

5 Reasons Why  
**DISCIPLESHIP  
IN AFRICA**  
*is Critical to the Global Church*





## The Church in Africa is Growing Exponentially

Across the more than 50 countries of Africa, Christianity has grown exponentially in the last century. In 2015, the percentage of global Christians residing in Africa was approximately 26 percent – up from just 1.4 percent in 1910 – and it’s expected to be nearly 40 percent by 2060.<sup>1</sup> The highest concentration of Christians in the world is now in sub-Saharan Africa (by contrast, Europe was home to 66.3 percent of the world’s Christians in 1910, dropping to 25.5 percent in 2015 and expected to be 15.6 percent in 2050).<sup>2</sup> In just 100 years, the general population in Africa went from being only 10 percent Christian to more than 50 percent Christian.



*Africa is now the centre of global Christianity and will exert greater and greater influence in the global Church.*



## An Under-Resourced Church has Fewer Spiritually Mature Leaders

While evangelism has accomplished the good and important work of bringing people to Christ, there now exists a significant gap between the staggering number of new Christians and the number of spiritually mature leaders.



*Because discipleship has not been able to keep pace with evangelism, there are simply not enough Christian mentors, teachers, and pastors to invest in new believers and help them develop deeper spiritual roots.*

Discipleship is critical to developing a deeper relationship with Christ, and to being equipped to stand firm in the face of issues like false teaching, suffering, political upheaval, civil war, western secularism, syncretism, and persecution – all major issues for the Church in Africa.

Christians in Africa need more resources to train and deepen the faith of believers and leaders who will grow mature churches and continue to spread the gospel effectively.



## Africans are Crucial to Evangelism



*If we as a global Church can support and equip Christians in Africa well, the future spread of the gospel will be impacted significantly.*

Christians in Africa zealously share Christ with others and are uniquely qualified to reach many difficult-to-reach people groups. For example, Christians in Africa are perfectly positioned to evangelize to the Muslim population with whom they share a continent. They can receive visas and travel documents easily when it is very difficult for missionaries from the West. As migrant workers, they are in many of the countries that are mostly closed to the gospel. Their strength in prayer, steadfastness in suffering, and commitment to church planting makes them excellent and crucial evangelizers.



## The Church in Africa can Help Us Understand Our Faith

The cultures and traditional values of African peoples are important and valid influences in their Christian walk. Western Christians must take care not to overlook these rich perspectives. Strongly held values common to many African cultures like hospitality, sharing, community, and respecting elders are prevalent in Scripture and upheld as honorable. The global Church can learn from Christians in Africa how to live these values out well.

Additionally, Christians in Africa can connect with and understand Scripture in a unique way because of their contexts. African cultures are often very close to biblical cultures and bring new perspectives to the world of theology and Christian thinking, dominated in the last centuries by European and American scholars.



*When disciplined well, their unique insights into Scripture, especially the Old Testament, can teach the global Church how to best apply these texts to their daily lives and better understand the revealed characteristics of God through his Word.*



## Africans have Inspiring Faith in God's Word

The Africa Leadership Study<sup>3</sup> confirmed that Africans are reading the Bible far more often than Christians in North America and Europe. Why? Because they fully believe the Bible is the true and authoritative Word of God that gives answers to life. They have amazing faith that God will fulfil all the promises in the Bible in their individual lives. In a global Church that is often straying from the truth in their sexual ethics, beliefs about the authority of God's Word, and Jesus Christ as the only way to have salvation, Africans in many denominations are standing firm in orthodoxy.

This commitment to orthodoxy has been true from the earliest centuries of the Church. Orthodoxy and theology moved from Africa to the West in beginning days through the work of theologians like Augustine, Tertullian, and Athanasius. Modern-day thinkers like Lamin Sanneh are still impacting the global Church.



*African theologians have contributed to building up the Faith since the inception of the church and Western Christians can still learn from them today.*



## Conclusion



*The discipleship of Christians in Africa is critical for the global Church.*

Western Christians can learn from Christians in Africa in many ways – their passion for evangelism and prayer, their understanding of biblical cultures, their comparatively greater commitment to attending church, their contributions to theology, and reading Scripture regularly. But they need the biblical resources, adapted to their contexts, that lead to deeper faith and equip them to engage more effectively. The most significant need for this dynamic movement of evangelism in sub-Saharan Africa is training and equipping disciples.

By building up Christians in Africa and helping equip them for deeper discipleship, the world's future hub of Christianity will be well prepared to in turn disciple the next generation of believers and carry forth the mission of God's people.



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of Christianity in Africa?*

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