to understand that this definition is more appropriately applied to camaraderie, which was my experience in my campus ministry days.

Thankfully, God led me to meet a small group of Believers who demonstrated true fellowship. Once I had experienced it, I was then able to identify the Believer with whom there was friendship, and the most outstanding Believers with whom we walk in fellowship together. There are a few Church leaders in this group, but sadly, they are *very few*. Those who walk in fellowship demonstrate love and hospitality. God then revealed the truths in 1 John 1:6,7:

1 John 1:6,7 If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

I have come to believe that walking in fellowship is a reflection of walking in the light, which is a reflection of abiding with the Lord Jesus Christ. But if they are not walking in the light, they are probably walking in darkness. The implication is that many of those who do not walk in fellowship, despite their outward appearances, accomplishments, and proclamations, may be walking in the darkness (Matthew 7:23). *Therefore, they may not even know, understand, or be capable of recognizing true fellowship.*

As a side note, walking in the light and walking in fellowship is a central theme of the book of 1 John.

I make no claims to be the hallmark of walking in the light, but the contrast between those whom I have known who walk in fellowship and those who don't is like the difference between day and night. The distinctions between typical Church *friendships* and true *fellowship* are so great that it is extremely difficult to define fellowship to those who have not experienced it. The best that can be done is to describe the life of Believers with whom I have walked in fellowship. A few descriptions can be found in Appendix A. The most outstanding quality of their lives is their love for God, which I believe is the result of their being gripped by God's love.

Very sadly, despite what I was led to believe concerning Church leaders when I was younger, it has been disheartening how few leaders I have known who walk in fellowship. Worse, a large percentage of Church leaders *diligently* avoided close relationships. Looking back over the years, it appears that many Church leaders embrace a doctrine that "leadership shall not entertain close relationships within the Church". It is beyond my imagination to see how self-imposed isolation reflects active love, and such practices destroy the potential of fellowship. Regardless of how or why so many church leaders have avoided relationships and fellowship, it is suspected that their examples are partly responsible for a culture of *relationship avoidance* within much of the modern Church. Attending Church gatherings and then rushing out the door is not truly assembling together (Hebrews 10:24,25), but this is a very common practice that I have found within much of the modern Church.

Therefore, the urgent question is, "How can Believers be disciplined to develop abiding friendships with the Lord Jesus Christ, to walk in the light, and to walk in fellowship"?

Proposed Building Blocks to Transform Hearts:

I still mostly feel like an outsider, yet for different reasons. My childhood was not fun, but I am so thankful for how God has used those challenges to reinforce His unconditional love for me and build our friendship. Based on my own life and the lives of those whom I have known who walk in fellowship, they all exhibit three fundamental characteristics. The first is that they are *gripped by and empowered by God's love*. Not intellectual truths, values, determination, or emotions, but God's love empowers and motivates them to gratefully bow to Jesus Christ as Lord. Their joy in the Lord leads them to the second quality, to develop and maintain abiding relationships with the Lord Jesus Christ. And with transformed hearts, the third quality is embracing their identities in Him.

As Biblically foundational as these truths are, for inexplicable reasons, much of the modern Church has not appeared to *recognize these priceless gifts as critical discipleship challenges*.

The first challenge of Discipleship - The Power of God's Love:

Although the foundational truths of the Bible and the Gospel have been faithfully taught within the modern Church, the widespread absence of Believers walking in fellowship reveals that many Believers probably only have an intellectual grasp of God's love.

[Romans 10:9,10](#) If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and **believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.** ¹⁰ **For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.**

Believing and understanding something in the mind is extremely different than holding something in the heart. It is often said that some individuals will miss going to heaven by 18", the average distance between the heart and the head. The modern Church has placed tremendous emphasis and efforts to honor the Lord Jesus Christ, but without the heart being empowered by God's love, Believers must bow to Him out of obligation or duty, rather than being delighted to love Him. Sadly, there is significant evidence that many Church leaders are also not gripped by God's love.

Ultimately, salvation and the transformation of the heart can only be realized when individuals and Believers respond to God's revelations. In a few cases, possibly how God's love was emphasized when the Gospel was presented, some new Believers are quickly embraced by God's love. In my case, God clearly revealed His love when I was young. However, it appears that God's path for many is to work out their salvation over time, through trials and victories. Even with extensive Bible teaching and diligent spiritual disciplines, the lack of genuine fellowship exposes that God's love often remains only abstract for decades, denying many Believers the transforming power of being gripped by His love.

Therefore, the critical question of discipleship is, "How can Believers be guided and encouraged to not only understand God's love but to be embraced by it"?

[1 John 4:19](#) **We love because he first loved us.**

When Believers enter through the gate by faith (Matthew 7:3,14), they start on the narrow path that leads to God's love gripping them. Not because they are good, or smarter, or know more Biblical truths, but despite their grievous sins and the selfish desires of their hearts, they begin to be gripped by God's love. In light of their failures, their understanding is enlarged as they begin to see His forgiveness and mercy, which empowers them to *reflect love back to God and bow to Jesus Christ as Lord with great joy and thankfulness.*

Joshua 1:8 Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; **meditate on it day and night**, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

Therefore, to disciple Believers so their lives reflect love, it is proposed that *God's love, expressed through the Gospel, must be permeated into their hearts and minds.* As intensive Bible teaching and structured discipline have not consistently yielded love, *sincere efforts to diligently memorize scriptures, consistently reviewing, and zealous meditation have successfully helped Believers integrate vital truths into their hearts.*

However, memorizing and reviewing Scriptures must not be to gain knowledge or to complete an application, but to embed the truths of God's Word into the heart (Psalms 119:11, Psalms 37:31, Psalms 1:2, Colossians 3:16). Meditation will then yield wisdom and transform the heart.

Sadly, very few Christians discipline and humble themselves to memorize God's Word. I have found very few Church leaders who have led by example or promoted these critical disciplines. Conversely, most of those whom I have known who walk in the light and in fellowship have memorized and integrated significant Biblical truths into their hearts. They don't just know Biblical truths, but they are indwelt by them. It must be understood that the goal is not memorization, or even to accumulate Biblical knowledge, but *to be transformed by God's love and abide with the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the **power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.**

There is a wide spectrum of how the Gospel is presented, yet its true cornerstone is God's love (John 3:16). Therefore, it is proposed that *the path to effective discipleship is to guide Believers to integrate the truths of the Gospel into their hearts:*

1. The Lord Jesus Christ is perfectly holy and righteous (Colossians 1:16,17, Hebrews 10:31, Philippians 2:10,11).
2. Our selfishness, pride, and filthiness of our sins separate us from God (Jeremiah 17:9, Romans 3:23, Psalms 14:1, John 8:34, 1 John 2:15,16).
3. The Lord Jesus Christ's love is so magnificent that He became a man and allowed Himself to unjustly suffer to pay for the penalty of our sins (John 3:16, Romans 5:8, John 15:13, 1 Peter 3:18, Hebrews 1:2,3). Being God, when He rose from the grave, He conquered sin and death.
4. There is nothing we can do to earn *or* maintain God's love (Romans 6:23, John 3:6,7, Ephesians 8:8-9, Titus 3:5-7).
5. God's love for us is unconditional and removes our sins as far as from the East to the West. That when we confess our sins, He forgives us because He loves us (1 John 1:9, Psalms 103:12,13, Romans 8:32).
6. When God's Holy Spirit enters into an individual, they are regenerated (born again), and all things are made new (John 1:13, 1 Peter 1:3, 2 Corinthians 5:17). The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is the

foundation of developing a close personal abiding relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:9, John 15:7, Philippians 4:6,7, Thessalonians 5:16-18, Revelation 3:20, John 14:23).

7. God causes all things to work together for our good, including trials to perfect us and prepare us for spending eternity with Him (1 Corinthians 3:16, Galatians 2:20, Romans 8:37-39, 1 Peter 1:3,4, Romans 8:31,32, Romans 8:28, Romans 9:15,17, James 1:2-4).
8. Believers receive a tremendous inheritance when they enter into the family of God (Ephesians 1:11-14, 1 Peter 1:3-5, Romans 8:16-17). They are an important element of the Church body (Ephesians 2:19-22, Romans 12:4,5) and are commissioned to be Representatives of the Lord Jesus Christ (Luke 10:27, Matthew 28:18-20, 2 Timothy 2:2).

If memorization, review, and modest meditation are only engaged in to complete requirements or personal disciplines, the effectiveness will be greatly limited. However, if these disciplines are *diligently embraced*, God will use His Word to transform hearts and grip them with His love.

The [Discipleship Meditation System \(DMS\) - A Handbook for Mentors](#) includes most of the above-referenced scriptures and provides suggestions for mentors to challenge and guide Believers to be embraced by God's love and other vital discipleship challenges.

The Second Challenge of Discipleship- To Abide with The Lord Jesus Christ:

The foundation of being gripped by God's love (also the foundation of sincere faith) is the engine to transform hearts, but the spiritual power to maintain a pure heart is an abiding relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

John 15:5 I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

When a Believer's heart is truly transformed, their love will seek an abiding relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ (1 John 1:6,7). Then, as they abide with Him, He prompts them through His Word and prayer to die to their selfish wants and desires, to put others first (Philippians 2:3,4), to serve them (Mark 10:45), and to actively love others (John 13:34,35). Abiding friendships with the Lord Jesus Christ empower Believers to overcome their selfish wants and desires, and to walk in the light.

However, *as with all relationships, quality time is vital for developing depth, understanding, and trust.* Therefore, Believers must spend *consistent* quality time in prayer and in God's Word to develop abiding friendships with the Lord Jesus Christ. These spiritual disciplines must not just be check box activities, but an intimate time with Him. *The result of a mature, abiding relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ is a constant awareness and communication with Him.* The Handbook encourages mentors to guide and encourage Believers to maintain spiritual disciplines with the ultimate goal of building a friendship with Him.

The Third Foundational Challenge for Discipleship- To Embrace Identity in the Lord Jesus Christ:

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."

When Believers develop a friendship and ultimately abide with the Lord Jesus Christ, they become a conduit for God's power and love to transform them into Disciples. Then, as Believers are embraced by their identity in the Lord Jesus Christ, they receive the traction to be His faithful Representatives.

Romans 12:2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind...

With the power of God's love and abiding relationship with Him, as Believers embrace their identity in the Lord Jesus Christ, not only are their hearts, but their minds and their lives are radically transformed (effective discipleship).

1 John 4:7,8 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

The greatest evidence of these transformations is genuine, active love for God and for others.

John 13:34-35 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

Active love naturally guides Disciples to walk in the light and in fellowship with other Believers (1 John 1:7).

Elements of a Believer's identity are numerous. A few are discussed in [The Transforming Power of the Fruit of the Spirit](#).

When Believers embrace their identity, they receive hope, purpose, and guidance for God's design for their lives.

Conclusions of the Foundations of Discipleship:

The modern Church has incorporated conventional discipleship philosophies (discussed below). Regardless of some apparent success, it is proposed that to the extent that the Believers are gripped by God's love, develop an abiding relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, and are embraced by their identity in Him, they are transformed (discipled).

The evidence of discipleship is when Believers walk in the light, walk in fellowship, and are a beacon of God's love.

Conventional Paths of Discipleship:

Most Church leaders appear to hold that the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) is important, and it can be fulfilled through leading individuals to faith in Christ and discipling them. Who can disagree with that? However, when asked what the purpose of the Church is, there are a lot of varying opinions. More confusing, there is little consensus on what a disciple is, or how discipleship should be accomplished.

After a fair amount of consideration, I propose that the modern Church has mostly embraced three basic discipleship philosophies, which reflect their definitions of discipleship. Discipleship through "intellectual" teaching is probably the most widely accepted. Another segment of the Church embraces "disciplined"

discipleship. And the Pentecostal portion of the Church promotes maturity through spiritual experiences, or “*experiential*” discipleship.

These philosophies and practices ultimately attempt to transform hearts by influencing minds, subjugating wills, or evoking emotional responses (*mind, will, and emotions*). While each of these approaches appears to produce some success, each of them also yields unacceptably high failures, with even a fair number of individuals who walk away from the faith.

Philosophy 1: The Lord Jesus Christ presented public sermons, probably as part of His efforts to disciple the Apostles. Following this example and founded on God’s Word being living and powerful, much of the modern Church practices that if Believers are taught Biblical values and truths through intellectual teaching, sermons, obtaining appropriate credentials, and Bible studies, Christians will be transformed. Regardless of how good and noble these efforts are, if Believers are not gripped by God’s love, do not have abiding friendships with the Lord Jesus Christ, and are not embraced by their identity, it is proposed that, regardless of Bible knowledge, very few hearts and lives are genuinely transformed.

The philosophy is, “*if the right truths are taught, Believers will be changed (discipled)*”. However, despite over a Century of noble efforts to teach God’s Word, limited love, lack of moral purity, failed marriages, and many other failures demonstrate that “*intellectual*” discipleship has miserably failed to consistently produce Disciples. Intellectual indoctrination and persuasion have helped some, but the number of Believers whose lives reflect God’s love (John 13:34,35-true Disciples) is woefully few. Many leaders in the modern Church are renowned teachers and speakers, but how many of them are distinguished for their outstanding examples of love?

There has been significant emphasis on the importance of salvation, teaching God’s Word, encouraging Christians to submit to Jesus Christ as Lord, completing spiritual disciplines and applications, and the importance of accomplishing great things for His Kingdom. As important as teaching and knowing God’s Word is, it is extremely difficult to transform a Believer’s heart without the three previously proposed foundations of discipleship.

Philosophy 2: The Lord Jesus Christ also spent considerable time with the Apostles in small group settings. Through the ages, portions of the Church, including some of the modern Church, have attempted to accomplish discipleship through small groups, home groups, Bible study groups, Sunday School classes, youth, and other groups.

Local Churches form groups for several reasons, but it is suspected that the underlying goals are to challenge individuals to be more accountable (attempts at discipleship). One example, which has shown considerable success in changing lives, is addiction recovery programs, such as Celebrate Recovery (CR). Addicts are so adept at lying that a group of former addicts is needed to recognize lies and hold individuals accountable. Therefore, the level of the relationships within these groups is typically much closer than commonly found within the Church, and one-on-one sponsors are often assigned to individuals. Thus, these groups should not be compared to most of the general groups within the modern Church.

The mechanism for these programs is usually through strengthening individuals’ will. While these and even secular programs have helped countless individuals change their lives, it is questionable how many would claim that hearts are truly transformed. Especially since it is fairly common practice for members of

addiction programs to often affirm their area of weakness, such as “I am an alcoholic”. If the heart of Believers is transformed through the power of God’s love and they maintain an abiding relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, they can proclaim with confidence that they are a new creation.

The Methodist denomination, founded in the mid-1700s, was built on a philosophy, “*If a Believer practices spiritual disciplines, they will become Disciples*”. During the 1800s, much of the American Church and the culture promoted Godly living (discipleship) through strict, disciplined lifestyles, and much of that Church is still stereotyped as “puritanical Puritans.” The positive result is that many of the foundations of American culture rest on solid Biblical principles. However, when Americans do not have a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and strive to live by codes of conduct, they are often attempting to earn God’s approval through good works. As noble and beneficial as living by God’s standards are, when God’s love is not the primary motivation, such individuals are only “religious” Christians.

Today, because of the foundations of American culture, many parents attempt to instill Biblical rules and moral standards into their children. However, it is extremely difficult to meet these high challenges without being embraced by God’s love, so it is no surprise that high numbers of children from Christian homes reject the faith. God’s standards are always good, and appropriate discipline is very beneficial. However, all attempts to gain God’s approval through works are wrong and unacceptable to Him (Ephesians 2:8,9). Furthermore, the natural heart of man is very deceitful, so individuals will often outwardly appear to be changed, while still inwardly clinging to selfish wants and desires. Therefore, as important as appropriate discipline is, attempting to transform hearts through *disciplined* discipleship has a long track record of producing counterfeit Christians.

As a side note, it is proposed that the discipleship success of small group settings is highly dependent upon whether leaders are Shepherds or sheepdogs. This is not to criticize sheepdog leaders; they play important roles. However, leaders cannot give away what they do not possess. Leading groups through a book or class often has a very little impact on transformed hearts. Sheepdogs usually do a fine job keeping a group (flock) safe and together (or cranking through materials), but it is very difficult for them to guide Believers to be gripped by God’s love, or to develop abiding relationships with the Lord Jesus Christ if they have not met these challenges themselves. Therefore, while sheepdogs are valuable, they must be directed by Shepherds who will help them disciple those in their group.

Some small group programs have successfully helped individuals conquer addictions by strengthening their will. However, appearances of successful results must never be confused with the true transformation of hearts.

Philosophy 3: During the 20th Century, the Pentecostal movement promoted the philosophy that hearts can be transformed through life-changing emotional experiences. Their philosophy is “*if individuals have and continue to have the right emotional experiences, they will be empowered to be transformed (disciplined)*”. They believe their experiences are the result of the Holy Spirit, but from my perspective, the power of transformation is the result of being embraced by God’s love. And, it appears that some Believers are gripped by God’s love during their experiences, but apparently not all.

Furthermore, God commands Believers to test every spirit (1 John 4:1). The Lord Jesus Christ is a God of order, and when encounters are not consistent with the scriptures, such as out-of-control actions, making

noises of animals, and others, significant questions are raised. Therefore, not all Pentecostal practices should be claimed to be legitimate.

I have not spent a lot of time in Pentecostal Churches, but I have a few friends who testify to how God used experiences to change them. In America, most of these experiences appear to be ecstatic utterances. Given that ecstatic utterances are also practiced by various pagan cults and used to worship Idols, it is critical to discern if such encounters are truly the Holy Spirit or not. In foreign countries, especially where there is tremendous persecution against Believers, visions and supernatural healing appear to be more common. Many in the modern Church reject the legitimacy of all Pentecostal experiences, but I find it difficult to deny God's involvement in cases where individuals genuinely embrace faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and are gripped by His love.

However, some Pentecostal Believers, excited about their experiences, unwittingly create a significant problem when they overshadow the importance of God's love or their great need for forgiveness with the hope of experiencing fantastic emotional experiences. An example of this is when Pentecostal Believers insist that speaking in tongues is a requirement to be genuinely born again. Such doctrines err on several levels, but the enticement of receiving Jesus to have fantastic encounters can easily replace the true Gospel with a prosperity Gospel. One of the most consistent examples of promoting the prosperity Gospel are Pentecostal Televangelists.

A more significant problem with *experiential* discipleship is the attempts to transform hearts through manipulating emotions. It is difficult to restrict God, who cannot reveal Himself and His love in dynamic encounters. However, if God supernaturally heals a Believer, significant questions are raised when routine healings (physical or emotional encounters) continue to be needed or desired. Emotional feelings can be powerful in the beginning, but they have a long track record of fading and being unreliable.

Mind, will, and emotional Discipleship: Effective discipleship (the transformation of hearts) must use the power of God's love to build abiding relationships with the Lord Jesus Christ and guide Believers to embrace their identities. God has transformed some hearts through *Intellectual* discipleship, some through *disciplined* discipleship, and others through *experiential* discipleship, but in general, manipulating *mind, will, or emotions* has not proven to be an effective means of transforming hearts.

As a side note, there are currently trends of presenting music styles designed to evoke emotional responses in the modern Church. Even when the fundamental philosophy of local Churches is not *experiential* discipleship. When God's love grips Believers, affectionate expressions naturally flow from them, but attempts to promote spiritual maturity or even praise through manipulating emotions are questionable.

Failed Discipleship: I suspect that one of the greatest discipleship efforts during the last half of the 20th Century was an organization that recruited tens of thousands of Christian families across the nation. Their program encouraged fathers/parents to disciple their children in homeschool environments, which was admirable. Parents were guided to teach Biblical wisdom to their children and to disciple them under *intellectual* and *disciplined* philosophies. Spiritual disciplines and strict rules of conduct were promoted.

Combining and incorporating so many *conventional* discipleship philosophies should have been accepted as ideal for students, but much of the modern Church rejected the organization. I believe that by the time the first generation of children completed the K-12 program, a *higher* percentage of them continued in the

faith than from the typical discipleship efforts of the modern Church. However, the disciplines of the program were extremely difficult for students who were not born again or who were not motivated by God's love. Sadly, 10s of thousands of the children grew up to be very bitter young adults. Regardless of the controversies that surrounded that organization, valuable lessons should be learned from the successes, but also from the high number of those who rejected the faith. Three important lessons are offered:

The first proposed lesson is that despite implementing conventional philosophies of intensive *intellectual* and *disciplined* discipleship, similar to modern Church efforts, many children rejected the faith. It is offered that the children who were not embraced by God's love could not obey out of delight, but were forced into molds to submit to values they refused to accept. Responses were similar to what occurred in America since the 1800s. The stricter the Christian home, the greater the bitterness of the children who did not embrace the faith. The root problem of some children is rebellion, and reasonable rules and discipline are beneficial, but imposing overbearing standards and demanding acceptance of values drives some to be outspoken enemies of the Church, the Bible, and the Lord Jesus Christ. They desperately needed God's love, but their rebellion and the corresponding response drove them to be convinced that neither God nor their parents loved them. The exact opposite of what they desperately needed.

The second apparent problem was a lack of mentoring for fathers. While it was admirable that many fathers had great aspirations, some apparently lacked spiritual maturity. Under the justification of patriarchal authority, some fathers yielded to temptations to demand that they were above being challenged or questioned. Fathers who proclaimed absolute authority should have been guided to respect and maintain Biblical principles for relationships with wives and children. Marriages were weakened, and many of the children were further embittered. Patriarchal authority is Biblical, but as absolute power corrupts, every level of authority must humbly submit to authority above them. This is especially important for pastors. If the fathers were under the authority of mentors, probably local Church leadership in most cases, most of the problems could have probably been resolved. However, as much of the modern Church rejected the convictions of homeschool families during those years, and especially that organization, most Church leaders forfeited their opportunities to guide homeschool fathers. Therefore, by default, the organization needed to recognize the issues and guide fathers to be accountable to Biblical standards (Ephesians 5,6 and Colossians 3), but it failed.

A third apparent problem was a lack of love. The Lord Jesus Christ is the true source, and the Apostle Paul is the example of reflecting God's love. Sadly, it was reported that many of the families in the program failed to *reflect* God's love, grace, or mercy. This is a symptom of fathers and parents who are not gripped by God's love themselves. Of all of the parents and students that I knew in that program (a relatively small number), while I appreciated their efforts and dedication, God's love was rarely a defining quality in their families. If fathers/ parents are not able to demonstrate genuine love, it follows that it would be extremely difficult for their children to recognize and embrace God's love or to build abiding friendships with the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is proposed that the fundamental cause of the collapse of those discipleship efforts was a failure to guide fathers and their families to be embraced and motivated by God's love. Despite significant criticism against the organization by the modern Church, from my perspective, both the modern Church and the

organization have/ are failing to establish genuine love. Similar to the Church, the organization presented materials through large group lectures. Regardless of how controversial the organization was, the lessons from its successes and failures are very valuable.

Conclusions for Conventional Paths of Discipleship: Just as individuals cannot be persuaded, disciplined, or enticed into heaven, attempting discipleship through manipulating minds, wills, and emotions has not proven to be very effective. Even though a few Believers are transformed and walk in fellowship, it is questionable how impactful their exposure to conventional discipleship efforts has been. It is suspected that God has used some conventional discipleship efforts, with time, trials, and failures, to help a few Believers to ultimately be gripped with His love. However, there are too many failures.

Furthermore, man's natural desire is selfishness and pride, and there is considerable evidence that *intellectual* discipleship tempts leaders and teachers to be puffed up with pride. Those who embrace *disciplined* discipleship must resist and guard against the temptation to lord over those they are mentoring, including fathers. And it appears that many who promote *experiential* discipleship also face temptations of pride in being endowed with *special* gifts from God, which Paul specifically addressed in 1 Corinthians 13.

Therefore, it is proposed that regardless of how a Believer may have come to faith, it is vital that they are effectively disciplined to be gripped by God's love. They must then be mentored to develop an abiding relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and to embrace their identity. Without these critical foundations, true transformations of hearts are doubtful.

Practical Discipleship:

After the three proposed goals are embraced, the next challenge is how to implement effective discipleship. While the Lord Jesus Christ commands discipleship, He doesn't provide step-by-step instructions or a master checklist on how to instill vital truths into the hearts of Believers. Which is why it is so important to embrace and focus on guiding Believers to incorporate these qualities into their hearts. What is presented below is derived from how God used Biblical truths to dynamically transform my life and the lives of Believers who walk in fellowship.

Discipleship Relationships: Some have identified that the term one-on-one discipleship as not recorded in scripture. However, it is offered that the Lord Jesus Christ *desires abiding relationships with all Believers, and it follows that He not only had a close one-on-one relationship with each of the Apostles, therefore modeling close discipleship relationships, which are vital to guide Believers to walk in the light with the Lord Jesus Christ and to walk in fellowship. Furthermore, it is proposed that the Lord Jesus Christ and the Apostle Paul not only engaged in one-on-one relationships, but they created and built the Brotherhood.*

[1 Peter 2:17 Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.](#)

Sadly, "Brotherhood" within the modern Church has been so neglected for over a century that it is doubtful that even the Biblical term is fully understood or valued by most of today's Believers. The deep nature of the Brotherhood that the Lord Jesus Christ had with the Apostles is revealed by John's statement, "the Disciple whom Jesus loves". The Lord Jesus Christ spent 3 years discipling the Apostles. He presented truths through public messages. He also worked with them as a group or a team, and they engaged in ministry activities together (going out two by two, feeding the 5,000, and several other ministry activities).

While Scripture clearly describes elements of discipleship, one-on-one discipleship is not specifically described. However, for all who have experienced the Brotherhood, they understand the natural development of one-on-one relationships.

A fellow Believer who has dedicated his life and successfully disciplined many affirms that the stronger the relationship that mentors have with those they are discipling, the more effective their discipleship efforts have proven to be. Of course, there are no guarantees, as was illustrated with Judas. But love begets love, and when children are embraced by their father's love, it is easier for them to be gripped by God's love. And when mentors lead by example with genuine love, Believers are guided down the path to be gripped by God's love. And as Believers begin walking in the light and as they walk in fellowship with mentors, a Brotherhood develops, which is much more than only one-on-one discipleship efforts.

Ephesians 5:21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

The Epistles reveal that the Apostle Paul followed the Lord Jesus Christ's example of building Brotherhoods. Paul's love for fellow Believers is woven through his letters, as is deeply expressed in His statement, "I have you in my heart". It is proposed that submitting to one another is a foundation for building Brotherhoods.

Acts 20:31 Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears.

Paul taught and admonished in public, and from house to house (Acts 20:20), but his statement, "admonish everyone with tears," further reveals that he was deeply concerned for each of them. Paul referred to many of them as brothers and sisters, and in Timothy's case, a son. *The depths of love and friendship described are not only close discipleship relationships but also the Brotherhood of fellow Believers.*

While the term "one-on-one" is not recorded, the singular and plural forms of brother are referenced over 300 times in the New Testament. *One-on-one relationships can be quite mechanical, but Brotherhood describes close fellowship and family-type relationships.* Sadly, I have only been able to find a few who walk in fellowship (the Brotherhood) within the modern Church.

Note: A challenge is presented to read through the Epistles, paying specific attention to the close personal relationships within the Brotherhood of the First Century Church.

Many local Churches attempt to promote unity through small groups, and friendships are often fostered. However, *friendships tend to be exclusive ("two are company but three is a crowd")*, often developing cliques that promote gossip and even rivalries. Given the hallmark of Disciples is love, fellowship *promotes inclusive environments, with the potential of developing one-on-one relationships within Brotherhoods.*

It took many years, but when I became aware of genuine fellowship, those who walked in the light and in fellowship became strikingly obvious. Thereafter, when meeting Believers who walked in fellowship, it now usually only takes a short time before brother or sister relationships begin to develop. Sadly, this amplifies the contrast of so many hollow relationships within the Church. I suspect that the general lack of Brotherhood, fellowship, and even solid friendships is the result of large numbers of Believers who are not genuinely gripped and motivated by God's love. Without fellowship, there is no Brotherhood. And without Brotherhoods, the strength of Christian communities is tremendously weakened. Thus, *effective*

discipleship is critical for local Churches to guide Believers to walk in the light, walk in fellowship, and to form Brotherhoods to properly represent the Lord Jesus Christ in love and purity.

As a side note: The Lord Jesus Christ specifically designed situations for individual Apostles to reveal weaknesses they needed to address. Was He showing off, or was He just going for a stroll on a stormy sea? He knew that Peter would jump out of the boat, and He knew that Peter's faith would temporarily fail. No doubt the other Apostles learned from the event, but this incident reveals the type of close love, care, and instruction that He had with the Apostles. This model should be followed in all discipleship relationships, especially for fathers with their children. Not just to guide Believers through a course or a handbook, but to cultivate close friendships and effectively disciple them by designing specific challenges for them. Is this not what God is doing when He allows specific trials into the lives of His Children (James 1:2)?

Discipleship Authority Structures: In many cases, God places newer Believers, young fathers, or older siblings into positions to guide, mentor, and disciple others. As an example, God often uses less mature Believers to guide others to faith, and while they are only beginning their own spiritual journey, they often have the best relationship to mentor those God has placed in their lives.

Also, God designed families to potentially be the most effective discipleship "group", but most young fathers are not spiritually mature, yet God blesses them with babies, while He holds them accountable for their ultimate spiritual development. The good news is that there is a lot of grace when children are younger, and as the children grow, hopefully, fathers/ parents will learn how to disciple their children. Also, within families, older siblings are often in positions to guide and mentor their younger brothers and sisters, even when they are far from spiritual maturity themselves. Therefore, young fathers/ parents and older siblings must be guided and *mentored* so they can be challenged, guided, and equipped to effectively disciple others.

2 Timothy 2:2 And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

There are many applications for this passage, but one perspective is that mature disciples (Timothies) are to guide *faithful men* (mentors, husbands, older women, fathers with older children, and others), to *teach others also* (*those the faithful men are discipling*). This perspective proposes a discipleship hierarchy comprised of multi-level one-on-one relationships. Such a discipleship structure provides experienced guidance and protection for less seasoned mentors, similar to God's design for grandparents, parents, and children within families. I have seen God use multi-layer discipleship very effectively.

As modeled by the Lord Jesus Christ and the Apostle Paul, discipleship is not an *assigned project*, but a sincere commitment for mentors to guide Believers. God instructs older women to disciple younger women (Titus 2:3-5), who are often responsible for young children. Mentors should instruct young fathers (faithful men) to guide them and coach their children as they, in turn, lead younger brothers and sisters (others also) by example.

It is often said that teachers learn more than students. In most discipleship relationships, there will be mistakes. Which is why "senior" mentors are necessary to guide "junior" mentors (including many fathers), who are discipling others (their families). Such a discipleship structure is much more effective in identifying and addressing mistakes, violations of authority, and sibling rivalries, resulting in greater spiritual maturity

for all who respond appropriately. Furthermore, discipleship structures build solid foundations for Brotherhoods.

As a footnote: when fathers, especially Church leaders, fail to maintain effective one-on-one relationships with their children, they greatly hinder their proper preparation, training, and discipleship (Deuteronomy 6:4-9). Sadly, the modern Church has a long track record of fathers who fail to maintain these vital relationships, which has forfeited tremendous opportunities to prepare their children to be dynamic young leaders for the next generations.

The Gate and Paths to Purifying the Church: Discipleship is a life-long journey, and God will complete the work that He started in the lives of every Believer (Philippians 1:6), but the transformation of Believers can be greatly streamlined, avoiding many pitfalls, through effective discipleship. When mentors guide Believers to be gripped by God's love and develop abiding friendships with the Lord Jesus Christ, they begin walking in the light together. And as they walk in fellowship, *holy and dynamic Brotherhoods are created*. And as Brotherhoods grow, Churches will be purified.

The proposed path to purify the Church is through effective discipleship:

1. Beginning with leaders, mentors must challenge and guide Believers to not only academically and emotionally understand, but to be gripped by God's love. The evidence of being embraced by God's love will be a *natural* desire, not an obligation to bow to Jesus Christ as Lord, which will give them the power and desire to reflect love to God and others (the Great Commandment - Matthew 22:37-40).
2. Mentors must challenge and guide Believers to develop close and abiding relationships with the Lord Jesus Christ. Daily quality time with the Lord Jesus Christ in prayer, in His Word, is vital, but the emphasis must be on the development of a friendship with Him, not to check off application boxes. When a constant awareness and communication with Him is established, Believers will receive the power to genuinely die to self, maintain moral purity, serve others, and develop Godly Character.
3. Believers must then be challenged and guided to understand and embrace their identities in the Lord Jesus Christ. Further discussion of these qualities can be found in [All Honor to the King- Discipleship](#).
4. It is vital for Believers to walk in the light, in genuine fellowship, and to mentor faithful men through challenges 1,2,3 (2 Timothy 2:2). Fathers must also be encouraged, guided, and equipped to be spiritual leaders of their families and to disciple their children (Ephesians 6:4).
5. Church leaders must be Disciples and Shepards, whose signature quality is genuine love (John 13:34,35). If so, they will meet the requirements of Church leaders, discussed in Appendix B.
6. As Believers mature into Disciples, communities will be transformed into Brotherhoods. The resulting salt and light will purify the Church, glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, and ultimately disciple our nation. Further discussed in [Representatives of the Lord Jesus Christ](#).

The triumphs above present colossal challenges that can only be accomplished through Disciples who exemplify God's love, embrace the challenges of Discipling others, and are dynamic members of the Brotherhood, especially for Church leaders and fathers.

Final comments:

God did not transform my life through academic knowledge, embracing values and convictions, or rigorous disciplines, but by being gripped by His love. The Lord Jesus Christ then built a friendship, allowing me to enjoy a *constant* awareness and conversation with Him. To abide implies living with, and the true source of my joy, love, and friendship is an abiding friendship with Him.

After over 60 years of attending Bible-teaching, evangelical local Churches, I have possibly known 1000s of Christians, but sadly, the number who have walked in love and fellowship are devastating few.

The surest path for Believers to walk in the light and in fellowship that I have witnessed is effective discipleship. Sadly, I have seen ineffective discipleship "pasted" over all manner of Church ministries and programs. A very few Believers exemplify the love of Disciples, and there is great concern for those who don't appear to walk in fellowship. There are serious questions about whether many are truly born-again, or if they are only "religious" Christians. This is not a judgment, but an emphasis on the importance of the need for close personal discipleship relationships.

The Believers whom I know, who walk in fellowship, who love the Lord Jesus Christ, whose lives are gleaming examples of His love, have been a tremendous joy. Most in the modern Church desire to hear the words, "well done, good and faithful servant," but I have absolute confidence that those who walk in fellowship are a great delight to the Lord Jesus Christ.

I propose that attempts to manipulate minds, wills, and emotions are extremely ineffective in transforming hearts. However, when Believers are transformed by being embraced by God's love, it is a delight for them to bow to Jesus Christ as Lord.

If even a relatively small portion of the modern Church begins to effectively disciple Believers to be gripped by God's love, develop deep friendships with the Lord Jesus Christ, and embrace their identity in Him, Believers, families, and the culture of local Churches will be transformed. As the number of Disciples, whose lives emulate God's love, Brotherhoods will ultimately purify the modern Church, bringing great honor to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Appendix A, Fellow Believers Who Walk in The Light:

Of the hundreds of Christians that I have met and known over the years, sadly, there has been fellowship with very few of them. It is not possible to know the true nature of the relationship that many have with the Lord Jesus Christ, but those who walk in fellowship have been a delight and a joy. The light of a few of these fellow Believers is worth remembering.

Mr. B is one of the few men that I have known who consistently memorized and meditated on God's Word. He rose early every morning to present devotions with his children before He went to work. Fellowship with Mr. B was a joy. However, God allowed him to be stricken with a debilitating disease, and his physical abilities continued to decline for over two decades. For many of those years, he was bound to a wheelchair. As his illness progressed, he was fed through a feeding tube. In the end, he could barely talk, but he often whispered prayers with visitors. Mr. B never complained, and there were no reports or evidence that he was ever bitter at God. He walked in the light, and the love relationship that he had with the Lord Jesus Christ was obvious to all who knew him.

Some of the greatest friendships that I had were with Mr. J. Shortly after we met, Mr. J was like a brother. He wanted to emphasize the importance of marriage for his children, so he and his family drove several hours to give an anniversary party for another dear brother and his wife. After the party, as Mr. J finished cleaning up, he suffered a massive heart attack. His wife and children said goodbye as he went to be with the Lord Jesus Christ. I really look forward to seeing this dear brother in the future.

Both Mr. B and Mr. J often commented, "God is Sovereign". They both trusted that God was in control and that His ways were higher than our ways. When Mr. J went to be with the Lord, I complained to God, "Don't you know that we are short of Godly men down here?" Of all of the men that God should have used to accomplish great things for His Kingdom, it should have been these men. I later had to ask God for forgiveness. God's ways are not our ways, and I was forced to consider, "What does God value from His Children?" To accomplish great things for His Kingdom or to walk humbly with Him.

Then there was Mr. M, who grew up on a farm. He had a fantastic knowledge of the Bible and Biblical truths. He held philosophies that were very practical and extremely valuable. We spent many hours discussing various Biblical issues. Mr. M decided that he had made enough money, so he retired early with plans to go on the mission field. However, while working to gain the required credentials, Mr. M had a massive heart attack. He survived for about another 8 years, but every time he attempted to go to the mission field, God allowed him to have more physical challenges. Mr. M recently went to be with the Lord. I so appreciated our fellowship together. Mr. M had a tremendous desire to honor God and a close friendship with the Lord Jesus Christ. God did not choose to use Mr. M to do the great things for His Kingdom that Mr. M visualized, but he greatly impacted many of those whom God brought into his life.

Surprisingly, there has only been fellowship with a few pastors, one of whom was Pastor D. He was a great pastor in every respect. He had a fantastic grasp of God's Word. He knew and feared God. And he lived by Biblical convictions. One of his convictions was not to remarry divorced individuals, but the leadership of the Church he pastored at the time did not respect his conviction and fired him. He worked diligently to start a new Church, but God directed him away from full-time ministry. Pastor D continued to share the Gospel, disciple young Believers, and lead home Bible studies for decades. During the last few years of his

life, our life situations allowed me to spend considerable time together before he went to be with the Lord. I enjoyed discussing so many Biblical philosophies, issues, and truths, but the true value was our fellowship together.

Another fellow Believer was Dr. D. I didn't have much opportunity to know him very well, but I have had great fellowship with some of his children, his grandchildren, and his "Timothy". Dr. D walked humbly before God, and many came to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ because he was so effective at demonstrating God's unconditional love. Many years ago, God prompted him with the question, "Why are we sharing the Gospel with those who have heard it before?" So, he jumped on a plane and flew to India. Dr. D shared God's love and emphasized the importance of discipling others. He was a "tent-maker" as he ministered part-time for over 40 years. He went to be with the Lord last year, and at the time, the emphasis of the one-on-one discipleship ministry was pushing 10 million Believers. When we first heard the spectacular claims about the size of the ministry, sincere inquiries were made. It was found that despite the severe persecutions, even many deaths, the resulting Disciples continue to share the Gospel and disciple new believers. Some estimate that God used Dr. D's efforts to share the Gospel with more than 100 million people. God did use Dr. D. He accomplished great things for God's Kingdom, but I believe that he greatly honored the Lord Jesus Christ and was embraced by His love.

What is ironic is that while God used Dr. D so mightily, he is virtually unknown within the modern American Church. With such powerful ministry results, he could have been highly renowned. The best explanation for his lack of fame is that he loved the Lord Jesus Christ and desired to raise Him up instead of himself.

Every one of these and others who walked in the light, in fellowship, and love held strong convictions of the sovereignty of God's Word, of the sanctity of marriage, and the importance of discipling others, especially their children. None claimed to be perfect, and in humility, they clung to the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. When they sinned, they ran toward God rather than away from Him, as many who have not walked in fellowship have done.

It is impossible to adequately describe the relationships that each of these men had with God. Their fellowship, abiding friendships with God, and their love are clear evidence that they walk/ed in the light.

Appendix B, Biblical Requirements for Church Leadership:

God's standards for Church leadership are described in 1 Timothy 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9, 1 Peter 5:1-4, and Acts 20:28. The requirements in 1 Timothy are representative:

1 Timothy 3:1-7 The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. ²Therefore an overseer must be [1] above reproach, [2] the husband of one wife, [3] sober-minded, [4] self-controlled, [5] respectable, [6] hospitable, [7] able to teach, ³[8] not a drunkard, [9] not violent but gentle, [10] not quarrelsome, [11] not a lover of money. ⁴He must manage his own household well, [12] with all dignity keeping his children submissive, ⁵for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? ⁶He must not be a recent convert, or he may become [13] puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. ⁷Moreover, he must be [14] well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

These qualifications should not be viewed as simple check boxes, but outward evidence of being Disciples. Not all Disciples are called to be in leadership, but all leaders must be Disciples:

1. Above reproach.
2. Husband of one wife.
3. Sober-minded.
4. Self-controlled.
5. Respectable.
6. Hospitable.
7. Able to teach.
8. Not a drunkard.
9. Not violent but gentle.
10. Not quarrelsome.
11. Not greedy.
12. Manages his children with dignity.
13. Not puffed up with conceit.
14. A good reputation outside the Church.

The following items can be viewed as a pyramid. Most of the qualities form the first level and are evidence of Believers who abide in the Lord Jesus Christ, die to themselves, and walk in the light.

The second level includes the qualities of “Husband of one wife”, “Hospitality”, and “Managing Children with Dignity”. This level demonstrates active love, verifying that leaders are Disciples whose hallmark of their lives is love (John 13:34,35).

The third level, the pinnacle of the pyramid, is the quality, “able to teach”. It is proposed that “able to teach” is not only academic achievements, or being able to present interesting messages, but proven track records of loving others and leading by example.

I have only known a few Church leaders who walk in fellowship and have each of these qualities. These precious few have demonstrated more genuine hospitality than all of their peers who have not walked in fellowship combined.

Therefore, regardless of how big a Church an individual has built, how “successful” or how renowned they may be, leaders should only be accepted and retained if they consistently demonstrate God’s requirements of leadership, especially to be Disciples.