THE BIBLICAL MODEL FOR RETAINING NEW CONVERTS IN THE CHURCH

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Abstrak


Keywords: Pemuridan, Iman Kristiani, kerohanian, pertumbuhan, pendewasan, Roh Kudus.

INTRODUCTION

Jesus has chose the disciples to continue His ministry and sent them to “Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the end of the world” (Acts 1:8). Jesus has given to the disciples the Great Commission instruction “Go” and “Make Disciples” as the principle of missionary and ministry. In specifically, each believer is facing challenge in the faith and practices all what one has heard
and receives. If the believer desire to be save his/her soul, one has to save people soul. This principle will build the minded in true commission according what is Jesus’ thought.

In Christ’s Global Mission is guarantee for all human kind if we are accept Christ, we are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise (Gal.3:29). The promise is written in the mix blood (Israel and Gentile) in His body. When the church has gain many new member into the fellowship, that has challenge to be mentor or supporter for them. Caslow (1982) explained “baptism is not the end of the process, only the beginning! In the immediate post-baptism experience of the new member, a planned program by the local church to nurture, assimilate, and disciple the individual must be developed.”(p.10)

The new born members in the church have expecting each old member to take responsibility and work for Christ; it is not for the church. As the Christian should build and work in missionary discipleship is teaching people about the True Love of God through Jesus Christ who is redemption the world from their sins. And Caslow pointed out the church should not satisfy with mere numbers but should be developing serviceable Christians as well. “Unhealthy churches at home lead to weak missions abroad, but when the church makes disciples at home, two good things happen: Christians become healthy and reproduce, and as they multiply, the world becomes evangelized God’s way”(Hull, 2010, p.16).

The discipleship and teaching have twofold benefit in the Christian experience, which are increasing the value of the faith in Christ and in the same time helping other growing the faith. “The discipling process seeks to deliver people, develop them, and deploy them into the harvest field” (Hull, p.20). The Principles are to share and to win people for Christ, through Holy Spirit will helping the believers strong in faith and give hand to all people willing to repent. In light of Christ’s willingness to lay Himself on the altar of sacrifice, the Bible admonishes us to “Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5). In ministry we must have mind set “Save One Soul” anytime, anywhere and any condition.

The only make the men become whole is only the Character of God, because God is love. Loving one another is at the very foundation of the Christian life. The fruits of the Spirit, love and unity will then be manifested and even non-believers will be led to testify, “See how they
love one another.” And people will taste the fruits of Spirit and they will feel heaven come down to the circumstances.

Moreover, the believers extend our hand to others by Christ our face will shine or reflecting the light of God to whoever desire of comfort and peaceful in the Lord. The Lord has commissioned the church to preach the gospel of reconciliation so people everywhere might be restored to the image of God. As they approach the great center of Life, it is not only will draw closer to Him but one another as well.

“The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.” The statement is a call for each believer in the load of commission in Christ (the religious workers and the layman members).

The goal of discipleship should focus on the development of both the fruits and gifts of the Spirit so that the mature disciple reproduces both the graces and ministry in others. The object of the Christian life is fruit bearing--the reproduction of Christ's character in the believer, that it may be reproduced in others.

**Statement of the Problem**

Responsibility as Christian is similar with the disciples who have received the tasks from Christ discipleship and teaching. When we are receiving the truth in the same time we accept the privilege as partner of Christ to extend of discipleship to teaching people about the truth of the Love of God through Christ by grace. The issue for all Christians are ‘what is the biblical foundation to retain of the church member?’ and ‘how do we do the discipleship and teaching?’

**The Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of the study is tracing the biblical foundation for the nurturing the new conversion and the rest of the church. Each believer has equal portion the responsible to Christ share the Gospel and bring the people to Christ. The church should learn and understand base on God’s love the way to reach out the people.
The Significant of the Study
Through this paper work will presenting the significant of the biblical foundation for retaining of the new convert in the church in general perspective. And it will discuss the church is working on discipleship and teaching the new convert. It is describing the role of the Holy Spirit after the conversion as a Christian.

Methodology of the Study
This research will use literature review

The Biblical Model for Retaining New Converts in the Church

We must have foundation of the mission in Christ, which is Christ has the authority in heaven and earth. Thus, we are having Christ who strengthens us in all things we do for the discipleship missionary. The new members, a guest, senior citizen of the church are a challenge for each believers and the church as whole. We need assist our fellows as brethren in Christ for work together to reach the mature faith in Christ. This friendship bridge is crucial to the whole process.

The moment a person decides to join the church is the logical time for one-to-one follow-up and discipleship to begin. People are based on Christ-centered friendships asking for real friends not just friendly churches. Sincere Christian friendship is the essential need that most newcomers will bring with them when they visit or join our church. Kasdorf (1980) supports “the call to discipleship has deep theological and ethical consequences, appealing to the will more than to the intellect, for obedience is a matter of the will, not of the mind”(p.169).

Independence with connection network of the church body is purpose of the discipleship for new members of the church. The indicators will show the member actively ministering the other new member extend to outreach in neighborhood and community. “The members of the kingdom of God maintain and foster a new attitude to spiritual and social needs, justice and equality, property and poverty, neighborhoods and neighborliness”( Kasdorf, 170). He wants
His children to have that same spirit of love and concern. He wants us to become healthy, active, and growing Christians. This task is never fully completed while we live and must be viewed as a process.

**The Seal of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 1:21-22)**

The Holy Spirit has worked continually in every single person who has accepted Christ and in faith growing through the Holy Spirit living in the believers. The Christian is leading by the Holy Spirit tell the truth of the Word of God to the world. When human spirit is united with the spirit of God, becomes parts of divine creativity, divine harmony ensures. Lee (1979, p.111) emphasis this divine harmony will restored through human response to the spirit of God, implies complete harmony in all change and creativity.

Paul wrote three foundations in the believers, which are establishes in Christ, anointed by God, and sealed by the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 1:21-22). “God not only guarantees His promises and the effective relationship of those promises, by the Spirit the believer is given undeniable assurance of this continuing relationship with Christ” (Caudill, 1989, p.34). Pache (1954, p.37) explained the Holy Spirit gives life, performs miracles, works in the heart of men, and using them as His instrument. The believers can do nothing and accomplished mission without Him, and all is brought to pass with His help. It is not human power and might, but the Holy Spirit is made everything possible. The ministry of Holy Spirit works based on the work of Jesus Christ.

God is the one who given the seed of faith in the human and God is the one who growth through the waves of life everyday. The Holy Spirit is like the raining ripens the plant in the season of the harvest. The raining will dropping in the season and the earth received for the plant. The Holy Spirit is ready for everyone those who opened and with the willingness to received it. Comblin (1989, p.70) concluded the Spirit produces complete human beings and it can be seen in the labors of missionaries and evangelizers.

Every single of believers in the church should continually abide to the work and the role of the Holy Spirit growing in spiritual maturity. The human heart is like the desert that is thirsty and hunger of the fulfillment of the spirituality. Only the truth and the leading of the Holy Spirit can accomplish in the every single time in the humans life. Clowney (1995, p.70) emphasizes to
be filled with the Spirit is to be filled with Christ, to know the Savior and His love, in the same
time to know the love of God as the Spirit pours it out in one hearts (Rom 5:5; 8:15-16).

Personal fellowship with the Holy Spirit is built up in the human intrapersonal
relationship. And the person will have abundant life among the believers which give impact and reflection through the gift of the Spirit. “Sharing the life of the Spirit drew the person to share their living” (p.60) (Rom 15:26; 2 Cor 8:4; Heb 13:16).

As whole, the role of the Holy Spirit convinces the world about the truth of Christ’s works through the witness of the believers and any instruments related to the works of ministries. Even the witness of “the stones” (Luke 19:40; Hab 2:11, KJV) for the gospel can uses by the Holy Spirit to confirm the truth as it is written in the end of centuries.

Wherever the Gospel preaches the Holy Spirit will accompanied the preachers, the messages lead them to reach the person who willing to repent. The bearer never loses the power of the Spirit, because He is the power of heaven which is imparted in the believers. The relation of the willingness of the bearer and the receiver of the gospel come up and in the same time, the manifestation the role of the Holy Spirit filling them in special way.

As soon as the humans are born of the Spirit, these graces of the Spirit begin to appear. And under the daily infilling of the Spirit they increasingly multiply. Bearing the fruit of the Spirit also means witnessing effectively for your Savior (Acts 1:8). God gives the sinners the Holy Spirit as the only means to equip and to fill the special place He has assigned in His great plan.

The Comforter that Christ promised to send after He ascended to heaven is the Spirit in all the fullness of the Godhead, making manifest the power of divine grace to all who receives and believe in Christ as a personal Savior. (Evangelism, p.615).

The Holy Spirit always transforms those in whom He dwells; He provides a living testimony in you against which no skeptic can argue. The extent of the transformation is directly related to the degree of the one surrender in faith to the inworking of the Holy Spirit. This fruit constitutes victorious living provides the key to the believers effective witnessing.
Comblin (1989) describes the presence of the Holy Spirit in the community shows itself in outward movement: not designed to gain other member of other peoples, but to share the gifts of the Spirit with them. White (1915, p.287) stresses the Holy Spirit enabled the disciples to exalt the Lord alone. He recreates, refines, and sanctifies human beings, fitting them to become members of the royal family, children of the heavenly King.

**The New Creation (2 Cor 5:17-21)**

Since, the person receive and born in the family of God is belongs to Christ and become a new creation. And the believer has connection to grow in Christ according to His grace and love. As new creation in Christ, the believer is “given the ministry of reconciliation, as ambassadors for Christ, and become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor 5: 18-21). Kasdorf (1980) wrote “The life of the new convert becomes most meaningful when responsibilities are reciprocated. Thus one shares in the corporate mission of the people of God” (p.191). The development of committed relationships between the new Christian and the body of believers with whom he associates will support and supply information available to the average pastor and layman to help implement these aspects of a total follow-up ministry.

Williams (1994, p.55) highlighting a spiritual church would be one in the atmosphere of expectancy which encouraged seekers after God to expect and seek and be open to the conviction as the person encouraged to come to Christ. Grenz (1994, p.426) explained according to the NT the believers union with Christ, which the Spirit works in conversion, involving the commitment to embodying in the beliefs, attitudes, and actions the meaning and values that characterized Jesus’ own life.

Interpersonal relationship can created in the fellowship of the church. The Holy Spirit will work on the believer’s heart, which is given to the church and poured out upon them to be united in Christ and the members to one another (Opsahl, 1978, p.226). It is the life of Christ in the soul, it is the active principle of love imparted by the Holy Spirit will make the one words fruitful (White, 1963 p.238). Comblin said it is always the same Spirit who produces different fruits appropriate to each age (p.131).

The disciples had gathered in the upper room encircled on prayer and worship humbly for the promise of the Holy Spirit. They continued with one accord in prayer and supplication,
through unity of their heart and witnessing Christ had done (Acts 1:13, 14). Green (1977, p.206) concluded the life-giving Spirit of Christ has brought the love of Christ into personal relations for countless modern Christians. The depth of the fellowship at local level is one of the most moving characteristics of the whole movement.

God’s Fellow Workers (2 Cor 6:1)

Kardorf found the foundation in the experienced of the church in Ephesus “the convert becomes an instrument unto good works (Eph 2:10). Christ becomes the Lord. The convert has become a disciple, a learner, and follower of Christ the Lord” (p.182). The church has trained lay participants simply to pray and make themselves available to do follow-up work as needed. This was intended to take place naturally as new members entered the fellowship of the church. Personal follow-up could degenerate from a Christ-centered friendship to the mere transfer of knowledge from one notebook to another. The friendship factor is pulled the experiences together and produced a true sense of belonging. “As part of the body of Christ, it is the young convert’s duty to build relationship and actively demonstrate his discipleship through corporate prayer, service, communion, and worship” (p.191).

Downs (1994, p.199) qualified spiritual growth is showing maturity in relationship to other believers as together to build up one another, which truly Christian stresses community and relationship. Moreover he explained spiritual maturity involves how the person thinks and engages the mind and shapes the way people think.

The Mango tree should bear the Mango fruit and those who eaten taste the sweet. Fruit is the pregnant metaphor for life, and in the context is evidence of the new birth. Ervin (1987, p.64) through biblical investigation claimed the fruit of the Spirit are the attributes of the divine nature of which believers become partakers’ through their new birth (2 Peter 1:4). The Spirit is the one who leads the believers back to the witness of the Apostles (Comblin, p.102).

The one exercises the gift of faith when one accepts the promises of God and attempt to do great things for Him. The person exhibit the grace of faith when she/he quiets the heart before the Lord and trust in Him who is able keep the believers forever (Criswell, 1973, p.144). Green clearly about the powerful victorious Spirit which indwells believers, and can keep their sinful
natures nailed upon the cross, is like a seed planted in the soil of the believer’s life. This seed will grow into a lovely fruitful tree (p.88).

Therefore, the church extends our hand to others by Christ our face will shine or reflecting the light of God to whoever desire of comfort and peaceful in the Lord. The Lord has commissioned the church to preach the gospel of reconciliation so people everywhere might be restored to the image of God. As we approach the great center of Life, we not only will draw closer to Him but one another as well.

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The goal of discipleship should focus on the development of both the fruits and gifts of the Spirit so that the mature disciple reproduces both the graces and ministry in others. The object of the Christian life is fruit bearing--the reproduction of Christ's character in the believer, that it may be reproduced in others. Thus, from the beginning the Holy Spirit impart of the believers to work according to His will, that, the Christian constrained by the love of Jesus Christ to followed His path in mission work. And the believer works and transforming to the Christ likeness, than in the mean time, others can change and convert to Christ by the works of the Spirit.

**Retaining Methods and Discipleship for New Believers**

From generation to generation the church is showing spread over the world, which is planted as they are growing. The growing of Christian’s life is reflecting in the church members those who give influence and impact through their testimonies. The foundation of the church is to build discipleship method in the believers, which can produce the faithful to become a seed for the church planting. The faithful becomes the fruit in the Christ and brought many seeds and every seed in the church, that can planted for the untouched field for the next new church. Logan
(2006, p.57) highlighting the health and vitality of the believer in the church and continue attach in the planting process of the new church.

Every single church has potential to multiply in the believers and the churches. The believers can growing in the church, but when the church mobilizing the believers to plant or build new church that make double goals. The spiritual strength of the believers has significant result in both the spiritual growth and produces the disciples when the church multiplies. Schwarz (1996, p.27) clearly demonstrates passionate spirituality and indicated the theological core produce through the life of faith as a genuine relationship with Jesus Christ. Macnair (1999) clarification the vital signs of a church’s health found “individual members are growing in spiritual maturity and the church is actively seeking to help unbelievers come to Christ” (p.9).

The concept of the discipleship can be use in the retaining of the new converters method and extend to the next level of the disciples growing in the church planting. The kingdom of God is continuing growing in the shape of a church who received the Great Commission in the hands of the believers. Masters (1992) proposes “a faithful church may sustain the practical reason of a discipleship capable of describing the moral significance of virtually any aspect of God’s creation” (p.141). “God calls each believer to a life of discipleship …by proclaiming the redemptive and enabling work of Jesus Christ” (Blomberg, et al., 1993, p. 33). Thus, the believers must be proactive in the discipleship methods to be fruitful in the spirituality and transferable in multiplying the church in the untouched field.

Since the early Christian the apostles taught the discipleship among the believers both the Jews and the Gentiles. The principle of the discipleship has built in the strong foundation as Jesus Christ did to the twelve disciples. All the believers become the disciples and transforming to become a church, which is the body of Christ spread all over the world. Tangeman (1996, p.21) pointed out the purpose of the church focus on the making disciples, which is the church brings glory to God because it obeys the command of God. He continued a responsibility of the church should working on “the process of edification involves working to help new believers grow in Christlikeness, through Bible study, fellowship, communion and prayer” (p.23).

**Accountable Discipleship**
Undoubtedly, Jesus Christ was not choosing His twelve disciples according His will, but according to His Father will (John 17:6). The accountable discipleship has focus group in the church, which is exercising the maturity of the spiritual growth through the commitment to the God’s call. “God became a human being as a servant to the human race, faithful Christians were called to follow that example in service to the world” (Watson, 1986, p.49). Moreover, Watson concluded the disciples in this group should making deeper commitment, become mutually accountable for their discipleship, obedience to the Holy Spirit and watching over in love as the responsibilities of the Body of Christ’ members (p.51-52).

Dianne Schilling (2009) said “responding accountably to life's challenges gives you the power to change things.”

Characteristics of a Healthy Accountability Group according Christopher Easley (2006):

1. **Vulnerability.** Each member is honest about how he has failed.
2. **Accepting of God's Love and Forgiveness.** Each member accepts God's forgiveness for his sin, trusting him and rejecting feelings of guilt and shame.
3. **Validation and Support.** Regardless of what temptations a member struggles with or how he has sinned, he should be accepted by the group and loved, not judged or ridiculed.
4. **Trust and Safety.** What is shared in the group stays in the group.
5. **Prayer.** The members of the group together ask God to help them with their specific struggles, strengthen them as they face temptation, forgive them when they fail, and help them stand up again to walk with him and live as "more than conquerors through him" (Romans 8:37).
6. **Accountability.** If a member is struggling with a certain sin or temptation and shares this with the group, the group will hold him or her accountable to act in a godly way in that area.
7. **Ownership.** Each member that participates in the group is consciously engaged in the group's meetings.
8. **Fellowship and Friendship.** All of the members build healthy friendships with each other as brothers and sisters in Christ.
Practical Methods of Retaining Methods and Discipleship New Believers in the Church according to Paul J. Bucknell with three steps:

First Step
Basic discipleship is the place that **immature Christians are established in their faith** by developing their awareness of what it means to follow Christ. It is here that older Christians help train new or very young Christians. Like small children, new Christians are unstable and need security.

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133Paul J. Bucknell
http://www.foundationsforfreedom.net/Topics/Disciple/Flow_Discipleship.html
Second Step
Intermediate discipleship is for those who have received basic spiritual training. This intermediate stage of discipleship is like adolescence, a temporary stage involving tremendous growth. The phrase 'never grew up' can be apply used to describe many Christians who never received training at the intermediate stage.

Third Step
The advanced stage of discipleship is where the mature Christian is refined over a longer period of time. The father is mature. These spiritual fathers still have a constant need for growth just like the younger ones. This growth might not be very visible from the outward. Their battles are often on a deeper level causing their spiritual roots to grow deeper as they grow closer to God.
CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

The biblical foundation for retain the new convert has teaching relationship to the Holy Spirit and the all the believers in the congregation. The growing of the new convert has a significant reflection through the gift of the Spirit, which is giving the sweet of the fruit and produces other new tree. All the believers in the church have responsibility to lead, train, and teaching in discipleship for the new converts, which they can grow together in the body of Christ. Billie Hanks, Jr. said “Love, vision, personal discipline, and the willingness to accept mutual accountability are the critical factors needed for a lifestyle that produces spiritual multipliers.”

Undoubtedly according to Jerry Mckinney the priority of the friendship is not only the most natural and effective method of outreach, it is the glue that bonds a new member to the congregation. It is well known that friendship basically determines whether a person will remain active or become a drop-out. Watson challenged each Christian “being accountable for our discipleship is far from an exercise in self-improvement. It is opening ourselves to the gracious initiatives of the Holy Spirit for which we have than God’s promise in Jesus Christ” (p.113).

Gary W. Kuhne (1979) one of the first ways to begin developing a meaningful relationship with a new Christian is by being honestly concerned for him, really wanting to be his friend. “A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity” (Prov. 17:17). “God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 1:8). Let one hold Jesus hand and another hand held and draw the unbelievers.

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