

Contribution from Christian Discipulomacy to Socio-Spiritual Transformation

B. Faustin^{1*}, M. Gabriel¹, NIMUBONA Venuste¹, N. J. Baptiste¹

¹Faculty of Theology, Hope Africa University

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36347/sjebm.2026.v13i06.003>

| Received: 26.03.2026 | Accepted: 06.05.2026 | Published: 05.06.2026

*Corresponding author: B. Faustin
Faculty of Theology, Hope Africa University

Abstract

Original Research Article

This study focuses on the Contribution of Christian Discipleship to Socio-Spiritual transformation within the Free Methodist Church, taking as a case study the Parish Center of Mabayi, located in a rural region of Burundi. The study begins with the observation that Christian discipleship, far from being limited to spiritual formation, has a direct impact on the integral transformation of believers, their family life, their community engagement, and their socio-spiritual transformation. The main interest that led the researcher to choose and work on this topic is to examine how Christian discipleship practices contribute to the growth of socio-spiritual transformation among the faithful and influence their social and economic behavior. The contextual framework of the Mabayi Parish Center, marked by challenges such as poverty, unemployment, low levels of education, and social tensions, makes this reflection particularly relevant. The methodology adopted is based on a qualitative approach combining literature review, interviews, and field observations. The analysis highlights that Christian discipleship, by promoting spiritual formation, personal responsibility, and community solidarity, constitutes a determining factor in strengthening Christian families and promoting collective well-being. Inspired by biblical teachings, the findings show that the practical application of Christian values through discipleship not only stimulates spiritual maturity but also fosters social engagement, the development of family economic projects, and the strengthening of community ties.

Keywords: contribution, Christian, disciplomacy, socio-spiritual, transformation.

Copyright © 2026 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.

INTRODUCTION

The study of Christian discipleship and its impact on socio-spiritual transformation is part of a dynamic in which the Christian faith, particularly in an African context, becomes an active agent of integral transformation (John, 1992, 263–270). Christian discipleship is not limited to spiritual formation; it also touches on how believers live, work, develop, and interact within their communities (John, 1992, 273). In an environment marked by religious pluralism, African traditions, economic challenges, and social tensions, Christian discipleship plays a structuring role in the restoration of families and the promotion of well-being (John, 1992, 274).

In the specific context of the Free Methodist Church – Mabayi Parish Center, this reality takes on a concrete dimension. This center, located in a rural region of Burundi, faces various challenges related to poverty, unemployment, low levels of education, and social tensions. Within this framework, Christian discipleship is not merely a church practice, but a tool for social transformation capable of influencing the socio-spiritual

transformation of families. This perspective finds its biblical grounding in the teaching of the Apostle James, who says:

My brothers and sisters, what good is it for someone to say they have faith if they do not have works? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is it? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. (James 2:14-17). According to Chris Wright, “God’s mission includes not only the proclamation of the Gospel, but also the demonstration of justice and peace in society” (Christopher 2006, 318). This perspective suggests that Christian mission, far from being limited to spiritual dimensions, extends to building a more just and balanced society, in which believers actively contribute to socio-spiritual transformation. This chapter consists of: Context of the study which situates the global and local environment in which the problem is situated; Problem statement defining the fundamental questions that the research seeks to answer; Justification for the choice of subject explaining the scientific, theological

and practical interest of the study; Research hypotheses proposing provisional answers to the problem statement; Objectives of the study specifying what the research aims to achieve, both generally and specifically; Interest and delimitation of the study highlighting the theoretical and practical contributions of the study as well as its limitations; Definition of key concepts to clarify the central terms used in this research. From this perspective, international movements have illustrated how Christian discipleship, integrated into a holistic development vision, combines faith and social transformation. For example, the Discipling for Development initiative, founded by The Navigators, has demonstrated through several projects, such as Family Farming in Africa and Asia, how Christian communities can be mobilized for their socio-spiritual development based on principles of discipleship (Myers, 2011). This model encourages groups of believers to identify the needs of their community, respond to them based on biblical values, and promote sustainable development that transforms both spiritual lives and social conditions. René Padilla, a leading figure in integral mission, emphasized that "the Gospel of the Kingdom concerns the whole person" (René 1985, 127), thus stressing the importance of contextualized Christian discipleship that is sensitive to economic and social challenges.

In every culture and on every continent, churches strive to form disciples not simply believers, but transformed individuals, committed to living according to the values of the Kingdom of God: love, justice, service, holiness, humility, and compassion. Although cultural, linguistic, and social contexts differ, the goal remains universal: to make disciples of Jesus Christ. For example, in Africa, the African Enterprise movement, founded by Michael Cassidy, integrated evangelism and Christian discipleship within an African contextual framework, combining gospel proclamation with social initiatives in urban and rural settings (Michael 1995, 144–147). In Asia, discipling a Whole Nation (DAWN) worked to establish culturally rooted local churches that train disciples responsible for community development and Christian witness in pluralistic societies. (Jim 1989, 33–37). In America in Latin America, the Integral Mission movement, theorized notably by C. René Padilla, emphasized that authentic Christian discipleship is not limited to personal piety, but includes a concrete commitment to social justice and the transformation of oppressive structures. (René 1985, 101).

METHODS

After defining this target population of 113 people, the sample size was determined using Yamane's formula (1967), in order to obtain a statistically representative and methodologically valid number of participants that allows estimating a representative sample from a given population:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

Where n is the sample size? N is the target population and e is the margin of error allowed. Applying this formula to a target group of 113 people, with a margin of error of 5% ($e=0.05$) and a confidence level of 95%, the calculation gives:

$$n = \frac{113}{1 + 113 \times (0.05)^2} \approx 88$$

This calculation made it possible to identify a sample of 88 participants, representative of the accessible population, which constitutes the immediate target of the sampling.

Therefore, the total sample for the study consists of 88 individuals selected using a probability sampling method based on Yamane's formula. Thus, the methodological approach adopted rests on a twofold justification: firstly, the reasoned selection of a target population of 113 individuals directly involved in discipleship, and secondly, the use of Yamane's formula to determine a representative sample of 88 participants. This approach ensures both the relevance of the data collected and the accuracy of the results. And there scientific rigor of the study.

RESULTS

Regarding knowledge of biblical teachings related to discipleship, 82% of respondents reported having some understanding, primarily through Jesus' teachings on discipleship (Matthew 28:19-20) and the examples of Paul and Timothy (2 Timothy 2:2). However, 18% of respondents admitted to not having a clear understanding of the concept of discipleship. This difference in understanding reflects one of the challenges identified in the literature: the presence of a theoretically known but practically limited Christian discipleship, as Dallas Willard (2006) and John Stott (1981) argue, who maintain that biblical knowledge only has a lasting impact when it translates into concrete action. These observations directly support the overall objective of this study, which aims to analyze how Christian discipleship influences the socio-spiritual transformation of families. A partial or superficial understanding of Christian discipleship effectively limits its transformative potential, as demonstrated by the literature on Christian discipleship and social transformation. The results reveal several important trends regarding member participation in discipleship activities. First, 17% of participants (15 individuals, including 6 women and 9 men) reported participating very frequently in discipleship activities. The proportionally higher presence of men in this category confirms observations in the literature, notably Oduyoye (2001), which emphasizes the central role of men in African church dynamics. Furthermore, 24% of respondents (21 individuals, including 9 women and 12 men) participated frequently, indicating a moderate but significant level of engagement, reflecting a genuine desire for spiritual growth even if participation remains irregular. However, the most striking trend remains the fact that 59% of the faithful rarely participate in

discipleship activities. This low participation rate is a critical indicator, as it means that more than half of the members do not regularly engage in the practices essential to their formation. This situation directly limits the effectiveness of Christian discipleship as a tool for moral and socio-spiritual transformation within the community. These results align perfectly with the overall objective of this thesis, which aims to analyze the contribution of Christian discipleship to socio-spiritual transformation. Indeed, even though 82% of members claim to be familiar with the biblical teachings related to discipleship, the fact that the majority of them rarely participate in activities reveals a disconnect between theoretical knowledge and concrete practice. As the literature review highlights, particularly Willard (2006) and Stott (1981), Christian discipleship only produces its transformative effects when it is experienced regularly, communally, and integrated into daily life. Consequently, weak and irregular participation logically leads to limited transformation, both individually and within families, thus reducing the impact of Christian discipleship on the socio-spiritual transformation of believers. The combined categories of "Very Often" and "Often" represent 41% (17 + 24), indicating that less than half of the participants have regular or high levels of involvement. No participation is observed, and no individual is completely absent, which is positive for minimal engagement. The majority of participants rarely attend, which could indicate a lack of motivation, interest, or favorable conditions for participation. It would be strategic to focus on the "Rarely" category to increase their participation frequency, for example, through encouragement, training, or more engaging activities. Participants in the "Very Often" and "Often" categories form a stable base of engagement that can be leveraged to motivate others. The study confirms that the majority of participants feel better prepared to live out their faith in social and family interactions. 78% believe that Christian discipleship has helped strengthen their personal faith and their understanding of Scripture. They emphasized that the teachings they received can help them better manage family conflicts, develop values of forgiveness and solidarity, and live a more embodied faith in their daily lives.

A parish catechist interviewed pointed out: «Christian discipleship has changed the way some families live their faith. We see couples praying together, young people becoming more involved in evangelization, and members taking initiatives to help their neighbors.» This impact has been measured by the strengthening of Christian values, the daily practice of faith, and the spiritual guidance received.

DISCUSSION

The results indicate that Christian discipleship has a significant impact on the participants' relationships. The majority (61%) reported a strengthening of their faith, representing 23 women and 31 men, demonstrating a stronger spiritual commitment among women.

Furthermore, 24.8% of participants (9 women and 13 men) indicated that Christian discipleship fosters the practice of Christian values in daily life, while 15.2% (5 women and 8 men) noted its help in managing family conflicts. These observations confirm that Christian discipleship is not limited to individual transformation but also acts as a catalyst for social and ethical change. It strengthens faith, fosters the integration of Christian values into daily life, and supports the resolution of relational tensions, thus aligning with Bryant Myers' conclusions on the integral formation of disciples (Bryant 2011, 45). The integration of Christian values into daily life confirms that Christian discipleship acts as a catalyst for social and ethical change.

CONCLUSION

The study on "The contribution of Christian discipleship to socio-spiritual transformation: Free Methodist Church – Mabayi Parish Center" highlighted several key points: Christian discipleship as a spiritual and social lever: The results show that Christian discipleship contributes significantly to the spiritual formation of the faithful by promoting Christian values such as love, solidarity, ethics, and responsibility. However, its impact on socio-spiritual transformation remains limited. Link between biblical teachings and daily life: The teachings of Christian discipleship positively influence the behavior of the faithful, their community involvement and their sense of ethics, but they are not always sufficient to generate lasting changes without concrete actions. Role of community initiatives: Activities such as prayer groups, pastoral visits, and training have fostered family cohesion and community support. However, the integration of economic projects and transformation strategies could be improved to maximize the impact of discipleship. Christian discipleship and socio-spiritual transformation: The study confirms that, when experienced holistically, Christian discipleship can become a driver of integral transformation, combining spiritual growth and socio-spiritual progress. In summary, Christian discipleship at the Mabayi Parish Centre represents significant potential for the transformation of families, but it requires better-articulated strategies between spiritual formation, economic initiatives and community support.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to express our deep gratitude our directors of this article, who, despite their numerous responsibilities, graciously agreed to supervise our work. Their insightful advice, expertise, availability, as well as their scientific and human rigor, have been of immense value to us. We also extend our heartfelt appreciation to the various social entrepreneurs active in mobility and government partners in mobility, as well as to all those who facilitated our access to the essential documents for the writing of this article. Our warmest thanks go to our family for their unwavering support and investment in us. We also cherish our friends and classmates, whose companionship made our study sessions all the more

enjoyable. Finally, may all those who contributed, directly or indirectly, to the completion of this work find here the expression of our sincere gratitude.

Competing interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Contributions from authors

All the authors contributed to the conduct of this work. They also state that they have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

REFERENCES

- Adeyemo, Tokunboh, ed. 2006. *Africa Bible Commentary*. Nairobi: WordAlive Publishers.
- African Leadership and Reconciliation Ministries (ALARM). 2021. *Annual Impact Report 2020*. Kigali: ALARM.
- Amartya, Sen. 1999. *Development as Freedom*. New York: Anchor Books.
- American Anthropological Association. 2012. *Principles of Professional Responsibility*. Accessed June 10, 2025.
- World Bank. 2023. *Burundi: Overview*. Washington, DC: World Bank. Accessed April 22, 2025. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/burundi/overview>
- Barth, Karl. 1956. *Dogmatics*. Vol. IV/2. Geneva: Labor et Fides.
- Bediako, Kwame. 1995. *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- Blomberg, Craig L. 1999. *Neither Poverty nor Riches: A Biblical Theology of Possessions*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. 1959. *The Cost of Discipleship*. New York: Macmillan.
- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. 1968. *The Price of Grace*. Translated by Henri Blocher. Geneva: Labor et Fides.
- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. 1996. *The Price of Grace*. Geneva: Labor et Fides.
- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. 2009. *The Common Life*. Translated into French. Geneva: Labor et Fides.
- Braun, Virginia, and Victoria Clarke. 2012. *Successful Qualitative Research: A Practical Guide for Beginners*. London: Sage.
- Bujo, Bénédet. 2003. *Foundations of an African Ethic: Beyond the Universal Claims of Western Morality*. Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa.
- Bushnell, Horace. 2006. *Christian Nurture*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers.
- Cassidy, Michael. 1995. *A Witness for Ever: The Dawning of Democracy in South Africa*. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau.
- Chadwick, Henry. 1993. *The Early Church* London: Penguin Books.