

**The role of discipleship in the equipping of
believers for ministry and growth according to
Ephesians 4:12**

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PREFACE

“Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” - Ephesians 3:20-21

I thank you Father for your unfathomable love and grace. I thank you Jesus Christ for being my Saviour, Lord, and Teacher. I thank you Holy Spirit for filling my heart with love and assurance and reminding me of the Truth.

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ABSTRACT

The New Testament often speaks of the church and believers as a growing and maturing body in relationship with Christ, her Head and King. In the Gospels and Acts this relationship between Christ and believers is expressed in terms of discipleship. It is a relationship based on grace through which believers are equipped for ministry, and obedience in following Christ as their King. The terms “disciple” and “making disciples” are not to be found in the Pauline corpus. Does this, therefore, mean that Paul never has discipleship in mind when he speaks of the equipping of believers for growth and ministry in relationship with Christ? Or has Paul in fact adopted the concept of discipleship in his understanding of how the church should be equipped for growth and ministry? This dissertation proposes a New Testament revelation-historical study of the concept “discipleship”, along with thorough exegesis of Ephesians 4:12, to shed light on the role that discipleship should play in the equipping of believers for ministry and growth in the church today.

Keywords

Disciple, discipleship, equipping, ministry, growth, follow, followers, Ephesians, church growth, services, leaders, offices, New Testament, building up, grace-gifts.

OPSOMMING

Die Nuwe Testament verwys dikwels na die kerk en gelowiges as 'n groeiende en ontwikkelende liggaam wat in verhouding met Christus, haar Hoof en Koning, staan. In die Evangelies en Handelingte word hierdie verhouding uitgedruk in terme van dissipelskap. Dit is 'n verhouding gebasseer op genade, waardeur gelowiges toegerus word vir dienswerk en gehoorsaamheid in die navolging van Christus as hul Koning. Die terme "dissipel" en "dissipels maak" word egter nie in die Pauliniese materiaal van die Nuwe Testament gevind nie. Beteken dit dat Paulus nooit dissipelskap in gedagte het wanneer hy praat van die toerusting van gelowiges vir dienswerk en groei in verhouding met Christus nie? Of het Paulus inderdaad die begrip van dissipelskap oorgeneem in sy verstaan van hoe die kerk toegerus moet word vir dienswerk en groei? Hierdie verhandeling stel 'n Nuwe Testamentiese openbarings-historiese studie, oor die begrip "dissipelskap" in die Evangelies en Handelingte, voor.; asook 'n deeglike eksegetiese ondersoek van Efesiërs 4:12 om lig te werp op die rol wat dissipelskap speel in die toerusting van gelowiges vir dienswerk en groei in hierdie vers.

Sleutelterme

Dissipel, dissipelskap, toerusting, dienswerk groei, volg, volgeling, Efesiërs, kerkgroei, dienste, leiers, ampte, Nuwe Testament, geestelike ontwikkeling, opbou, genadegawes.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE	I
ABSTRACT	II
OPSOMMING	III
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Proposed title	1
1.2 Background	1
1.2.1 Personal Background	1
1.2.2 Ecclesiastical Background	1
1.3 The relevance of this study to New Testament scholarship	2
1.4 Preliminary literature review	3
1.4.1 Discipleship as concept in New Testament studies.....	3
1.4.2 Equipping the believers for ministry and growth in Ephesians 4:12 in New Testament studies	4
1.4.3 New Testament studies and the relation between these two concepts	5
1.5 Problem statement	6
1.6 Aim and Objectives	7
1.6.1 Aim	7
1.6.1.1 Objectives.....	7
1.7 Central theoretical argument	8
1.8 Methodology	8
1.9 Chapter division	8
1.10 Preliminary clarification of some key terms	9

1.10.1	Discipleship	9
1.10.2	Ministry	10
1.10.3	Church growth	10
CHAPTER 2 DEFINING DISCIPLESHIP AS A NEW TESTAMENT CONCEPT		11
2.1	Introduction	11
2.2	The background to New Testament discipleship	11
2.2.1	Discipleship in Classical Greek and Hellenism.....	12
2.2.2	Discipleship in the Old Testament and Septuagint.....	14
2.2.3	Discipleship in the Rabbinate.....	17
2.3	The New Testament witness to discipleship	18
2.3.1	The general characteristics of discipleship in the Gospels and Acts	19
2.3.1.1	The kingdom-orientation of New Testament discipleship	19
2.3.1.2	The call to New Testament discipleship.....	21
2.3.1.3	The content of New Testament discipleship as found in the Gospels and Acts	23
2.3.2	New Testament discipleship and its relevance to the post-resurrection community	33
2.3.2.1	The authorial intent of Matthew.....	34
2.3.2.2	The authorial intent of Mark	35
2.3.2.3	The authorial intent of Luke	35
2.3.2.4	The authorial intent of John	35
2.3.2.5	Conclusion as to the authorial intent of these accounts	35
2.3.3	Discipleship in the Pauline corpus	36

2.3.3.1	Paul's own conversion as the start of his discipleship	36
2.3.3.2	Paul's ministry and discipleship	36
2.4	Conclusion: Defining discipleship as a New Testament concept	39

CHAPTER 3 THE MEANING OF “EQUIPPING” BELIEVERS FOR “MINISTRY” AND ‘GROWTH’ IN EPHESIANS 4:12 **40**

3.1	Introduction	40
3.2	Historical and literary background to Ephesians	40
3.2.1	Historical background	40
3.2.2	Literary background.....	41
3.3	Thought structure of Ephesians 4:1-16.....	46
3.3.1	Discussion of the structure and content of Ephesians 4:1-16.....	49
3.4	The meaning of Ephesians 4:12	56
3.4.1	The problematic interpretation of Ephesians 4:12.....	56
3.4.2	The meaning of important concepts in Ephesians 4:12.....	59
3.4.2.1	Concept 1: τὸν καταρτισμὸν [equipping]	60
3.4.2.2	Concept 2: εἰς ἔργον διακονίας [the work of ministry].....	63
3.4.2.3	Concept 3: εἰς οἰκοδομὴν τοῦ σώματος [growth and building-up of the body]....	66
3.5	Conclusion.....	71

CHAPTER 4 CONCLUSION AS TO THE ROLE OF DISCIPLESHIP IN THE EQUIPPING OF BELIEVERS FOR MINISTRY AND GROWTH IN EPHESIANS 4:12 **74**

4.1	Introduction	74
4.2	The presence of discipleship as a New Testament concept in Ephesians 4	74

4.2.1	Discipleship and the historical background of Ephesians.....	75
4.2.2	Discipleship and the literary background of Ephesians	75
4.2.3	Discipleship and the thought-structure of Ephesians 4:1-16.....	76
4.2.4	Discipleship concepts in the immediate context of Ephesians 4:1-16.....	77
4.2.4.1	The exhortation to live worthy of one’s calling in Ephesians 4:1.....	78
4.2.4.2	Discipleship and the community of believers in Ephesians 4:1-6	78
4.2.4.3	The kingdom of God in Ephesians 4:8-10.....	79
4.3	The role of discipleship in equipping believers for ministry and growth in Ephesians 4:12	80
4.3.1.1	Discipleship and the structure of Ephesians 4:12.....	80
4.3.1.2	Discipleship and τὸν καταρτισμὸν τῶν ἀγίων in Ephesians 4:12 (the equipping of believers).....	81
4.3.1.3	Discipleship and εἰς ἔργον διακονίας in Ephesians 4:12 (for the work of ministry).....	83
4.3.1.4	Discipleship and οἰκοδομὴν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ in Ephesians 4:12 (the building up / growth of the body of Christ).....	83
4.4	Conclusion.....	85
4.5	Further avenues of research.....	86
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	88

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 3-1:	The structure of περιπατεῖν"-phrases in the second section of Ephesians.....	44
Figure 3-2:	Macro analysis of the thought structure found in Ephesians 4:1-16.....	47
Figure 3-3:	Option A: Ephesians 4:11-12 as co-ordinate.....	56
Figure 3-4:	Option B: Ephesians 4:12 as sub-ordinate.....	57

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Proposed title

The role of discipleship in the equipping of believers for ministry and growth according to
Ephesians 4:12

1.2 Background

The background of this New Testament study regarding the role of discipleship in the equipping of the church for ministry and growth in Ephesians 4:12, is multi-faceted. It can be discussed in terms of its personal, ecclesiastical, and subject-specific aspects.

1.2.1 Personal Background

The deepest motivation for this study is personal – it is the conviction that spiritual formation or growth is a necessary part of the Christian life as well as that of the functioning of the body of Christ (Keller, 2012:54; Van Heyningen, 2000:7; Reeder & Swavely, 2008:13). To undergird this conviction, one needs not think much further than Jesus' words as recorded in John 15:1-2: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit" (Bible, 2001) (see also Hebrews 5:12-14; Philippians 1:6; Ephesians 4:14-15; Proverbs 1:5; Psalm 1:3, etc.).

As members of Christ's body, believers can never be content that they have fully grown in their faith. Growth and spiritual formation is in fact part of Christ's agenda for his children and, therefore, with his body, the church, collectively (Keller, 2012:54, Marshall & Payne, 2009:72-73). The Reformer John Calvin (Institutes, 4.1.1) was so convinced of this that he characterized the church as the mother of believers. She nourishes them and guides them to grow towards maturity – a maturity that will only reach its fulfilment as we are glorified by God in full communion with him at Christ's return (Philippians 1:6).

This personal conviction has led to the practical question: "How should the leaders of the church equip believers for ministry and growth?"

1.2.2 Ecclesiastical Background

Apart from this personal motivation for studying the proposed theme, this study is also driven by an awareness of trends in protestant, reformed and evangelical churches around the globe. It is becoming increasingly clear that churches finding themselves in secular, post-modern and often

antagonistic contexts, are also struggling with the matter of church-growth. Buys (2013:1) summarizes this struggle as:

“...an international phenomenon of reformed and evangelical type churches...endeavouring to outgrow their ingrown vision and become part of God’s mission to reach unreached people groups in every corner of the world. There are lively debates on reviewing and rethinking inherited ecclesiological theological traditions and practices in churches.”

My being part of the Reformed Churches in South Africa that practice confessional, reformed theology, has made me aware of this phenomenon and its presence in our local churches (Van Helden, 2011:1; Van Heyningen 2000:1). Therefore, among other objectives, this study is meant to contribute to the above-mentioned “reviewing and rethinking inherited ecclesiological theological traditions and practices” within reformed and evangelical circles (Buys, 2013:1).

1.3 The relevance of this study to New Testament scholarship

The main motivation for studying this theme, with such a practical focus, within the subject of New Testament, is that this discipline provides the opportunity to evaluate convictions using tested exegetical methodology. In my view this is the best way to formulate principles for ministry based on Scripture. This discipline makes use of exegetical methods that are well-suited to tracing and analyzing the relationship between important concepts found in the New Testament Scriptures to demarcate its meaning (Silva, 2007:21).

The following 2 convictions need to be evaluated:

In the first place, the conviction that the way in which churches and believers are to be equipped for growth is revealed in Scripture, especially in the New Testament — hence the focus on this relevant verse: Ephesians 4:12. In this verse we note the phrase *πρὸς τὸν καταρτισμὸν τῶν ἁγίων εἰς ἔργον διακονίας, εἰς οἰκοδομὴν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ* (Bible, 2012), which can be interpreted to be the purpose of the gifts or services Christ gives his church (verse 11) (Page, 2005:26). It can be translated as “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, (Bible, 2001).

This phrase clearly speaks of the theme at hand, namely that of equipping the church for ministry and growth and is found within the context of an epistle that is clearly relevant to the topic of this study. In fact, some New Testament scholars view Ephesians as the Pauline epistle with the most comprehensive teaching on the *ekklesia* (the church) and its functioning within the will of God (Carson & Moo: 2005:493; Floor, 1995:9).

In the second place, in agreement with many authors of recent books that deal with church growth (Dever, 2004:17; DeYoung & Gilbert, 2011:62; Getz, 1974:21; Hull, 2006:35; Keller, 2012:1; Marshall & Payne, 2009:49; Smallman, 2011:9), I am convinced that this scripturally-revealed way of equipping churches and believers for growth and maturity, is part of an underlying New Testament theme – the theme of discipleship. It seems as if this emphasis on discipleship in the equipping of the church is also becoming more and more prominent in evangelical and protestant circles across the globe:

Several churches and denominations are moving in this direction with their church growth strategies.

- The Presbyterian church in North America has a committee focused on training local churches for discipleship (PCA, 2018).
- In 2013 the Reformed Churches in America launched a vision-strategy named “transformed and transforming” through which it wants to help churches grow into being transformed in Christ and involved in His kingdom. It seems that discipleship plays a big role in this strategy (RCA, 2018).
- The Christian Reformed Churches of Australia have adopted a discipleship program called the “Discipleship Matrix” as part of their Fourfold Task Strategy’s “growth” leg (CRCA, 2015:186; CRCA, 2018).

These convictions are not only widely held but already play an important role in the way the ministry of churches is shaped. Therefore, their validity certainly needs to be thoroughly and scientifically evaluated using the New Testament as basis.

1.4 Preliminary literature review

The proposed study with its different aspects is very much at home in the discipline of New Testament studies. It is important to take existing research on these concepts into consideration.

1.4.1 Discipleship as concept in New Testament studies

Discipleship as an underlying concept in the New Testament, has been studied extensively. One can think of New Testament scholars such as M.J. Wilkins (1995) with his “Discipleship in the Ancient World and Matthew’s gospel” and Rengstorf (1964) with his monumental article on the μαθητῶν-word group in the Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. They and numerous others (Hull, 2006; Longenecker, 2006; Nam, 2017; Smallman, 2011; Steyn, 2010; Shirley, 2008, etc.) have done conceptual research as well as the revelation-historical research on the meaning of discipleship and disciple-making in the New Testament. The results of their exegesis along

with my own independent exegesis make it possible to formulate a working definition of “discipleship” which can be used in further study of this theme.

There is, however, ongoing debate among these and other New Testament scholars about what discipleship entails and what role it should play in the equipping and functioning of the church (Buys, 1989:143; Gallaty, 2015:27; Hull, 2006:16-17; Smallman, 2011:9). This debate is characterized mainly by two different definitions of discipleship, each presenting different ends on the spectrum of the debate. At the one end, discipleship is understood as a narrower concept which is derived from words found only in the Gospels and Acts and therefore a concept that should not be given too much attention in ecclesiological research (Smallman, 2011:10; Van Bruggen, 1990:472; Wilkins, 1995:21). At the other end, it is viewed as a holistic concept, present throughout Scripture, which encompasses all ministry in the church. In fact, discipleship is viewed as the essence of Christian life, without which no Christian can be equipped for growth in faith (Gallaty, 2015:28; Hull, 2006:16-17; Smallman, 2011:9).

The former view does not find discipleship as a horizontal relationship in the Old Testament and therefore cannot see it play such a central role in the New Testament church which is the continuation of the Old Testament people of God. For them the emphasis rather falls on the vertical covenant-relationship between God and his people in which He disciplines them in a theocratic manner. The Word is revealed by teachers and prophets, but it is God himself that teaches his people how to live (Rengstorf, 1964:430). Since this view emphasizes the pedagogical character of discipleship, it defines discipleship for the church as transferring knowledge by preaching and teaching in catechism and sermons (Smallman, 2011:10).

The latter view, however, defines discipleship as the process of becoming and making disciples in a closely committed relationship where there is teaching as well as fellowship within a community (Smallman, 2011:13; Wilkins, 1995:41-42). This view emphasizes that God uses disciples to make disciples, equipping them through personal relationships of teaching and fellowship with other believers.

1.4.2 Equipping the believers for ministry and growth in Ephesians 4:12 in New Testament studies

In the second instance, just as with “discipleship”, scholars are divided over the meaning of equipping believers for ministry and growth in Ephesians 4:12. They mainly differ on how the relationship between the three prepositional phrases found in Ephesians 4:12 should be interpreted. Gordon (1994:78), for example (see also Lincoln, 1990:253; Page, 2005:27) contends for an understanding where the ministry of the services in Ephesians 4:11-12 is not “reduced” to

simply equipping the rest of the believers for their *διακονία*. According to Gordon (1994:78) and those that share his views, these three prepositional phrases are coordinate, meaning that the services deal with all the ministry that is described by each of the three phrases. For them the role of believers is described rather more distinctly by verses 7 and 16. Others such as Stott (1991:166-167), Floor (1995:153) and Breed (2015:6) along with Hoehner (2002:549) and Gallaty (2015:120-121), view the content of the second prepositional phrase as subordinate to the first, namely the equipping of the saints. For them it is the direct purpose of the services to equip the whole body for its *διακονία* unto the growth and unity of the believers (Ephesians 4:13).

1.4.3 New Testament studies and the relation between these two concepts

Although New Testament research has been done separately on these two concepts – discipleship in the New Testament; and equipping of the church in Ephesians 4:12 – it seems that no thorough research has been done on the relation between these two concepts in this specific text. This is the main purpose of my proposed research.

Steyn (2010) wrote a dissertation in practical theology on: “Discipleship as a ministry model for Congregation-building to the baptized members (13 to 18 years of age) in the Reformed Churches in South Africa”. He gives a thorough definition of discipleship and describes its role in the equipping of the church, but he does not focus on Ephesians 4:12.

Gallaty (2015:119-121) comes close by dealing with this text in his popular book “Rediscovering discipleship”. He contends that the “comma”-interpretation found in certain translations (e.g. KJV) of Ephesians 4:12 – where the prepositional phrases are viewed as three separate purpose-clauses - has played a major role in misunderstanding the equipping of believers. In fact, he proposes that this is the reason why discipleship as a New Testament theme and the equipping of believers, has been separated in the minds of Christians. However, his is a cursive discussion of the topic and not published as part of structured New Testament research.

A study which is of particular relevance to this research is the recent New Testament dissertation of W. Nam (2017), entitled: “A study of *μιμητής* in 1 Corinthians 7:1-11:1 from the perspective of discipleship.” Part of Nam’s research is to determine whether the theme of discipleship, as found in the gospels, should be understood as an underlying theme of *μιμητής* in 1 Corinthians 7:1-11:1 (Nam, 2017:4). Nam (2017:53) shows that there are important similarities between the concept of discipleship in the gospels and the theme of *μιμητής* in Paul’s understanding.

1.5 Problem statement

It may be asked if one would not be doing “eisegesis” by somehow forcing the theme of discipleship onto this text. However, there are several reasons why it may be possible that Paul in fact has discipleship in mind when he speaks of equipping believers for service and growth.

Firstly, as Nam (2017:53) in his study of μιμητής has pointed out, it seems that discipleship is not a strange concept to Paul. This shows that there are concepts within the Pauline corpus that denote discipleship. Secondly, there are several concepts present in Ephesians 4 that might have “discipleship” as underlying idea. In Ephesians. 4:1 & 17 Paul speaks of the believers’ “calling” and “walk of life”. ‘Calling” and “walk of life” are concepts closely related to discipleship. Hoehner (2002:504) points out that Paul uses περιπατέω in a metaphorical sense. To walk worthy of your calling, is to bring your life into balance with your calling. Later in this chapter (Ephesians.4:20) Paul deliberately uses the word ἐμάθετε (Ephesians 4:20) when he speaks about the way believers were “taught” Christ, or “brought up” in Christ. The word he chooses - ἐμάθετε (to learn-active, indicative, aorist, 2nd person, plural from of μαθάνω) is semantically linked with μαθητεύω which means to “make a disciple of” (Louw & Nida, 1989a:470; Rengstorff, 1964: 556, 563).

In Ephesians. 5:1 the believers are called to be followers of God as his children. This may reflect discipleship-thinking as discipleship has an aspect of following. One should remember Paul’s self-representation: along with calling himself a δοῦλος (slave) of Christ, Paul also calls himself an apostle of Christ (Romans 1:1) and, as such, stood in relationship with the other “apostles”. This possibly points to a background of discipleship (Matthew 28:16-20).

Also, in other letters one picks up more of these elements of discipleship. For example, in Titus 2:1-8 he directs Titus on how equipping in the congregation in Crete should take place. It seems that he has discipleship in mind here, where younger believers are mentored by older believers. Paul has the same approach to equipping in his relationship with Timothy. Paul’s close relationship with Timothy plays a key role in the way he equips Timothy – he doesn’t only teach him but calls him to imitate him as he follows Christ (2 Timothy 3:10-11; see also 1 Corinthians 4:14-17) (Marshall & Payne, 2009:72).

Lastly, we should not forget the way that Luke portrays Paul’s ministry. In Acts, Luke records the way the apostles fulfilled the mandate of Luke 24:46-49 (cf. Matthew 28:16-20). Here we repeatedly hear of new converts that are called disciples. For example, in Acts 14:22-23 we hear of people listening to Paul’s preaching, coming to faith and then being called disciples. Strikingly, in this passage Luke also notes that elders were chosen to look after these disciples (presumably

with the task of equipping the believers by strengthening them through and reminding them of the gospel). In Acts 19:30 we also hear of the believers in Ephesus, spoken of as disciples.

It's clear that one main question arises from the above: **What is the role of discipleship in the equipping of believers for ministry and growth according to Ephesians 4:12?**

The research questions that need to be dealt with in order to answer this main question, are:

- What is discipleship in the New Testament?
- What does the phrase “τὸν καταρτισμὸν τῶν ἁγίων εἰς ἔργον διακονίας εἰς οἰκοδομὴν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ χριστοῦ” in Ephesians 4:12, mean?
- What is the relation between “discipleship” and the different main parts of the phrase “τὸν καταρτισμὸν τῶν ἁγίων εἰς ἔργον διακονίας εἰς οἰκοδομὴν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ χριστοῦ” in Ephesians 4:12? This question can be subdivided as follows:
 - The relation between discipleship and καταρτισμὸν.
 - The relation between discipleship and ἔργον διακονίας.
 - The relation between discipleship and οἰκοδομὴν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ χριστοῦ.

1.6 Aim and Objectives

1.6.1 Aim

The main aim of this study is to determine what role discipleship as New Testament concept plays in Paul's understanding of the equipping of the church for ministry and growth in Ephesians 4:12.

1.6.1.1 Objectives

The following objectives flow from this aim:

- a. To carefully determine what “discipleship” as New Testament concept entails and to critically evaluate different definitions, with the purpose of arriving at an own definition of New Testament discipleship.
- b. To research the meaning of “equipping” the saints for “ministry” and ‘growth” in Ephesians 4:12 and to carefully determine what Paul has in mind in this verse.
- c. To analyse the relation between “discipleship” and the different main parts of the phrase “τὸν καταρτισμὸν τῶν ἁγίων εἰς ἔργον διακονίας εἰς οἰκοδομὴν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ χριστοῦ” in Ephesians 4:12, with the goal of determining the role that discipleship should play in the equipping of believers for ministry and growth, according to Ephesians 4:12.

1.7 Central theoretical argument

The central theoretical argument of this dissertation is that Paul, at least to some extent, has discipleship (as found in the rest of the New Testament) in mind when he speaks of the equipping of the church for ministry and growth in Ephesians 4:12.

1.8 Methodology

This exegetical study will be done from the perspective of Reformed theology. The whole of this study assumes the reformed view of Scripture and, accordingly, of the Christian faith (Belgic Confession, Art. 2-7; Heidelberg Catechism, Canons of Dordt). This view of Scripture determines the way in which scripture is treated using the grammatic-historical approach.

To reach the above-mentioned objectives the following methodology will be used:

- a. A literature study of research done by New Testament Scholars on the meaning of “discipleship” in the New Testament will be done; this will be supplemented by a cursive revelation-historical study of the same concept using the methodology of Jordaan (2003:619) which is comparable to the application of biblical theology as used by Walter C. Kaiser (2008) in his *The Promise-Plan of God* (cf. Coetsee, 2014:8).
- b. Thorough grammatic-historical exegesis will be done of Ephesians 4:12, to determine the meaning of equipping believers for ministry and growth. This will be done mainly following the exegetical method of Fee (2002) as taught in his handbook for ‘New Testament Exegesis’. Where necessary, it may be supplemented by the exegetical methodology of Michael J. Gorman (2010) as discussed in his exegetical guide “Elements of Biblical Exegesis.” (see also Silva, 2007:21). The following exegetical elements, based on the above-mentioned methodology, receives attention in chapter three of this dissertation:
 - The historical and literary background of Ephesians
 - The thought structure of Ephesians 4:1-16
 - The meaning of Ephesians 4:12 will be determined by studying the micro-structure of this verse as well as the meaning of important concepts in this verse
- c. The relationship between these concepts will then be determined by means of analysis and synthesis, with the purpose of coming to conclusions about the role that discipleship plays in the equipping of believers for ministry and growth according to Ephesians 4:12.

1.9 Chapter division

This is a mini-dissertation which consists of an introductory chapter, two research chapters and a concluding chapter with bibliography.

Chapter 1: Introduction (based on research proposal)

Chapter 2: Defining discipleship as a New Testament concept

Chapter 3: The meaning of equipping believers for ministry and growth in Ephesians 4:12

Chapter 4: Conclusion as to the role of discipleship in the equipping of believers for ministry and growth in Ephesians 4:12

Bibliography

1.10 Preliminary clarification of some key terms

1.10.1 Discipleship

Discipleship as term is derived from the *μανθάνω* word-group in the New Testament, (simply put – “to learn”) It is related to words such as *μαθητής*, meaning “disciple”; *μαθητεύω* meaning “to make or be a disciple”, etc. (Rengstorf, 1964:390).

Discipleship as such then refers to the state of being a disciple (Hull, 2006:35). Thus, discipleship is a process of continual learning within the context of a committed relationship (Wilkins, 1995:12).

However, the following nuances are important:

- Biblical discipleship is not only an intellectual, pedagogical agreement between a master and pupil. In the first century classical-Greek and Hellenistic context, it was already a relational concept. Here the pupil is also an adherent and follower, living in fellowship with the one he or she is a disciple of (Hull, 2006:67; Wilkins, 1995:41).
- Biblical discipleship is unique in that it always starts with the gospel of the kingdom of God being preached, and along with it the call to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ as the King of that kingdom (Matthew 4:17-19; Mark 1:15-17; Luke 4:43;5; John 2:36-37;50-51). The Holy Spirit brings the person to conviction of this call and into a relationship with Christ based on grace (Acts 16:14; John 6:44). By means of this sustained relationship of teaching, adherence and fellowship, the truth of the gospel is personally applied in the disciple’s heart.
- Biblical discipleship takes place within the context of the church as the body of Christ (Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 14:22-23; Ephesians 4:11-16). Here the Spirit uses the ministry of the Word, within the community of believers and applied within personal relationships, to sanctify believers (Smallman, 2011:21).

1.10.2 Ministry

I am informed by the research of Breed (2012:1-8) in my understanding of *διακονία* (ministry), that it refers to the total ministry of the church in obedient service to her head, Christ. The believer is delegated and sent as a servant to obey the command of Christ. Notably, as Breed (2012:3) shows, this *διακονία* does not only refer to bodily, or physical serving but in the first place refers to an inner disposition of humble, loving service as a representative of Christ (Collins¹, 2014:57-77). In this service the servant or minister acts on the grounds of Christ's authority, using the gifts that Christ has bestowed on him or her, to serve others with the humble love of Christ (Philippians 2:5-11).

1.10.3 Church growth

For this introductory chapter I tentatively define church growth as the result of the verb *οικοδομῶ* which means "to increase the potential of someone or something, with focus upon the process involved - 'to strengthen, to make more able, to build up.'" (Louw & Nida: 1989a:677-678). It is the quantitative as well as qualitative building up of the church in its unity and sanctity in relation to Christ, its head (Buys, 1989:58). The purpose of this growth can be described in terms of Ephesians 4:13-14 as the firm unity of faith and the unwavering knowledge of Christ. Through *οικοδομῶ* the church matures in its knowledge of, belief in and service to Christ; and consequently, grows in its witness of Christ in the world. This intensive and extensive growth of the church is mutually inclusive (Floor, 1995:154).

¹ Collins (2014) has done notable research on the meaning of *διακονία* in the New Testament. In chapter 3 of this dissertation his understanding of *διακονία* is discussed and critiqued.

CHAPTER 2 DEFINING DISCIPLESHIP AS A NEW TESTAMENT CONCEPT

2.1 Introduction

The main aim of this dissertation is to determine the role that discipleship as New Testament concept plays in Paul's understanding of equipping the church for ministry and growth in Ephesians 4:12. In order to reach this objective it is of primary importance to define the concept of New Testament discipleship. Disciple-*ship*, as a derived term, is never used in the New Testament, yet the underlying concept is presented by terms such as, μαθάνω [to learn], μαθητής [pupil, disciple], μαθητεύω [to become a disciple or make a disciple], ἀκολουθεῖν [to follow], καλεῖν [to call – as in calling], διδάσκαλος [teacher, Rabbi], etc.

Discipleship is usually defined in terms of what being a disciple means. The analogy between discipleship and disciple is seen in the definition of Marshall and Payne (2016:64) "...a disciple is a learner; discipleship is 'learnership'". Although the researcher disagrees with the statement that a disciple is simply a learner, the analogy is clear: discipleship refers to the state of being a disciple. Hull (2006:35) states: "...discipleship has a nice ongoing feel – a sense of journey, the idea of becoming a disciple rather than having been made a disciple". His definition points out that discipleship refers to a long-term state of being and growing in relationship to a master (Marshall & Payne, 2016:65). In line with these definitions and that of Wilkins (1995:221) which is discussed below, the following definition of discipleship is taken as a point of departure: a disciple refers to a follower or pupil of a master; discipleship refer to the state or process of being such a disciple within a long-term, committed, disciple-master relationship.

This chapter contains the results of a literature study that surveys research by New Testament Scholars on the meaning of "discipleship" in the New Testament. It is supplemented by the results of a cursive independent revelation-historical study² of the same concept. The goal of this chapter is to arrive at a more specific and exegetically undergirded definition of discipleship as found in the New Testament.

2.2 The background to New Testament discipleship

New Testament discipleship as concept, should be viewed against the background of at least two important historical lines. Firstly, the history of the concept as it developed in the sphere of

² This is done using the methodology of Jordaan (2003:619) which is comparable to the application of biblical theology as used by Walter C. Kaiser (2008) in his work "The Promise-Plan of God" (cf. Coetsee, 2014:8).

Classical- and Hellenistic Greek language and culture. Secondly, the history of the concept as it developed from the Old Testament and the Jewish background (Rabbinate) to the New Testament.

2.2.1 Discipleship in Classical Greek and Hellenism

K.H. Rengstorf (1964) has had an important influence on New Testament discipleship-research. His article on the *μανθάνω* word-group as published in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (1964), is still widely referred to in research on this theme. Rengstorf (1964:390-461) looks at this concept in the context of Classical Greek, the Old Testament, the Jewish Rabbinate, the New Testament and that of the early church. He spends most of his attention on the verb *μανθάνω* and the derived noun *μαθητής*, looking only cursorily at the verb *μαθητεύω* and other relevant terms. From his research he discerns an ordinary use, a cultic (religious) use and a philosophical use of this word-group.

In the ordinary sense the verb simply denoted 'directing one's mind to something, making oneself accustomed to something, or to seek to learn something from experience.' In this sense it strongly denotes acquiring a set of skills under the instruction of a master as part of an apprenticeship (Rengstorf, 1964:391-392). This verb is ordinarily used in Classical Greek to denote, "if not always with equal clarity, an intellectual process... and this always has external effects" (Rengstorf, 1964:392). In this ordinary sense the noun refers to the person that is the subject of this process. Rengstorf (1964:416) makes it clear that this process cannot only involve a *μαθητής*, but always implies a direct dependence of the *μαθητής* on a *διδάσκαλος*. "In this relationship the education consists in the appropriation or adoption of specific knowledge or conduct...that...proceeds deliberately and according to a set plan...The process involves a corresponding personal relationship" (Rengstorf, 1964:416).

In the cultic sense, this word-group is used in connection with the ancient mystery religions of the Greeks, as well as with master-disciple relationships that have a religious aspect to them. The mystery religions of ancient Greece made use of discipleship to initiate new members into a religious society gathered around a deity. The initiate needed the master to introduce him to the mysteries of the god and the cultus. This can be seen as a type of discipleship. The goal is fellowship with the deity, rather than knowledge of the deity and can be an impersonal relationship with the teacher (Rengstorf, 1964:421).

Buys (1989:144) also refers to these ancient Grecian mystery cults. He does, however, come to a different conclusion to Rengstorf (1964:421). He notes that the use of discipleship in these cults was, in fact, very personal and sometimes informal, with the disciple following the teacher's life-example. There might possibly have been a diversity of approaches to discipleship in these cultic

movements, with some being more personal than others. From this it can be deduced that discipleship in religious spheres often took the form of a personal relationship and often played an important role in the incorporation of someone into a religious society.

An overlapping religious and philosophical aspect is found in some master-disciple relationships. Teachers such as Pythagoras and Epicurus were often venerated by their followers (Rengstorf, 1964:422). This happened as they bound their followers to their own person and made them learn their own teachings by heart. In these master-disciple relations one sees a pedagogic aspect accompanied by a relationship of fellowship. The disciple becomes like his master as he follows his master and lives in relationship with his master.

Rengstorf (1964:397-398) states that in the philosophical spheres of Classical- and Hellenistic Grecian culture, discipleship came to be completely intellectualized. According to him, the relevant terms came to denote a purely theoretical learning process, focusing one-dimensionally on the *voũs* (the faculty of intellectual perception, BDAG, 2000:680). This is exemplified in the way the Sophist schools used the term *μανθάνω* to denote a purely theoretical process of acquiring knowledge as part of formal education in exchange for payment (Rengstorf, 1964:420). Rengstorf points to Socrates and his pupil Plato who reacted against this form of impersonal pupil-master relationships by refusing to allow their relationship with their own followers to be described in terms of *διδάσκαλος* and *μαθητής*. Their relationship with their followers was more in line with the ordinary and cultic sense – a relationship where fellowship and education were combined. As Du Rand (1991:314) states: “Socrates saw himself as teacher, assisting people in recollecting what they already had learned rather than imparting information.” First and foremost, they offered themselves to their disciples. It was then in the process of living together, that they passed on their wisdom to kindle a specific attitude toward life in their pupils. They wanted to benefit their followers, rather than rule over them. Based on Du Rand’s (1991:314) understanding of these terms, it’s the researcher’s view that Rengstorf (1964:417) mistakenly infers from Socrates and Plato’s reaction that intellectual element of the terms *διδάσκαλος* and *μαθητής* completely dominated the meaning of these terms in Classical- and Hellenistic Greek. If researchers follow Rengstorf’s view uncritically, this may result in a misunderstanding of discipleship by the time of the New Testament as a purely intellectual venture.

In this regard Wilkins (1995:14-15) has rightly challenged Rengstorf. He traces the use of discipleship-terminology by surveying it as found in works by prominent Classical and Hellenistic authors. Contrary to Rengstorf, he shows that the concept of discipleship was, in fact, still used in a variety of ways, even in philosophical spheres, by the end of the classical period. From the classical section of Wilkins’s (1995:21-29) survey it’s clear that Socrates and Plato, in fact, only refrained from using these terms when there was the risk of confusing their followers with the

pupils of the Sophist Schools. At the end of his survey Wilkins (1995:124) comes to the important and contrary conclusion that "...by the time of the New Testament and Josephus, μαθητής carried the general and technical associations of follower, with the type of discipleship determined by the one leading."

When Wilkins's conclusion is considered it makes sense to rather understand discipleship in the New Testament as a relational mode of teaching. The disciple experiences fellowship with a master that teaches him throughout their experience of life together, rather than just a pupil-master relationship where the main emphasis falls on intellectual education. A purely intellectual understanding of discipleship could be a matter of incorrectly projecting one aspect of contemporary education into the meaning of New Testament discipleship.

Conclusion as to the meaning of discipleship as seen against the Classical and Hellenistic background:

Discipleship as a concept was familiar to the religious, cultural and philosophical background of the New Testament. The state of being a disciple was, in fact, seen as a major vehicle for growth, both in knowledge as well as character throughout the centuries before the New Testament.

- Apart from certain specific philosophical schools, discipleship took place within a committed relationship of fellowship through which teaching took place under the guidance of a master.
- Discipleship could be formal or informal.
- Discipleship could also include the veneration of a master.

2.2.2 Discipleship in the Old Testament and Septuagint

The second aspect of historical development that had an important influence on the meaning of New Testament discipleship, is its Old Testament background. This background played a major role in the minds of the New Testament writers who were often from a Jewish background.

The major issue that divides researchers on the subject of discipleship in the Old Testament, is whether discipleship is truly present in the Old Testament, and if so, how it should be understood. Rengstorf (1964:426) speaks of a "material" problem, when dealing with the noun תלמיד (pupil) which is the equivalent of μαθητής (disciple) as used in the Greek Septuagint.

The material problem entails that the noun, μαθητής, does not occur in the established Septuagint tradition (only in three passages that are part of an insignificant ground text), and that the Hebrew equivalent of the noun, is found in only one Old Testament passage - 1 Chronicles 25:8

(Rengstorf, 1964:426-427). Rengstorf (1964:427-428) suggests that this means that there's no clear evidence of a horizontal master-disciple relationship in the Old Testament, where one human is guided by another human in the process of their spiritual growth before God. He doesn't see any of this among the prophets nor among the scribes. He states the following reasons:

“The religion of Israel is a religion of revelation. Here, then, the religious speech of man is simply the means which God uses to make known Himself and His will...In the sphere of revelation there is no place for the establishment of a master-disciple relation, nor is there the possibility of setting up a human word alongside the Word of God which is proclaimed, nor of trying to ensure the force of the divine address by basing it on the authority of a great personality... God's word alone is justified...”(Rengstorf, 1964:430-431).

This is in line with his understanding of the verb לָמַד/μανθάνω, and its use in the Old Testament. This verb, related to the above-mentioned noun, occurs some 55 times in the Old Testament. The Hebrew root, occurring 40 times, has the basic meaning of either acquiring personal information, or to accustom oneself to something by exercise. In the context of divine revelation, the “word is in some sense used for the process wherein man subjects himself to fulfilment of the will of God as this is intimated especially in the Law.” (Rengstorf, 1964:401).

In Rengstorf's view there is only one “Master-disciple” relationship in the Old Testament – it is that of God with His people. God reveals His will, making use of the direct witness and proclamation of His prophets and servants. Israel as a people are to heed God's words, learn them and obey Him. Thus, Rengstorf (1964:430-431) finds only a vertical discipleship between God and His people for which He makes use of people as instruments of revelation.

The researcher agrees with Wilkins (1995:44) and Hull (2006:54) in his wake, who have criticized Rengstorf for being mistaken about his so-called “material problem”. Wilkins (1995:44) convincingly argues that the presence of a concept should not be equated with the material presence of the lexical terms that represent it. A concept is often represented by multiple terms used to express different aspects thereof. Apart from this, Wilkins (1995:46-49) clearly proves the material presence of Old Testament terms that are explicitly related to the concept of discipleship. He carefully looks at the use of the verb לָמַד /μανθάνω and its use in the Masoretic text of the Old Testament as well as that of the Septuagint. He shows that apart from the one instance where the noun תַּלְמִיד (pupil) is used in 1 Chronicles 25:8, there are other instances where the passive participle of this word is used in reference to someone in the process of learning under the guidance of a human teacher. Contrary to Rengstorf (1964:427) Wilkins (1995:46-49) is convinced that these instances prove the presence of a horizontal discipleship that plays an instrumental role in the vertical discipleship between God and his people. These

instances are found in Isaiah 8:16 & 50:4 (Wilkins ,1995:46-48). In these texts, God is primarily the one discipling his people; however, Isaiah is described as more than just a mechanical mouthpiece of God. He is intimately involved in the religious life of these people as their teacher.

Wilkins (1995:51-91) also studies the existence of this concept in the Old Testament by looking at passages where the concept is present although the lexical terms indicating discipleship, are absent. He shows how there is a clear inclination towards organic discipleship relationships in the Old Testament. This entails accountability, spiritual mentorship and submission to be shaped by a teacher. He sees this in the relationship between Moses and Joshua³, between the prophets and the kings⁴, among the prophets⁵ themselves and later also among the scribes (see also Hull, 2006:56-59). What is clear from passages such as Deuteronomy 6, Psalm 78, Nehemiah 8, as well as from the whole spectrum of wisdom literature in the Old Testament, is that the family, elders and religious leaders played an instrumental role in the spiritual formation of each person in that society (Wilkins, 1995:71). There's a clear emphasis on mentorship and purposeful upbringing of children in the fear of the Lord, in line with the covenant. There's a resounding emphasis on the instilling of wisdom in young adults as they move into full adulthood (Proverbs 1:1-6,8; 2:1; 3:1; 4:1; etc.) This formation takes place within the context of personal, and committed relationships, where one person, more mature in faith and knowledge of God, guides the another who is less mature in faith and knowledge.

Conclusion as to the meaning of discipleship in the Old Testament:

- Discipleship is no strange concept to the Old Testament.
- Here it also refers to a personal, committed relationship where a person is guided along a process of growth in knowledge and faith, by another.
- The centrality of God's revelation is clear – discipleship centres on the understanding of God's will which is revealed in the Torah and by the Prophets.
- There is no conflict between God as the primary Master of His people, and His use of mature believers as personal instruments to bring His revelation to bear on the lives of His people.
- God uses discipleship within organic relationships to have His truth worked out practically in everyday life, in line with the covenant.

³ Ex. 24:13. "He was by his side from there on" (Bible, 2001).

⁴ Prophets are often sent to guide kings spiritually: Isaiah – King Hezekiah and others (Peels & Snyman, 2012:40); Nathan –King David (Psalm 51:2), etc.

⁵ This is seen in 1 Samuel 10:5, The so-called sons of the prophets that worked under Elijah and Elisha. Elisha guides them as Elijah guided him (2 Kings 4:38) (Wilkins, 1995:90-91).

2.2.3 Discipleship in the Rabbinate

It's important to have a clear view of the meaning of discipleship in the Jewish Rabbinate in order to understand New Testament discipleship.

As part of his survey of discipleship in the broader first-century Jewish society, Wilkins (1995:92-125) also pays attention to discipleship in the Rabbinate. He describes the Rabbinate as one of several important discipleship movements⁶ in 1st Century Jewish society. It was is strongly connected to the legalistic renewal movement of the Pharisees, that wanted to bring religious reform to a Jewish society that was heavily influenced by Hellenism (Wilkins, 1995:106-107). They seem to have been the sponsors of the Rabbinate as a formal, structured movement. In Rengstorf's (1964:431-441) research of the term תלמיד (pupil), he shows that it clearly refers to someone in a formal educational relationship to a Rabbi (a teacher).

Discipleship in the Rabbinate was reserved for men alone and only the brightest young men were allowed to become disciples of important Rabbis (Rengstorf, 1964:444). It was a hierarchical movement and separate titles developed in order to distinguish between a new disciple and a disciple approaching the level of knowledge his Rabbi had (Rengstorf, 1964:432). The purpose of becoming the disciple of a Rabbi was primarily to gain knowledge of the Torah and to become skilled at interpreting it (Van der Walt, 2007:159-160). A disciple would strive to one day become an ordained Rabbi like his Master (Hull, 2006:62; Rengstorf, 1964:432). The dominating element of the Jewish Rabbinate was unmistakably the teaching of the Torah and was therefore called the "school of Moses" (Rengstorf, 1964:437; Wilkins, 1995:106-108, see also John 9:28). Rabbis would teach their disciples their own methodology of interpretation and application of the Torah, making use of narratives and real-life situations. These disciples would follow their Rabbis, not only in teaching but also in lifestyle and habit (Hull, 2006:62, Van der Walt, 2007:159). Their followers would learn their stories, their way of keeping the Sabbath and their methods of understanding the Scriptures.

Conclusion about the meaning of discipleship in the Jewish Rabbinate

- First-century Jewish discipleship happened in a committed, long-term relationship containing both an educational process and practical focus on the formation of character. It focused on mastering the teachings and interpretation methods of a Rabbi and on living like one's Rabbi.

⁶ John the Baptist with a purist form of discipleship – repent, seek God and serve him. (Hull, 2006:60); Separatist movements such as the Essenes at Qumran – a reaction to the spiritual lethargy among the priesthood (Hull, 2006:60); the Zealots – a reactionary messianic group that wanted a messianic liberation from their Roman oppressors (Hull, 2006:61), etc.

- It was a renewal movement that wanted to return the Jewish society to its cultural roots in the Torah. It can be described as a tradition that wanted to preserve the teachings of Moses for generations to come.
- First-century Jewish discipleship culminated in the ordaining of a disciple as a Rabbi himself.
- To become a disciple, one had to be of a certain gender, intellectual ability and religious upbringing. It was one's own responsibility to apply for discipleship under a Rabbi. This made it a matter of status and class.

2.3 The New Testament witness to discipleship

Keeping the meaning of discipleship in the above contexts⁷ in mind, we now turn to the New Testament evidence of discipleship. Attention is paid to the research of New Testament scholars on the meaning of discipleship in the New Testament, as well as to the results of an independent revelation-historical study. For the purpose of this dissertation the focus mainly falls on the general characteristics of discipleship as found in the Gospels, Acts and the Pauline Corpus⁸.

A cursive look at New Testament research on discipleship, reveals that Jesus' discipleship has many similarities to that of the Jewish Rabbinate, the Greek Philosophers and the Old Testament. This is seen in its pedagogic focus, its emphasis on understanding the Scriptures and the practical focus on living from a master's teaching in everyday life. Yet, Jesus' discipleship fits the conclusion which Wilkins (1995:221) has come to with regards to the general meaning of discipleship at the time of the New Testament: (see above 2.2.1) "...μαθητής carried the general and technical associations of follower, with the type of discipleship determined by the one leading" (Wilkins, 1995:221). The difference between Jesus' discipleship and that of others, is found, not so much in His methodology, as in the content He gives His discipleship.

In the gospel-accounts and Acts this becomes exceedingly clear. Ultimately, Jesus' disciples did not only follow him as teacher, or as popular Messianic figure that brings political or economic freedom, but as Lord and Saviour who rules over all of life (Bosch, 2011:23; Hull, 2006:65-66; Rengstorf, 1964:442-443).

What follows is a cursive overview of discipleship as portrayed in the four gospel-accounts and Acts. The specific canonical⁹ information of these accounts cannot be discussed here, and the

⁷ Classical Greek and Hellenistic context, the Old Testament context and the Jewish Rabbinate

⁸ The goal of this dissertation is to determine the role that discipleship plays in Ephesians 4:12, which is viewed by the researcher as a Pauline letter (see Carson & Moo, 2005:480-486).

⁹ The researcher takes the traditional view on the authority of these accounts (see Carson & Moo, 2005:142; 174-177;203-206; 232).

purpose is mainly to portray the essential aspects of discipleship as found in these accounts. Firstly, the general characteristics of discipleship in the gospels and Acts is discussed, followed by a discussion of the relevance that New Testament discipleship has for the post-resurrection community.

2.3.1 The general characteristics of discipleship in the Gospels and Acts

As part of the general characteristics of discipleship, the kingdom-orientation of discipleship, the call to discipleship and the content of New Testament discipleship, are discussed below.

2.3.1.1 The kingdom-orientation of New Testament discipleship

Ridderbos (1950:5) introduced his monumental work “De komst van het koninkryk”¹⁰ by saying that the central theme of Jesus’ preaching in the gospels is the coming of the kingdom of God. This is in line with the fact that in all four of the gospel-accounts, there is at some point clear reference to Jesus’ ministry and its explicit connection to the coming of God’s kingdom (Mt. 4:17, Mk. 1:14-15; Lk. 4:43 & Jn. 2:36-37; 50-51).

It is not within the scope of this dissertation¹¹ to discuss the theme of God’s kingdom in its entirety. It suffices to say that this theme, intertwined with the theme of the covenant, is firmly rooted in the Old Testament¹² (Ps.2, Ps. 110, 2 Sam.7:16 etc.). It stretches throughout Scripture and can be traced from beginning to end (Helberg, 2011:9, Van der Walt, 2007:38)). It’s present at the creation account (Genesis 1 &2), where God’s created kingdom lives under His sovereign reign (Helberg, 2011:9). It is present at the fall into sin which was rebellion against God’s kingdom and the rise of Satan’s rebellious reign as a false king (cf. Genesis 3) (Helberg, 2011:8). It continues throughout the covenant history, where God restores His reign as king over a people that He has chosen for Himself in the covenant (Van der Walt, 2007:39-40). It culminates in the coming of God’s kingdom in His Son Jesus Christ and the complete restoration of that kingdom at the consummation of all things at Christ’s return (Revelation 20:11, 21:3-5 etc.) (Helberg, 2011:9, van der Walt, 2007:46).

¹⁰ This work was translated and republished in English in 1975 as “The coming of the kingdom”. This work of the Dutch New Testament scholar, Herman Ridderbos, can be viewed as one of the most important works of the 20th century on the revelation-historical content of the New Testament.

¹¹ For a thorough discussion of this theme a number of works may be seen: The above work by Ridderbos as well as the “The kingdom of God” by John Albright is viewed as classical renditions of this theme. Helberg (2011) “The Lord reigns” gives a cursive overview of this theme with special reference to the Old Testament.

¹² Although the term “kingdom of God” is never used as such in the Old Testament, the concept is present (Helberg, 2011:7).

One of the most important aspects of this theme is that God's kingdom is a dynamic concept. This means that His kingdom doesn't primarily refer to a certain physical or geographical area, but rather to God's dominion itself (Helberg, 2011:10). God's kingdom breaks into the world and into the lives of people through the coming of a Person – the Person of His Son, Jesus Christ (DeYoung & Gilbert, 2011:85; Snyman & Floor, 1969:37).

Along with the dynamic nature of His kingdom, there is also an important tension between the “already” and “not yet” aspects of His kingdom (Bock, 2012:205-209). This is seen in the fact that God's kingdom arrived in the Person of Jesus Christ and yet it will only be consummated at the return of Christ (Revelation 21:5-6) (Van der Walt, 2007: 46-47). Therefore, the New Testament has constant references to both the arrival of God's kingdom, as well as to the eager expectation of its consummation (Mark 1:14-15; Romans 8; 1 Pet. 1:3-9; Heb. 2:8-9 etc.).

The relationship between discipleship and the kingdom of God

The relationship between New Testament discipleship and the Kingdom of God is especially seen in the *call*, *content* and *mission* of Jesus' disciples.

Firstly, in all four gospel-accounts the *calling* of the first disciples (Mt.4:17-19, Mk. 1:14-17, Lk.4:43 - 5:11, Jn 1:36-37; 50-51), as well as that of Levi, (Mt. 9:9-13; Mk. 2:14-17; Lk. 5:27-32) is deliberately and structurally related to the announcement of the arrival of the kingdom of God (Green, 1997:226-227; Hagner, 1993:75; Van Bruggen, 1988:51; Strauss, 2014:76,). In all three synoptic gospels the calling of the first disciples is immediately preceded by Jesus' announcement of the coming of the kingdom of God. The disciples follow Jesus after hearing Him announce the kingdom of God and its arrival in Him. In John 1:36-37; 50-51 the motive for following Jesus is the same as that in the synoptic gospels: it's when the disciples hear that He is the Lamb of God, and the promised King of Israel (see also Revelation 14:4-5) that they start to follow him (see Michaels, 2010:120 on John 1:39)

Secondly, the *content* of Jesus' discipleship is also kingdom-oriented. This can be seen, for example, in the different renditions of the so-called “Sermon on the Mount” (Matthew 5:1-7:26; Luke 6:17-49). This teaching of Jesus can be viewed as an orientation of His disciples towards the kingdom of God as it has arrived in their lives through His presence (Ferguson,1987:3; Van der Walt, 2007:188). This focus is also seen in Jesus' use of parables and His interaction with the disciples, as seen in the kingdom-parables of Matthew 13, Mark 4 and Luke 8 where the essence of God's kingdom is expounded (Van der Walt, 2007:179-180). Jesus addresses the crowds (cf. Matthew13:2) using these parables, yet, as seen in Matthew 13:36, Jesus made sure that His own disciples were the ones who clearly understood them. This emphasizes the fact that the

disciples are the ones who receive true knowledge and comprehension of God's kingdom (Cf. Mark 4:10-11; Luke 8:10).

Thirdly, the relationship between Jesus' discipleship and the kingdom of God is seen in the accounts where Jesus, after His resurrection, commissions His disciples to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom to the whole world. In Mark 16:15-16¹³ they are commanded to go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to all of humanity. Here, "gospel" cannot mean anything other than that portrayed in Mark – namely the Good news of the arrival of God's kingdom (Mark 1:14-15) in Jesus Christ (Van Bruggen, 1988:396).

In Matthew 28:16-20 the same kingdom-focus is evident. Buys's (1989:156-159) structural analysis of these verses clearly shows the link between Christ's authority over all things (Matthew 28:18) and the imperative to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19). After discussing the kingdom-emphasis in the three participial phrases of verse 19-20, he concludes that Christ's purpose in making disciples through His church, is that His all-encompassing authority may be known everywhere (see also Hagner, 1993:886-887).

In Luke 24:47-48 the disciples are commissioned to be witnesses of Christ's suffering and resurrection; and they are to proclaim repentance and forgiveness of sin in His Name among all people – from Jerusalem and onward. Here, once again, Christ's royal authority plays a central role in the mission of the disciples. They are to proclaim the gospel in His name and as Acts 2:29-36 shows, those who believe receive salvation only in His name (Bock, 2012:205).

From this brief reference to the relationship between discipleship and the kingdom of God as found in the gospels and Acts, it can be deduced that following Jesus into discipleship primarily means acknowledging Him as the promised King over all things who brings the fulfilment of all the promises of the covenant in the Old Testament. Being commissioned by Him means to become His royal envoys among all nations.

2.3.1.2 The call to New Testament discipleship

In the above discussion it was established that New Testament discipleship is oriented to the kingdom of God. Now it's important to understand the role that Jesus' *call* plays in New Testament discipleship. Contrary to the Greek Philosophical schools and the Jewish Rabbinate, Jesus started His discipleship with a call to follow Him, rather than having disciples apply for discipleship with Him (Bosch, 2011:23; Hull, 2006:65-66; Smallman, 2011:10; Rengstorf, 1964:443). In certain

¹³ Although there is almost full consensus that Mark 16:9-20 is an addition to the original text of Mark, the researcher still views it as an addition that stands in line with the whole of Mark and that it should be taken as authoritative (van Bruggen, 1988:396)

texts, such as John 2:49, 6:44, 10:29 & 15:16 it's clear that His call to discipleship is based on a premeditated choice made by Him, in line with His Father's will.

Some researchers (Bosch, 2011:53; Buys, 1989:151-152; Hull, 2006:67; Smallman, 2011:10) have equated this "call" to discipleship to the call to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. By acknowledging this link between the call to discipleship and the call to conversion a whole new perspective on New Testament discipleship is opened up. If the call to discipleship is the same as the call to repentance and faith in Jesus, it logically follows that the life of all believers should be viewed as discipleship.

The Scriptural evidence for this is convincing. In Mark 1:14-20 Jesus starts His ministry by proclaiming the gospel saying: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." (Bible, 2001). In the immediate context of this proclamation Mark then continues to describe the calling and answer of the first disciples (Mark 1:16-20). From this it can be argued that Mark structurally links Jesus' call to repentance and faith in the gospel, with the call to discipleship (Smallman, 2009:22-23).

Jesus' own description of his discipleship in John 3:3 supports this. Here a conversation between Jesus and a Rabbi, Nicodemus, pertaining to the origin of Jesus' ministry, unfolds. Jesus unequivocally states that no-one can see the kingdom of heaven if he or she isn't reborn (Michaels, 2010:179). In John 3:4-5 He then explains this rebirth as being born of the Spirit. Thus, in this passage it's clear that truly answering Jesus' call to discipleship, is about grasping the fact that the kingdom of God has arrived in Jesus, and also entails believing in Him through the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit (see Matthew 16:17).

In Luke 5:5 to 8, where Peter is called as disciple, there is more support for this. Here Peter's change of heart is seen in the different ways he addresses Jesus. Before Jesus' divine power is displayed, Peter calls him "master" (Luke 5:5); afterwards he acknowledges Him as being "Lord". Importantly, Peter immediately acknowledges his own sinfulness when He sees Jesus' divine power in the miracle of the fish (Green, 1997:233). This can be understood as the start of repentance. This is also seen in Luke 19, where Jesus requests of Zacchaeus to enter his home. Zacchaeus similarly acknowledges his sin and decides to live a radically different life. On both these occasions the call to discipleship is answered with repentance.

Furthermore, in texts such as Mark 10:17-31 (also Luke 18:18-30 and Matthew 19:16-30) Jesus clearly shows that following Him is the result of a divine work in the heart of a person. In these passages, a young man asks Jesus how to receive eternal life. Jesus' answer entails two things – firstly turning away from his present life (repentance) by selling everything that was of more

value to him than Christ himself, and, secondly, following Him as disciple into a life of faith (Strauss, 2014:441). When His disciples remark that it is impossible for people to do this, Jesus answers that it may be impossible for people, but it is possible for God.

As will be discussed in 2.3.2 it can also be seen from Acts 11:26 that being Christian (i.e. belonging to Christ) and being a disciple is the same thing in Luke's understanding (Bock, 2012:244-245). It's the logical conclusion then that the call to discipleship and the call to become a "Christian" is the same.

From the above it can be deduced that the call to discipleship bears the expectation of handing over control of one's entire life. It's not a call to mere intellectual acceptance of Jesus' teachings, but a call to personal fellowship and faith in Jesus Christ, where one acknowledges Him as the Son of God who brings the kingdom of God. This personal fellowship starts with the confession of sin, repentance and faith in Jesus. God Triune is involved in this call: the Father elects people to be disciples of His Son (Matthew 16:17; John 6:40; 10:29; 17:24); the Spirit brings them to the true faith and life in the Son (Luke 3:16; John 6:63; 14:26) and continues to teach, comfort and remind the disciples of their Master's teachings.

2.3.1.3 The content of New Testament discipleship as found in the Gospels and Acts

It has now been established that Jesus' call to discipleship is a call to hear the gospel of the kingdom and to answer by means of a confession of sin, repentance and faith in Him. Consequently, it's important to have a clear view of what it means to continue to follow Him in this state of discipleship. The following section portrays the research of different New Testament scholars on the content of New Testament discipleship. The purpose is to give a general overview of the perspectives which Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and Acts give.

2.3.1.3.1 Matthew's perspective on discipleship

Van der Walt (2007:167) discerns two major facets in Jesus' ministry as found in Matthew 4:23 and 9:35, namely, what Jesus said - His teachings, and what He did - His miracles. According to Van der Walt (2007:167) this simultaneous approach played a primary role in the discipleship of Jesus' followers. It meant that disciples were intimately present during Jesus' teachings as well as during his miracles and deeds. Although Jesus made use of the conventional teaching methods of that time, such as proverbs, teachings, imagery and parables, it was the content of His teaching that was fundamental to His discipleship (Van der Walt, 2007:170-172). In Jesus' teachings his followers were constantly confronted with and reminded of the reality of His kingdom. In His miracles and His service to others they continued to see His divine authority and power displayed before their eyes (Van der Walt, 2007:168). It is clear that His purpose was

always to enlighten their minds with knowledge of Himself as the Son of God and the fulfilment of all the covenant promises in the Old Testament (see also Luke 4:17-20; 24:27;28 etc.) (Carson, 2014:70, Oh, 1998:47).

The results of a survey done by Viljoen (2011:2-12) accentuates this. Viljoen (2011) focuses on the titles used to address Jesus in Matthew. In summarizing his findings Viljoen (2011:16) says: “The evangelist portrays Jesus in profound and exalted terms. Through Him God became present in an unprecedented way. In Him God inaugurated the new definite age of salvation.” (Viljoen, 2011:16). Clearly, discipleship entails being a witness of the inauguration of this age of salvation in Christ.

Although Rengstorf (1964:406) considers the true mark of a New Testament disciple to be ἀκολουθεῖν (to follow) rather than μανθάνειν (to be a pupil) (also Bosch, 2011:60; Hull, 2006:34 & Oh, 1998:19) he notes that when μανθάνειν is used, “It always implies the existence of a personal attachment which shapes the whole life of the one described as disciple...” (Rengstorf, 1964:441, Wilkins, 1995:124). From this he deduces that Jesus does not merely want to impart information or deepen an existing attitude through His discipleship, but rather wants to awaken unconditional commitment to Himself. He wants a committed relationship of faith with his followers in order to shape their whole life according to His goal.

In dealing with Matthew 28:16-20 Buys (1989:147-148) comes to a similar conclusion when studying the term μαθητής. He notes that discipleship is about bringing people into a specific relationship with the risen Lord, calling them to faith and communion with Him. Thus, Jesus’ discipleship is especially characterized by the fact that He lives in personal union with His disciples. Buys (1989:159) convincingly shows that this may be understood as a covenantal relationship.

Buys’s exegesis of the aorist participial phrases in Matthew 28:19 is informative for understanding the content of New Testament discipleship. He shows that each of these participial phrases contributes to the meaning of μαθητεύσατε. Firstly, Buys (1989:146) convincingly shows that πορευθέντες (to go) does not primarily point to going away on a journey (contra van Bruggen, 1990:476), although it may include that. Rather as Buys, (1989:146) has shown, it strengthens the main verb of making disciples and denotes urgency. This then refers to the way they should make disciples: they should do it with urgency and as they go. Importantly, they are now to bear witness of the resurrected Christ to people from all nations (van Bruggen, 1990:476). The researcher agrees with Hagner (1993:886-887) that this should be understood in the light of Jesus’ universal, sovereign authority over all things as expressed in verse 18. This shows that

New Testament discipleship entails an urgency in making disciples of others, which is an integral part of Jesus' call to discipleship (Mark 1:17).

Secondly, he shows that βαπτίζοντες means that disciple-making involves incorporating people into a community. This baptism is baptism in the name of God-Triune, and, therefore, primarily signifies an incorporation into communion with God Triune, as well as into that of His people (Van Bruggen, 1990:476). From this it can be deduced that discipleship involves becoming part of God's people and living in communion with God-Triune.

Thirdly, he shows that διδάσκοντες means to guide on the road of growing obedience¹⁴ to Christ. Buys (1989:150-155) concludes that it includes a total and holistic teaching with the goal of bringing the total person in line with God's purpose for the man and woman which they are created to be (Buys, 1989:151-152). It includes both the initial call to repentance and conversion as seen in the early church (Acts 5:28-31; 20:20-21) as well as teaching which brings believers to a deeper personal knowledge of Jesus Christ, and consequently to a deeper understanding of the implications of His kingship for their own lives (see also Bosch, 2011:53). The content of what they should "teach" is that which Jesus had taught them. From this it can be deduced that discipleship is an ever-continuing process of learning, through which a person is brought in line with God's purpose and calling for that person. This implies that no believer should ever say "I don't need a διδάσκαλος" (see also Buys's discussion of καταχεω 1989:155-164 & καταρτιζω, 1989:165-173). Disciples are not only to learn what Jesus taught them, but also how to obey what He taught them.

From Buys's exegesis it can be deduced that discipleship should take place through the church. This is in line with what Jesus proclaimed to Peter and the disciples in Matthew 16:18, that He would use their witness of Him, to build His church. This becomes a reality as they are commanded to make disciples of all nations in Matthew 28:19. In Acts 2:37-47 this is seen when people hear the gospel, repent and believe and are baptised to become disciples.

Another aspect of Matthew's portrait of discipleship is that it shows how Jesus never expects His disciples to take His place as Master (Bosch, 2011:24). Whereas it was the goal of the Jewish Rabbinate to have disciples become Rabbis with their own interpretational authority, Jesus always remains the Master of His disciples. This is true even when He commissions them to make disciples of others (Matthew 28:19). One sees this from His command in Matthew 23:8,10-11: "But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers...Neither

¹⁴ Which is of particular relevance to the theme of this dissertation as it clearly links with the equipping of believers as discussed in chapter 3

be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ. ¹¹The greatest among you shall be your servant.” (Bible, 2001).

Importantly, they are clearly called to partake in Christ’s discipleship of others, yet with His authority (Wilkins, 1995:172). This is seen from the verbs used to describe their activity when Jesus commissions them:

“...in most cases the synoptic gospels use the same words for the activities of both Jesus and the disciples, for instance, in respect of preaching, teaching, evangelizing, exorcising, and healing. The disciples have simply to *proclaim* and *do* what Jesus proclaims and does” (Bosch, 2011:172).

Bosch (2011:172) describes this as Christ endowing his authority upon them. This means that the authority remains His, yet they act with the power of His authority when they do their work as His royal envoys.

2.3.1.3.2 Mark’s perspective on discipleship

Longenecker (2006) pays attention to the Son of Man imagery in Mark and its implications for theology and discipleship. He (Longenecker, 2006:224) firstly shows that Jesus uses this imagery to refer to Himself as the fulfilment of the “Son of Man” vision found in Daniel 7. He then states that Jesus’ use of this imagery “... provided an interpretive key into the nature of His person and ministry” (Longenecker, 2006:234). Longenecker’s (2006:235-236) focus on this imagery in Mark 8 to 10 and its implications for discipleship, is relevant to this dissertation. In the three cycles of material found in Mark 8:32b-33; 9:32-34; 10:35-39 Jesus shows that the disciples misunderstood His ministry and consequently, also their discipleship (Longenecker, 2006:235-236). He notes that Jesus uses this image to re-interpret the Messianic expectation of His disciples. They expected a Messiah that would save them through power and glory. By using this image Jesus shows them that He will complete His ministry of glory through suffering (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:45).

Importantly, Longenecker (2006:240) continues to show that this “re-interpreted” pattern of Jesus’ ministry has direct implications for discipleship. In Mark 8-10 there is a clear, structural link between Jesus’ ministry of suffering and what, following Him as disciple, entails. Along the same pattern as the “Son of Man” statements (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:45) Jesus calls His disciples to follow Him in the same kind of self-sacrifice. They are also to deny themselves, to take up their cross and to follow Him (Mark 8:34-35). If they want to be first, they also need to be last (Mark 9:35). Everyone who wants to be important among them, must be a servant first (Mark 10:43-44).

Longenecker (2006:241) concludes:

“Jesus’ pattern of ministry as the Son of Man is to be our pattern of life as his disciples...there certainly was in the early church a lively consciousness that to be one of Christ’s people... was to accept for one’s life this pattern of discipleship.”

From Longenecker’s research it’s clear that discipleship entails following Christ in His pattern of life, by going into glory through suffering.

Along with Longenecker’s (2006) research on discipleship and self-denial, the *διακονία* research of Breed (2017) should be taken into account. Breed (2017) has done thorough research on the meaning of the *daikon*-word group in the New Testament, and his contribution is especially seen in his critique of John N Collins’¹⁵ exegesis of *διακονία* in Mark 10:45 (see 3.4.2). Whereas Collins (2014:57-77) argues that *διακονία* is always an expression of service as an envoy of someone important, and never an expression of loving sacrifice, Breed (2017:364) convincingly shows that this is a restricted understanding of *διακονία*. According to him it should include both the concept of an envoy with a commission as well as genuine self-sacrificial love towards others (Breed, 2017:364).

Breed’s critique of Collins’s understanding of *διακονία* does more than simply clarify the meaning of *διακονία* in Mark 10:45. His discussion is conducive to a better understanding of the role *διακονία* plays in discipleship. He carefully critiques Collins’s take on *διακονία* in Mark 10:45 by placing it fully in the narrative context of Mark 8-10 (Breed, 2017:352-367). He firstly pays attention to the "following" of Christ as found in both 8:31-38 and 10:42-45. In both instances Jesus describes the essence of being a disciple as “denying oneself and following” Him. Breed (2017:355) then shows that the repetition of the words *σπλαγχνίζομαι* (8:2; 17-27) and *ἐλεέω* (10:47-48) makes it clear that this self-denial and following of Christ should be characterized by the same mercy and receptiveness with which Jesus acts towards them and other people (see Mark 8:2; 10:47,48). Breed’s argument shows that the call to discipleship includes the call to *διακονία* and that this *διακονία* is done in obedience to Christ, as envoys of Christ, but also in self-sacrificing love to others. It can be stated, then, that in Mark’s view, discipleship means obediently following Jesus as king into suffering in order to serve others with Christ’s self-denial and love (Oh, 1998:48).

¹⁵ Collins (2014) has done ground breaking research on the meaning of *διακονία* in the New Testament. He has shown that *διακονία* should primarily be understood as something done as part of a commission by an important person, rather than as something done purely out of empathy or good character.

2.3.1.3.3 Luke's perspective on discipleship (Luke & Acts)

Longenecker (2006:244) wrote a second article on discipleship, "Taking up the Cross Daily", which focuses on discipleship in Luke-Acts. He notes that although Luke makes less of the term μαθητής there is evidence of "...an extensive thematic development..." of discipleship present in Luke-Acts (Longenecker, 2006:244). He makes use of redaction-critical analysis to discuss discipleship in Luke-Acts and finds a remarkable structural correspondence between what Jesus says and does in Luke and what the disciples do and say in Acts (Longenecker, 2006:245-246). After carefully tracing the elements of discipleship as found in Jesus' ministry according to Luke and how that unfolds in the ministry of the apostles in Acts, he usefully summarizes the following as elements of New Testament discipleship (Longenecker, 2006:270):

1. "Discipleship is based on what Christ has effected for the redemption of humanity.
2. Discipleship must always be rooted and shaped by the apostolic tradition.
3. Discipleship always needs to be dependent on God and submissive to his will, and so aware of the importance of prayer.
4. Discipleship must always recognize the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.
5. Discipleship is to be involved in prophetic proclamation, with that proclamation focused on the work and person of Jesus Christ.
6. Discipleship is to cherish, both in thought and action, the understanding of God's grace and the gospel as being universal.
7. Discipleship is to be committed to a lifestyle that allows no allegiance to take the place of allegiance to Jesus.
8. Discipleship is to be concerned for the poor, the imprisoned, the blind, the oppressed.
9. Discipleship is to follow the examples of Jesus and the apostles, particularly of those of Paul, in matters of service, prayer, and cross-bearing.
10. Discipleship is to be a life of development in both one's faith and one's practice."

Bock (2012) gives a similar survey of discipleship in Luke-Acts. His approach is to give a thematic overview of specific themes in Luke-Acts. His conclusion as to the way discipleship is portrayed in Luke-Acts can be summarized as follows:

1. Discipleship asks for total commitment (Bock, 2012:323) He states:

"The ethics of the church community finds expression in discipleship. At salvation a believer becomes a disciple, but discipleship is a walk that lasts the rest of one's life. Since each Christian must still deal with the presence of sin, his or her walk has successes and failures."

He emphasises that Jesus is clear about an absolute commitment, yet He deals graciously with the disciples' lapses (Bock, 2012:324).

2. He shows that discipleship is essentially worked out in love for God and love for one's neighbour (Luke 10:25-28) (Bock, 2012:324).
3. He focuses on the significant role that prayer plays in discipleship. (Luke 11:1-16 - the disciples' prayer; Luke 18:1-8 – the importance of prayer. Cf. also Acts 1:7-14, 23-26, 3:1 10:9-11, 13:2-3) (Bock, 2012:325).
4. Discipleship entails perseverance in suffering 8:13-15 18:8 21:19(Bock, 2012:326)
5. Discipleship demands watchfulness, patience and boldness. This is nurtured in an environment of accountability to Jesus himself (Luke 12:54-56; 19:11-27; 21:28-36) (Bock, 2012:236).
6. Discipleship asks for faith and dependence on Jesus, (Luke 5:31-32 12:22-34; 15:17) and joy and praise (Luke 8:13; 10:17 24:41 52; Acts 8:8; 12:14; 15:3) (Bock, 2012:237-238).
7. Testimony and witnessing are at the core of the church's mission in discipleship. (see Luke 24:44-49 and Acts 1:8; 13:47) They are to live in commitment towards reaching the lost.
8. Discipleship has a clear impact on the way people treat wealth and possessions (Acts 2:37-47).

Bock (2012:330) also discusses certain hindrances to discipleship as found in Luke-Acts. Of these, the cost of discipleship plays a primary role. It is only in doing this that Jesus' disciples will be able to fulfil what Jesus essentially teaches them on his journey to Jerusalem (Luke 9 - 19). They are to be selfless in loving God and others. This was contrary to the world they lived in.

At the end of his survey Bock (2012:331) concludes the following about discipleship in Luke-Acts:

“When one puts all of these ethical exhortations together one sees a contrast between the way people functioned in the Roman Empire and how Christians are called to function ethically... the values reflected in these exhortations do not represent a culture of patronage... do not represent a political challenge to the empire, but they do represent a distinct ethical lifestyle about how to live and challenge the common cultural way of life... a more local and practical form of cultural challenge than seeking a political and revolutionary change of government...”

From both Longenecker's (2006) and Bock's (2012) surveys, discipleship in Luke-Acts revolves around total allegiance to Jesus Christ and His kingdom. It is this total allegiance that drives the disciple to count the cost of following Christ and of leaving the old way of life behind. As Hester (1977:58) states: “The victory of Jesus and the faithfulness of God supply confidence for remaining steadfast while bearing the cross ‘daily’ ”. In this way discipleship results in a practical cultural challenge which acknowledges Jesus' reign over all of life.

2.3.1.3.4 John's perspective on discipleship

Oh (1998) has done research on disciple-making preaching in the light of the New Testament. He has paid thorough attention to the meaning of discipleship in all four of the Gospels. His research on John is particularly informative. He notes two emphases that play an important role in discipleship as portrayed in the gospel according to John (Oh, 1998:58). Firstly, the emphasis on a 'new love', and secondly on a 'new life' (see also Du Rand, 1991).

A new love: The love of God is a recurring theme in the gospel according to John (see John 3:16; 13:1; 17:23-24, etc). In this gospel discipleship is intricately linked to the love of God and love for God. This love is primarily seen and revealed in the person and presence of Jesus Christ. A clear example of this is found in John 13:1. Here Jesus' farewell discourse, the second major section of this gospel, is introduced (Michaels, 2010:720). In this section Jesus spends time with his disciples teaching them for the last time before his crucifixion. The introduction of this new section is significant – John says: “Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. (John 13:1) (Bible, 2001). This characterizes the whole of His farewell discourse and shows the character of Jesus' discipleship and teaching as found in the whole of John's gospel (Michaels, 2010:720). It's within this discourse that Jesus washes His disciples' feet and commands them to love one another. In John 13:34-35 Jesus states that the disciples' love for one another will show the world that they are His disciples.

This characteristic of Jesus' discipleship is especially seen in the recurring theme of the “disciple whom Jesus loved” (13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:20). From a cursive overview of this theme in John, with special attention to John 21:20-24, it can be deduced that “the disciple whom Jesus loved” is the self-portrait of the author of this gospel (Stramara, 2009:27). This has clear significance for understanding discipleship in John. It seems as if John had used this self-disclosure with the purpose of summarizing his experience as a disciple of Jesus. He wanted his readers to know that being a disciple of Jesus is about experiencing the love of God revealed in the person of Jesus Christ.

New life: The second emphasis that Oh (1998) discerns as a characteristic of discipleship in John, is the emphasis on new life. This is especially seen in what can be deemed the purpose statement of this gospel: “. . .but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” (Joh 20:31 Bible, 2001). This statement connects faith in Jesus Christ to new life. When the content of John 8:31-32; 13:34; 15:9 is considered, it becomes clear that faith is linked with the words of Christ and abiding in His

words characterises the essence of being His disciple (see also Rengstorf, 1964:406-407 on the meaning of μένω, Smallman, 2011:9-10).

Oh (1998:61) summarizes discipleship in John with the following definition:

" In John being a disciple is ultimately to be defined as being in Christ or connected to Him – that is, in abiding in Him. This abiding is the new life in Christ, which brings new love, the fruit of the Holy Spirit."

From Oh's research on discipleship in the gospel according to John, it is clear that discipleship starts with the realization that God has revealed His truth and love in Jesus Christ. Remaining in discipleship means remaining in relationship with Jesus by remaining in His truth and love. This should result in a whole new self-understanding: seeing oneself as "a disciple whom Jesus loves" and in that as a beloved child of God who starts to love others.

2.3.1.3.5 Conclusion about the content of New Testament discipleship as found in the Gospels and Acts

Although the gospel-accounts and Acts certainly overlap in their perspectives on discipleship, it's important to note that each account emphasizes a unique aspect of New Testament discipleship.

Matthew emphasizes the fact that discipleship entails being taught by and being witnesses of Jesus as the Son of God. In this, disciples are to come to a deep knowledge of Jesus Christ as the Son of God who fulfils the promises of the Old Testament. In their discipleship they are prepared to become a community of witnesses of Jesus Christ in order to disciple others. Matthew 28:16-20 defines the content of discipleship: it entails becoming part of a community of believers (the church) through faith and baptism and learning to obey Christ as king and to live in His presence within that community.

Mark emphasizes the content of discipleship as following Christ willingly into suffering. This is especially seen in the "Son of Man" imagery which shows that Jesus came to conquer through suffering. His disciples are to follow and obey Him as royal servants who serve Him in self-denial and self-sacrificing love. Discipleship entails living according to Jesus' pattern of life.

Luke portrays many practical aspects of discipleship in Luke-Acts. It's the researcher's conviction that the core aspect of discipleship in Luke-Acts is total allegiance to Christ. It is this total allegiance that drives the disciple to count the cost of following Christ and in that, to leave the old life behind and find new life in Him. Through this, discipleship brings about a whole new culture of living.

John's emphasis falls on discipleship as identity-formation. This happens by remaining in the truth and love of Christ. It is in this union with Him that one's identity is formed into "a beloved disciple". This is a disciple who experiences the love of God and loves others with that love.

What these accounts have in common is that discipleship entails being a learner and follower of Jesus Christ as Saviour, King and Teacher; it entails being shaped by Him through both the hearing of His words and the seeing of His deeds. They portray discipleship as a continuous road of maturing in the relationship with Christ that should result in testifying of the gospel to others.

Critique

It's the critique of the researcher that in the above research the integral relationship between the call to discipleship and the content of discipleship is often underplayed. It's the researcher's conviction that what is present embryonically in the call to become a disciple also constitutes the essential content of discipleship. If the call is to hear the gospel of the kingdom and, on account of that, to repent and believe, then following Him in discipleship means doing that and continuing to do exactly that. This is seen in the way Jesus continuously deepens His disciples' understanding of Who He is and what He has come to do (the gospel) in order to transform them into witnesses of Him (Matthew 16:18; 28:19; Luke 24:48, etc.). As they grow in their understanding of Who He is, they increasingly have to leave the old life behind and live the new life of faith in Him. He makes continual use of repentance and faith to shape them into people who reflect His character in self-sacrificial love.

The above may be seen in Luke 5:36-39, Mark 2:22 and Matthew 9:17. Here Jesus tells the parable of new wine in old wine-skins, teaching that His presence and the renewed life in His followers must inevitably lead to their transformation. He may, in fact, be referring to the complete transformation at His return, and yet they are described as already living differently in the present age because of His presence (Luke 5:33-34).

Marshall and Payne (2016:68-69) allows the image of taking up Jesus' yoke in Matthew 11:27-30, to inform their practical understanding of discipleship:

"To 'take the yoke' is a metaphor for service, submission and obedience, for accepting the authority of another – like oxen who are yoked together to plough in the service of their owner, or slaves who bear the yoke of their master."

To take on the yoke of someone is to submit to that person's authority and have him teach you and guide you. This inherently entails "unlearning" earlier ways of life and learning a new way of

life. It means to be re-oriented to His kingdom in the basic presuppositions of life and allowing Him to bring the whole of one's existence in line with that.

This is also seen in Luke 6:40-41. Here it is clear that Jesus intended what He was doing with his disciples as something that was to increase their maturity. They were to become more and more like their Master in both understanding and character, as they followed Him. Yet, this would come only as they removed the "log from their own eye, to see better in removing the speck from their brother's eye" (Bible, 2001). Clearly discipleship both starts and continues with the knowledge of Christ as Saviour, repentance and deepening faith.

Another point of critique is against the notion by Bosch, (2011:60); Hull (2006:34); Oh (1998:19) and Rengstorf (1964:406), that ἀκολουθεῖν (to follow) rather than μανθάνειν (to be a pupil) should be viewed as the distinguishing mark of a disciple. It is true that a disciple should rather be seen as a follower, yet, the content of following is often portrayed as learning. This verb is found in the synoptic gospels and John where it refers to "learning" as part of discipleship. It is also found in Matthew 11:29, a text which clearly portrays the call to discipleship, as well as in Matthew 24:32, the context of Jesus' teaching His disciples at the last supper (cf. Mark 13:28); and in Matthew 9:13 – used in reference to the Pharisees – who found themselves in the context of discipleship. The effect of understating μανθάνειν as an important term in New Testament discipleship, is that those texts in the rest of the New Testament, such as the Pauline letters which make use of it to explicitly refer to discipleship, are easily overlooked. This may lead to viewing discipleship as a concept confined only to the gospels and Acts.

2.3.2 New Testament discipleship and its relevance to the post-resurrection community

The link between the kingdom of God and discipleship, as well as other general aspects of discipleship, is clear from the above. However, there is a deeper question that surfaces as one studies the concept of discipleship in the New Testament, especially as the focus shifts from the definition of discipleship to the role it may play in Paul's understanding of equipping believers for ministry and growth in Ephesians 4:12. The question is whether and to what extent the discipleship as found in the gospels, where Jesus himself is physically present, is relevant to the post-resurrection community? If it's not portrayed as playing an important pastoral role in the narratives and letters to the post-resurrection community, it follows that it could not have played such an important role in Ephesians 4:12. If, however, there is a clear link between the discipleship of Jesus in the gospels and ministry in the post-resurrection community, it follows that Paul could possibly have understood the equipping of believers for ministry and growth in Ephesians 4:12 as discipleship.

The relevance of discipleship to the post-resurrection community is especially seen in the authorial intent of the gospel-accounts and Acts.

2.3.2.1 The authorial intent of Matthew

Wilkins (1995:171-172) gives an important exegetical perspective on this matter. His analysis of Matthew's use of the term μαθητής in his gospel-account shows that Matthew has written his account in a manner that calls his audience to discipleship. Jesus is often portrayed alone to accentuate various aspects of His life and ministry. Matthew does this because he wants people to see Jesus in front of them as their Teacher and Lord. His readers, in fact, become onlookers. Along with this, μαθητής as a term becomes a signal word appearing in the text where a certain teaching is meant to be understood as a "discipleship" teaching. According to Wilkins (1995:171-172) this is a literary device used by Matthew to portray the way Jesus taught His disciples. This is also clear from the way Matthew portrays the 12 disciples:

"With both the moment of the historical disciples and the moment of the church before the reader, one is able to see that Matthew's portrait of the disciples both passes on the tradition about the twelve, and at the same time presents an example of discipleship to the church...the historical disciples become a means of encouragement, warning, and instruction as examples." (Wilkins, 1995:171-172).

What is more, is the fact that Matthew clearly understands the "twelve" to be commissioned in Jesus' discipleship of others. As Wilkins (1995:172) states: "It was the disciples' responsibility to go among the crowds of Israel, and always will be their responsibility among the nations of the earth." One sees this in the way the twelve are commissioned in Matthew 9:38-10:20. They are to "pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest" (Mt 9:38) and immediately after this Jesus sends them into the fields to harvest (10:1-20). This is probably the clearest in Matthew 28:16-20 where all of the themes of Matthew's gospel converge in one main indicative, imperative and promise: "(indicative) All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. (imperative) make disciples of all nations... (promise) I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Bible, 2001; Own emphasis JVS).

From Matthew's use of the term μαθητής and his literary creativity, it is exceedingly clear that he is convinced that discipleship must be carried over to the early New Testament church. His audience is part of this post-resurrection community and his gospel-account equips them to be disciples of the resurrected Christ and to make disciples of others, in line with those that disciplined them.

2.3.2.2 The authorial intent of Mark

As already discussed under the heading of the relationship between the kingdom of God and discipleship (see 2.3.1.1 above) it is clear that Matthew and Luke share this view of discipleship with Mark. Bosch (2011:26) notes:

“The gospel of Mark...puts discipleship within the force-field between the passion of the earthly Jesus and the parousia of the coming Son of Man; to be a disciple means to follow the suffering Jesus and to look forward to His return in glory (cf. Breytenbach 1984:passim).

This certainly shows that Mark views discipleship as being meant for all believers.

2.3.2.3 The authorial intent of Luke

Rengstorf (1964:446) has found a similar clarity regarding this matter in the attention given to Luke's use of the term μαθητής in Luke-Acts. He notes the unique use of this term by Luke. It seems that Luke found this as a fixed term in the sources used (Luke 1:1-4), and, yet, from Luke 22:45 onwards he stops using this term for Jesus' followers and, apart from Acts 1:15, only starts to use it again in Acts 6:1 (Rengstorf, 1964:442). Whether or not he does this because of the betrayal of Jesus by the disciples in the events at the cross, is not clear. However, what is clear, is that when the term returns in Acts 6:1 it is used in a general sense - of all the believers.

2.3.2.4 The authorial intent of John

In John, this same authorial purpose is found in the literary theme of the “beloved Disciple” Stramara (2009) and Du Rand (1991) have written about this theme as a textual paradigm which identifies Johannine authority and points to discipleship as ideal for both men and women in the church. This clearly shows that it was the intent of John that his readers should understand themselves to be disciples (Du Rand, 1991:321). John uniquely reveals the Spiritual relationship that disciples have with the resurrected Christ. It is through the Spirit that believers in John's audience may view themselves as true disciples of Christ. They abide in Him through their obedience to His command, worked by the Spirit (John 15) and it is in this organic connection between His life and theirs, that they are sanctified (Edwards, 1953:86-87). The typical description of Johannine discipleship is following Jesus as a believer and remaining in Him (John 1:35).

2.3.2.5 Conclusion as to the authorial intent of these accounts

Thus, in Matthew, Mark, Luke and Acts, as well as in John, we find this explicit literary purpose, namely that discipleship should become the main framework from which their audience would approach life as believers in Jesus Christ. They clearly want their hearers to view themselves as

disciples of the risen Christ. They want them to grow in this faith through discipleship within the post-resurrection community of believers, by means of their testimony in the gospel-accounts and the present work of the Holy Spirit.

2.3.3 Discipleship in the Pauline corpus

Before concluding about New Testament discipleship and its possible relevance to Ephesians 4:12, it's important to have a clear understanding of the apostle Paul's own ministry as it is found in relevant passages of Acts and his letters.

2.3.3.1 Paul's own conversion as the start of his discipleship

In Acts 9 we find the account of Paul's own conversion to becoming a follower of Jesus Christ. From this passage Paul's conversion is described as a conversion from being a disciple of the Pharisees (see Acts 22:3) to becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ. The repetitive reference to believers as disciples (9:1,10,19, 26) alongside the fact that Ananias calls Paul "brother" after his conversion, portrays his new identity as that of a disciple. His experience of meeting Christ on the Damascus-road changed him from someone that διώκεις Jesus (Acts 9:4 persecutes) to a μαθητής, someone that follows Jesus (Acts 9:19). His new calling entails suffering in following Christ (Acts 9:16) as is typical of discipleship and in 9:28 we clearly see that Paul is identified as a disciple that "goes in and out" with the other disciples in Jerusalem.

2.3.3.2 Paul's ministry and discipleship

Apart from Paul's identity as a disciple, the New Testament also speaks of Paul's approach to ministry. The researcher agrees with Bosch (2011:120) that Paul's main approach to shaping a community was to gather people around himself and teach them through demonstration. This clearly reminds of Jesus' approach to ministry in the Gospels. Acts also gives a historical account of this. In Acts 9:25, just after Paul's own conversion, we find a possible reference to Paul's own disciples¹⁶. These are people who came to faith in Christ when Paul proclaimed the gospel in the synagogue of Damascus (Rengstorf, 1964:453). This clearly means that Paul's ministry is viewed by Luke and his sources as a ministry of discipleship.

In Acts 11:26 we see this approach to ministry continuing among the believers in Antioch. Paul and Barnabas spent a year of intense labour in Antioch doing that which Jesus called the eleven

¹⁶ In the United Bible Societies' 5th revised edition of the Greek New Testament (2014), the text-critical issue noted in the 4th edition is omitted, showing that the editors regard μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ as the correct rendition of this text. This means that in Acts 9:25 it should be translated as "his disciples", referring to Paul's disciples.

to do in Matthew 28:19-20 – namely to teach the believers. Significantly, in this same verse the disciples are called Christians for the first time.

Just a few chapters later in Acts 14, Paul's ministry is once again portrayed as discipleship. In verse 21 we find one of the four instances where the verb μαθητεύω (to be a disciple or make a disciple) is used in the New Testament. Here, as in the gospels, there is yet again a strong link between the proclamation of the gospel (see 14:15-17) and the call to discipleship. Luke says in verse 21: "When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples..." Bible, 2001) This shows that people heard the gospel and in their coming to the faith, became disciples.

Upon their return to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, Paul and Barnabas are said (Acts 14:22) to have strengthened the souls of the disciples there, by encouraging them and speaking to them about the suffering which disciples must endure in the expectation of Christ's return. This echoes Jesus' words to the disciples in passages such as Mark 10:45, 13:13, Luke 21:12-19 & John 12:25. Interestingly, Luke notes in the next verse (Acts 14:23) that they appointed elders to oversee these disciples, presumably to continue what Paul and Barnabas had been doing in teaching and encouraging these elders as disciples.

In Acts 20:17-38 the role of discipleship in Paul's equipping of a congregation, is seen again. Here Paul bids the elders of Ephesus farewell before his return to Jerusalem. In his farewell message he reminds them of the way in which he ministered to them. He gave himself to them personally – as Christ did - with tears, in friendship and in service (20:19). He spent three years of ministry with them (20:31), teaching them the full spectrum of the gospel, doing so publicly and in person from house-to-house (20:20; 27, cf. Ephesians 1:1-23). In verse 28 he commissions these elders to carry on with this equipping of the congregation. They are to follow his lead and do what he had done with them, with the congregation, in order that the disciples may grow steadfast in their faith (20:30, cf. Ephesians 4:14). They are to serve (20:34-35), teach and guide the disciples as Paul himself would (20:28) in obedience to Christ. They are to continually carry the Word of grace personally into the lives of the believers, so that they may mature in faith and ministry through the work of the Spirit.

This theme of discipleship is also reiterated in Paul's letters. In some of his letters (1 Corinthians 4:16; 1 Corinthians 11:1; Ephesians 5:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:6; 2:14), he encourages the believers to become imitators of him as he imitated Christ's self-giving in his ministry. Nam (2017) has made a thorough study of Paul's use of the word μιμητής with special reference to its use in 1 Corinthians 7:1-11:1. He comes to the conclusion that Paul adopted this term in the place of μαθητής to bring across the idea of discipleship into his own ministry (Nam, 2017:66). The emphasis is somewhat different in Paul, for he is not speaking of a discipleship with Christ in his

physical presence (Nam, 2017:66). However, it's a discipleship where Christ uses Paul as trainer and teacher to disciple believers in His name. The purpose of this discipleship is the same, namely the growth of the believer within a personal relationship with Jesus Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit. Although the emphasis in μιμητής often falls on serving in the name of Christ rather than on witnessing as in the gospels (Nam, 2017:66), it has the same result, namely that God is revealed through the witness and deeds of a disciple, so that others are also called into discipleship. This also serves to emphasize the importance of διακονία in discipleship.

The importance of discipleship in Paul's ministry is seen in the way that he connects the lives of his followers to the accounts of God's people in the Old Testament, as well as to the account of Jesus in the Gospels. Paul continually calls believers to follow Jesus and view themselves as those ones who continue in line with Him. Dunn (2004:348) writes of Paul's purpose with this in his letters:

“...it was the story of Christ that gave them a central model for living: the cruciform life, the cross as determining the character of self-sacrificing love, the story of discipleship as the story of Christ's self-giving being still lived out till that day when those who had shared in his dying would also share fully in his rising...”

The presence of discipleship in the Pauline literature is also seen in the use of the verb μανθάνω (Marshall & Payne, 2016:72). This verb is abundantly present in the Pauline literature. It's found in Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 14:31; Philippians 4:9,11; Colossians 1:5-7; Ephesians 4:19-24 and Titus 3:14. In these texts Paul either refers to learning the doctrines of the gospel from him, other believers or other ministers of the gospel, and, most importantly, learning Christ (Ephesians 4:19)¹⁷.

Paul directs Titus on how he should equip the congregation in Crete. In this he has discipleship in mind where younger believers are mentored by older believers in living out their faith (Titus 2). Paul has this same approach when he equips Timothy for his ministry. His close relationship with Timothy plays a key role in the way he equips him – he doesn't only teach him the faith but calls him to imitate him as he follows Christ. In 2 Timothy 3:14 Timothy is not only to remember and remain with what he has learnt about Christ, but he must also remember the ones who taught him the truth of the Scripture and introduced him to the revelation of God. (2 Timothy 3:10-11;14-17; Philippians 4:9) (Marshall & Payne, 2009:72).

¹⁷ This text is significant in that it doesn't say learning “from” Christ, but “learning Christ”. Christ himself is the object of this learning. (cf. Best, 1998:427)

Thus, it can be concluded that Paul views himself as a disciple of Jesus Christ, and his own approach to ministry is clearly in line with the commission of Matthew 28:16-20. He proclaims and imitates Christ throughout his ministry, in order to reveal His grace to others, and then he calls those who grasped it, to do the same. Paul's ministry is a ministry of discipleship.

2.4 Conclusion: Defining discipleship as a New Testament concept

The purpose of this chapter, which flows from the main theme and aim of this dissertation, was to arrive at a detailed and exegetically undergirded definition of discipleship as found in the New Testament. After surveying the work of New Testament scholars on the meaning of discipleship in the New Testament and testing that against the results of a cursive and independent revelation-historical study, the researcher comes to the following definition of New Testament discipleship:

New Testament discipleship refers to the lifelong state of being and growing towards that which God the Father calls his elect, to be in a committed relationship of total allegiance to and fellowship with His Son Jesus Christ as sovereign King, Saviour, and Teacher in order to be recreated by His Spirit and His Word within an instrument community of believers, through a) increasing knowledge of the gospel, b) continuous confession, repentance and faith, and c) obediently following him into ministry (διακονία) and self-denial in order to build up His church and be His royal witnesses in all of life among all people.

CHAPTER 3 THE MEANING OF “EQUIPPING” BELIEVERS FOR “MINISTRY” AND ‘GROWTH” IN EPHESIANS 4:12

3.1 Introduction

As stated in the previous chapter the main aim of this dissertation is to determine the role that discipleship as New Testament concept plays in Paul’s understanding of equipping believers for ministry and growth in Ephesians 4:12. In line with this aim, discipleship as New Testament concept was discussed in chapter two. The aim of chapter three is to determine the meaning of “equipping” believers for “ministry” and “growth” in Ephesians 4:12. Consequently, the results of a grammatic-historical exegetical study of this verse are presented below.

3.2 Historical and literary background to Ephesians

3.2.1 Historical background

The letter to the Ephesians is probably the Pauline¹⁸ epistle with the most comprehensive teaching on the “ekklesia” (the church) and its functioning within the will of God-Triune (Ephesians 1:9-10) (Carson & Moo, 2005:493; Floor, 1995:9). As an epistle it is unique in its nature for it doesn’t seem to focus on a specific historical occasion (Carson & Moo, 2005:490; Hoehner, 2002:98; O’Brien, 1999:51). This dissertation takes the view that the Apostle Paul either wrote this letter directly to the church in Ephesus (Carson & Moo, 2005:488-489; Floor, 1995:24-25; Hoehner, 2002:78-79) or, at least as an encyclical, that, among others, had the church in Ephesus as an important audience (Carson & Moo, 2005:490, O’Brien, 1999:56). Paul’s relationship with the church in Ephesus as presented in Acts 18,19 and 20:17-38, is therefore taken as an important historical background to this epistle. His main purpose in ministry to the church in Ephesus is seen in these texts.

Paul worked to equip the church as a body of believers to understand and fulfil its role in God’s great purpose with the whole of history. (Ephesians 1:9-10; 23, 2:10, 2:22, 3:10; Acts 19:8-10, 20:24-25,27,31) He did this by teaching them, personally as well as corporately, by giving instructional discourses and teachings in private and in public (Schnabel, 2012:790-792, van Eck, 2003:416). From Acts 20, it can be deduced that he paid special attention to the elders and

¹⁸ Although researchers are divided about the authenticity of this letter as Pauline, this dissertation takes the view of Hendriksen, 1967:53-55; Guthrie, 1990:527; Elwell & Yarbrough, 2013:294 and others, that it is in fact a truly Pauline letter. For a thorough discussion of the matter, see Carson & Moo (2005:480-486).

overseers. The content of his teaching as described in Acts 19:8 and 20:25,27 is the gospel of the kingdom of God (van Eck, 2003:416), which, as Schnabel (2012:790) states, is:

“...the reality of the fulfillment of God’s promises concerning Israel’s restoration and the salvation of the world - a reality brought about by the life, death, resurrection and exaltation of Jesus, Israel’s Messiah and Savior of the world, and a reality that grows as a result of the Spirit-empowered work of the apostles and the churches... not general scriptural truths but specifically about Jesus, about his royal rule as exalted Savior and Lord, and about coming to faith in Jesus in order to share in God’s kingdom.”

In this dissertation the letter to the Ephesians is understood against the background of this purpose that Paul had in his ministry and proclamation.

3.2.2 Literary background

The letter to the Ephesians consists of an introductory salutation, followed by two main parts [1:3-3:21] & [4:1-6:24] and ends with a greeting (Hoehner, 2002:61; Lincoln, 1990: xli; O’ Brien, 1999:70). The structure of Ephesians starts with a presentation (ch.1) and explanation (ch.2-3) of God-Triune’s eternal purpose of reconciling all things to himself in Christ. It then moves on to describe the essence and functioning of the church as His body and calls every believer to take their place within that purpose. As O’Brien (1999:67-68) explains: “The movement of thought is from the lofty heights of learning Christ and the new creation to the ‘nitty-gritty of Christian behaviour’”. Importantly, although the first main section of the letter (ch.1-3) is characterized by indicative language, and the second main section (ch. 4-6) by imperative language, the letter cannot strictly be divided into a structure where the an imperative section is purely followed by and indicative section (Fowl, 2012:125).

The first section of the letter [1:3-3:21]

Chapters 1:1 to 3:21 contain the elements of a liturgical Berakah-prayer¹⁹ (Lincoln, 1990:78; Jordaan, 1990:51, Roberts, 1990:13). The confession of 1:20-23 is found at the centre of the Berakah’s chiastic structure, emphasizing their importance. Along with 1:9-10 they can be taken as key thematic texts in this letter. They are a confession in which Paul links the cosmic dominion of Christ over all things (1:9-10) to his dominion over the church which fulfils a specific calling in respect of Him as their head (Lincoln, 1990:79-80). God has willed to fulfil His οἰκονομία (1:10), His plan of salvation in His Son, by electing believers in Him (1:4), adopting them as children

¹⁹ A typical Jewish prayer-form with the following elements: Doxology (1:3-14), Intercessory prayer of thanksgiving (1:15-20), a confession of Faith (1:20-23; explanation – chapter 2), Intercessory prayer for believers (3:1,14-19) and another doxology (3:20-21) (Jordaan, 1990:51; Lincoln, 1990: xlvi).

through Him (1:5-6), and giving them an eternal inheritance in Him (1:11). They already partake in this blessing through the Holy Spirit who has sealed them through faith for this eternal salvation (1:13-14). All of this brings praise to God as the glory of His grace is revealed in Christ, and through the work of the Spirit revealed in and through the church.

In 1:22 Paul states that God has given Christ as head over the whole cosmos, which clearly points to His royal authority over all of creation (O'Brien, 1999:147). Significantly, in 1:23 he describes the church as "His body" - the "fullness" of Him who fulfills all in all. Lincoln (1990:80) explains this: "...the church as His fullness is the community which he fills supremely with his presence and dynamic rule" (see also Best, 1998:188; O'Brien, 1999:152). The church is nothing in herself, she finds her purpose and existence only in her relationship to Christ her head. She enjoys the benefit of His Spirit present in her, His grace toward her, and His gifts to serve her (O'Brien, 1999:152). Her significant calling is none other than to bear witness of Him (Ephesians 3:10) in the whole of the cosmic realm (Lincoln, 1990:80). The church as the body of Christ lives from His rule and grace, so that the whole cosmos may have a view of its glorious King and His power and grace.

Chapter two can be understood as an explanation of the foregoing confession in 1:22-23 (Floor, 1995:86, O'Brien, 1999:66). At the start of chapter two, Paul connects the overwhelming truth of God's οἰκονομία as explained in chapter 1, with the present lives of believers (Best, 1998: 198; Lincoln, 1990:116). He explains how God executes His eternal plan of making sinners into saints (Hoehner, 2002:305). They who previously walked in the sinfulness of their flesh, who have deserved His wrath, have received His mercy and love by grace. They are now new creations of God in Christ, created to walk in the good works God has prepared for them (2:10). Those previously outside the covenant with God, are now partakers of it (2:11-13). Those previously in strife with one another as Jews and Gentiles are now united in one body – the church (2:14-16) – through the gospel of peace (2:17). They are being built up together as a temple of God in the Spirit (2:21-22).

Chapter three contains a second prayer²⁰ from which Paul momentarily digresses in verses 2-13 to reflect on his commission²¹ and ministry of the gospel among gentiles (O'Brien, 1999:240). This prayer portrays important themes that sets it in parallel with the first prayer of 1:15-20. In the prayer of 1:15-20 Paul praises God for the glory of His grace and then asks Him to help believers

²⁰ 3:1 is an introduction to his second prayer, however he digresses in 3:2-13 to speak about the mystery of the gospel that God has entrusted him with. He continues with his prayer in 3:14 (Floor, 1995:124; Hoehner, 2002:420; O'Brien, 1999:226-252)

²¹ Lincoln (1990:168-170) discussed the parallelism between Ephesians 3:1-13 and Colossians 1:23-28 in detail.

understand their newfound hope, rooted in His strength that works in them. This is the same power with which He raised Jesus from the grave and keeps them safe for their future inheritance (Hoehner, 2002:471; O'Brien, 1999:136). In the second prayer, 3:14-19, he asks that the believers may understand and embrace their place in God's glorious plan. He now longs for them to, through faith, experience the powerful reign of the risen Christ in their hearts (O'Brien, 1999:259). This comes through the continuous intimate knowledge of Christ's very own love for them and results in them being filled to the fullness of God (see 1:22-23) (Hoehner, 2002:471, Lincoln, 1990:206).

Apart from the parallelism between these two prayers, the respective confessional sections that immediately follow these prayers, also portray parallel themes. In 1:20-23, at the end of the first prayer, Paul confesses that Christ has received dominion over all things from God and that this places the church in a specific relationship with Him. It was also made clear that the power of God, effective towards believers, was at work in Christ. In 3:20-21, the second confession, following the second prayer, Christ's power and reign over all things is again mentioned. This time it is stated as an experiential reality, which is at work practically within the believer (Lincoln, 1990:215-216). God is now not only praised for His past activity, but also for His present work in believers, and for the future glory that He will receive (Hoehner, 2002:493)

From these parallel texts it is seen that the letter continually progresses from the external reality (see 1:15-20) of salvation through Christ's incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection and the fact of His eternal dominion, to the internal reality of His rule within the heart of every believer through His Spirit. In the first two chapters the will and work of God-Triune, completely independent of humans, is described. In chapter three the way God draws the church as a whole into His plan, is described. It can be deduced that the progressive character of this first section serves to prepare the audience for the second part of the letter (4:1-6:20) which calls believers to practically live out their faith in obedience to Christ (Hoehner, 2002: 496; O'Brien, 1999:270). Without the identity constructed for them in the first section of the letter, the believers cannot move to the second section (Fowl, 2012:125)

The second section of the letter [4:1-6:24]

The second section of the letter is paranaetic²² in nature and is characterized by a structure of περιπατεῖν²²-phrases which emphasise its practical focus. The researcher agrees with O'Brien (1999:272) that this shift does not justify dividing the letter strictly into theology followed by ethical application. It is much rather a mixture of both in each section, with a general shift toward the

²² In the first part of the letter the readers were prepared for this by being reminded of their identity as believers in Christ; now they are exhorted to live from that identity (Lincoln, 1990:224).

practical and personal application of the faith as the letter progresses. Hoehner (2002:62) fittingly analyses the structure of the second part in terms of the new way in which believers should live their lives (2:10).

Figure 3-1: The structure of περιπατεῖν’-phrases in the second section of Ephesians.

A 4:1-16 Walk in unity – 4:1 (Παρακαλῶ οὖν ἀξίως περιπατῆσαι τῆς κλήσεως ἧς ἐκλήθητε)
B 4:17-32 Walk in Holiness (Τοῦτο οὖν λέγω καὶ μαρτύρομαι ἐν κυρίῳ, μηκέτι ὑμᾶς περιπατεῖν, καθὼς καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ ἔθνη περιπατεῖ ἐν ματαιότητι τοῦ νοῦς αὐτῶν)
C 5:1-6 Walk in love (γίνεσθε οὖν μιμηταὶ τοῦ θεοῦ ὡς τέκνα ἀγαπητὰ ² καὶ περιπατεῖτε ἐν ἀγάπῃ,)
D 5:7-14 Walk as children of the light (ὡς τέκνα φωτὸς περιπατεῖτε)
E 5:15-6:9 Walk in wisdom, controlled by the Holy Spirit at home and in public (¹⁵ Βλέπετε οὖν ἀκριβῶς πῶς περιπατεῖτε μὴ ὡς ἄσοφοι ἀλλ’ ὡς σοφοί,
F 6:10-20 Final words– stand firm in the spiritual war, using the spiritual gifts (Τοῦ λοιποῦ,)

The repetition of περιπατεῖν in different verbal forms across chapters 4-6, highlights Paul’s intention. This word means “to walk” and is used in a metaphorical sense referring to the way these believers lived their lives (Hoehner, 2002:504). Notably, the first occurrence of περιπατεῖν (4:1) is in the aorist tense. This expresses an ingressive use meaning that the believers are to start living differently from the way in which they used to live, based on what they have learnt (Hoehner, 2002:504).

For the sake of this dissertation a clear distinction is made between 4:1-16 and the rest of the second section (4:17-6:20). Although the “paracletic”²³-character of the second section is already presented by the verb παρακαλῶ οὖν in 4:1, Jordaan (1990:61-62) has convincingly shown that 4:1-16 should be viewed as an indicative island with a transitional function. It sets the stage for what follows (O’Brien, 1999:273). In these verses, where the focus falls on Christ’s personal reign over the church, a specific matter is discussed that constitutes the link between the more confessional first section (1:3-3:21) and the more practical second section (4:17-6:20) (Mbennah, 2012:68). The researcher is convinced that this section proves the importance of community amongst believers for their growth in faith. Without that which is revealed here, believers may believe and confess the truth as proclaimed in the first half of the letter but will not grow into the maturity of living from that truth as seen in the second half.

This indicates the structural and practical purpose of the passage in focus. That which is revealed in these verses, moves believers from acknowledging Christ as king to living in obedience to Him as part of His body in their daily walk of life. It moves them from acknowledging and understanding the power of the Holy Spirit (1:13,19-20), to experiencing the reality of His work and the fruit in their lives (4:3,30; 5:9).

As seen from Figure 3.1 (above) in chapters 4:17-6:20, Paul sets out a “series of paragraphs which spell out in detail how local congregations and Christian households should heed the exhortation of 4:1-3, namely, to live worthy of their calling as believers” (O’Brien, 1999:318). Although these chapters cannot be dealt with in detail here, it may be important to highlight the content of two specific passages in these chapters, namely 4:20-24 and 5:1-2.

In these specific passages, concepts are found that implicitly link the meaning of Ephesians 4:12 to “discipleship” as discussed in chapter two of this dissertation. In 4:20-24 Paul focuses on the renewal of believers. In verses 22-24 the transition from the old life to the new, is described as putting off the old person, and putting on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. This echoes and expands on that which Paul explained in 2:10, namely that believers are created as new beings in Christ for good works that God has prepared for them. Importantly, the way this transition started to take place in believers, is described in 4:20 and 21. In verse 20 the phrase ἐμάθετε τὸν χριστόν, (how you learned Christ) is used, of which the word ἐμάθετε is of specific significance. This term ἐμάθετε, derived from μανθάνω – a discipleship concept (see chapter 2) – clearly refers to the systematic process through which

²³ To ask for something earnestly and with propriety - 'to ask for (earnestly), to request, to plead for, to appeal to, earnestly request (Louw & Nida, 1989a:409,425). This is a request to react in a certain manner based on the foregoing information and the relation between the author and the audience (Jordaan, 1990:59)

believers are instructed in the truth of the gospel (4:11-12) to live as God's new creations in Christ. Importantly, Christ himself is the object of their learning. This means the goal is not only intellectual knowledge of Christ, but to come to know the living Christ personally through the gospel (Floor, 1995:164, Best, 1998:426). This is explained exegetically in verse 21 as "hearing" Jesus and "having been taught" in Him, as the truth is in Him. Both O'Brien (1999:324) and Hoehner (2002:595) are convinced that the "hearing" of verse 20 refers to believers' initial response to Christ, while the second "you were taught" refers to the process of ongoing instruction which followed conversion. Best (1998:427) agrees with them, showing convincingly that this verse should not be translated as "learning of" or "learning about" Christ but as "learning Christ". This means that the believers in effect heard the call of Christ Himself as He called them through the proclamation of the gospel by His instruments, the apostles. O'Brien (1999:324) summarises the meaning of these verses in the following striking way: "Learning Christ means welcoming him as a living person and being shaped by his teaching. This involves submitting to his rule of righteousness and responding to his summons to standards and values completely different from what they had known". Both Hoehner (2002:595) and O'Brien (1999: 324-425) understand the systematic instruction of the believers to be the work of those whom Christ has equipped and given as ministers to the church in Ephesians 4:11. Clearly, the believers are able to live in relationship with Christ Himself, as they meet Him through the teaching of His Word by those He has sent to proclaim Him.

In 5:1-2 we find another discipleship concept. In 5:1 Paul says: "Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children." (Bible, 2001). The term here for imitators, μιμηταί, has clear links to discipleship. As Nam (2017:66) has shown, Paul uses it in the place of "μαθητής" to carry over the idea of discipleship into his own ministry. (see discussion of this term at 2.3.3.2 in chapter 2). Hoehner (2002:644) notes the importance of the present imperative tense used here. Paul wants believers to presently and continuously develop into imitators of God. Immediately following this term, in 5:2, Paul says that they are to "walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." The emulation of God by them "as children" is fulfilled by the command to become more and more like Christ with His sacrificial love as motive. Believers are to lay down their lives and imitate God specifically by following Christ (Hoehner, 2002:648, O'Brien, 1999:352-356).

3.3 Thought structure of Ephesians 4:1-16

Before the meaning of Ephesians 4:12 can be studied, the internal structure of 4:1-16 needs to be clearly understood. Although scholars emphasize different aspects of this passage, they mostly agree that it can be divided into at least two sections: verse 1-6 with its emphasis on the believers' call to live worthy of their calling, a call towards unity, and verse 7-16 with its emphasis

on the diversity through which that unity is attained, enlarged and preserved with the maturity of the body as goal. (Best, 1998:357;373; Fowl, 2012:126; Hoehner, 2002:501;521; Lincoln, 1990:225; O'Brien, 1999:273;286, etc.) Contrary to Hoehner (2002: 501-582), and Mbennah (2012:71) the researcher agrees with Van Aarde (2014:223) that the main theme of this passage is the proper functioning of each believer in the body of Christ to build it up in love. Van Aarde (2014:223) divides this passage into thought-blocks according to the semantic clusters found in it. His approach highlights an aspect of this passage that is not accounted for by most of the above commentators. It is the researcher's conviction that he correctly subdivides the second section of this passage into two sections namely 7-14 and 15-16, taking the inclusio structure of verse 15-16 into account (Van Aarde, 2014:201-205). This subdivision is portrayed in the following structural analysis:

Figure 3-2: Macro analysis of the thought structure found in Ephesians 4:1-16.

Thought-block 1: Verse 1-6 "The unity of believers rooted in their common calling and faith in the one Triune-God"

Verse 1-3: *The main paraclesis of verse 1-16:*

Live worthy of your **calling** as believers by maintaining the unity the Spirit has brought amongst you.

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you [Παρακαλῶ οὖν] to walk in a manner worthy of the **calling** to which you have been **called**, [ἀξίως περιπατῆσαι τῆς κλήσεως ἧς ἐκλήθητε]. ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with **one** another in love,³ eager to maintain the **unity** of the Spirit [τὴν ἐνότητα τοῦ πνεύματος] in the **bond** of peace.

Verse 4-6: The basis of this unity: It exists as unity given to them in their call to a mutual faith and relationship with the one True God.

⁴ There is **one** body and **one** Spirit--just as you were called to the **one** hope that belongs to your **call**—[Ἐν σῶμα καὶ ἓν πνεῦμα, καθὼς καὶ ἐκλήθητε ἐν μίᾳ ἐλπίδι]
⁵ **one** Lord, **one** faith, **one** baptism, [εἷς κύριος, μία πίστις, ἓν βάπτισμα]
⁶ **one** God and Father of **all**, who is over **all** and through **all** and in **all**. [εἷς θεὸς...]

Thought-block 2: Verses 7-14 The diversity of gifts received along with the calling and faith, through which this unity is maintained, experienced and grown with the maturity of the church as goal.

Verse_7: The gift of Christ's grace given to each believer according to His measure

7 But **grace** was **given to each one** of us according to the measure of Christ's **gift**. ['Ενὶ δὲ **ἐκάστῳ** ἡμῶν **ἐδόθη** ἡ χάρις κατὰ τὸ μέτρον τῆς **δωρεᾶς** τοῦ Χριστοῦ.]

Verse 8: Indirect quote of Psalm 68:19 as support for the content of verse 7 and 11

8 Therefore it says, "When he ascended on high, he led a host of captives, and he **gave gifts** to men." [ἔδωκεν **δόματα**]

Verse 9-10: Explanation of quotation in verse 8

9 In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? 10 He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.

Verse 11: Along with the grace-gift given in verse 7, specific persons are also given as gifts to the church with specific functions that relate to the grace in verse 7 and calling in verse 1.

11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers,

The purpose of these person-gifts

12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,

The goal to be pursued by the person-gifts (v.11) that function according to their purpose (v.12): the Spiritual maturity of believers as coming to the "fullness of Christ"

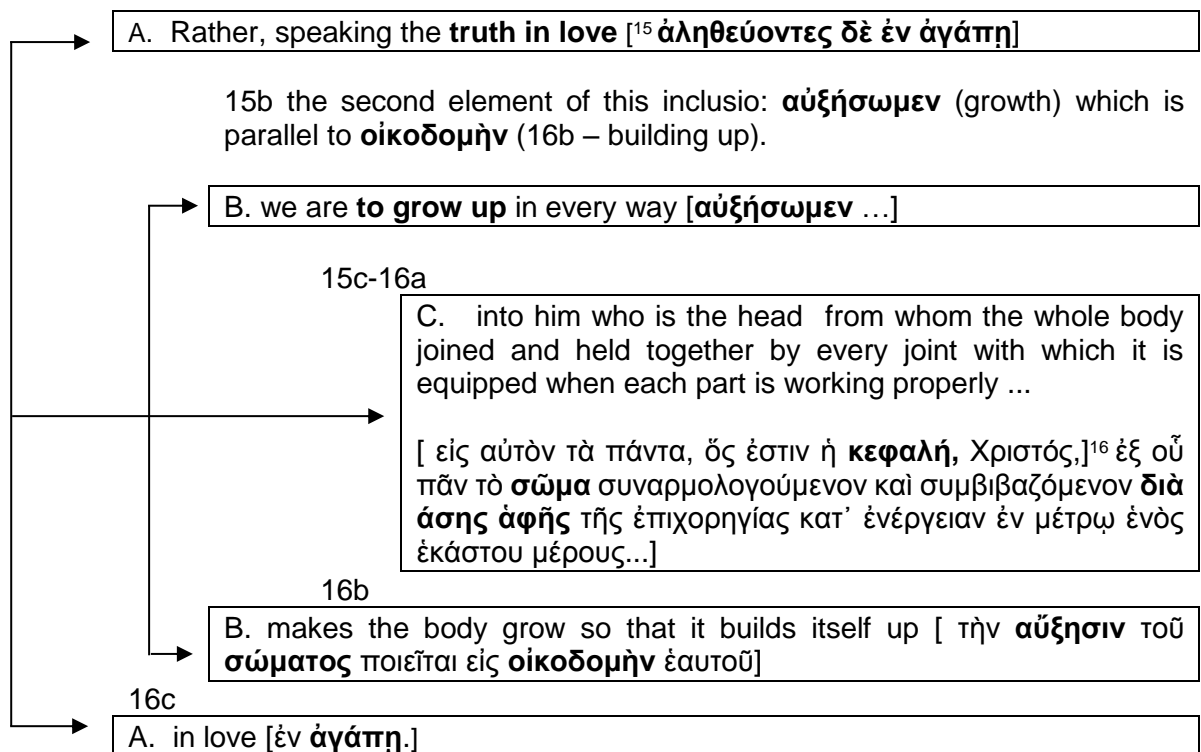
13 until we all attain to [...μέχρι καταστήσωμεν...]: the unity of the faith [εἰς τὴν **ἐνότητα τῆς πίστεως**] and of the knowledge of the Son of God, [καὶ **τῆς ἐπιγνώσεως**...]to mature manhood, [...εἰς ἄνδρα τέλειον...]
to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ [εἰς μέτρον ἡλικίας τοῦ πληρώματος τοῦ χριστοῦ...]

Antithesis of verse 13: The opposite effect when this goal is not attained.

14 so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. (Eph 4:7-14)

Thought-block 3: Verse 15-16 A climactic summary of the passage, structured as an inclusio that captures the essence of this passage in its core at 16a:

15a the first element of this inclusion:



3.3.1 Discussion of the structure and content of Ephesians 4:1-16

Thought-block 1:

In Ephesians 4:1-16 Paul provides the main exhortation of this passage (the paraclesis). Based on what God has done for and in believers (τοῖς ἁγίοις, Ephesians 1:1), as described in the previous chapters, they are to start living worthy of their calling and consequently preserve the unity that is already theirs through their mutual faith. As Breed (2014:5) and Thielman (2010:250) have shown, the believers' unity is rooted in their relationship with God-Triune (see also Hoehner, 2002:501-502). As the Spirit brings their walk of life into balance with their calling as children of God²⁴ (see Romans 8:28-30; Ephesians 1:4-7; 1 Thessalonians 2:12), their unity will deepen, they will experience unsurpassed mutual love and ultimately bring glory to God as His love becomes visible among them (3:6-10). A diverse group of people consisting of Jews and gentiles are brought to unity in one body under one Head through their Spirit-given faith in One God.

²⁴ Fowl (2012:129) shows that living worthy of one's calling means bringing one's actions into balance with a certain standard determined by that calling.

Thought-block 2:

In thought block 2 (Ephesians 4:7-14) the focus shifts from unity and calling towards diversity, gifts and growth towards maturity. This shift portrays a progression from the exhortation in 4:1 to the way that exhortation is to be fulfilled. Paul now explains the means by which believers are to mature in faith so that they will preserve their unity and the bond of peace to the glory of God.

In **verse 7** He speaks of “grace given to each...according to the measure of Christ's gift.” (Ephesians 4:7). The “grace-gift” of Christ in this verse should be distinguished from the “gifts” of verse 11 (Best, 1998:388). Christ gives ἡ χάρις to every believer in this verse. This should be related to χάρισμα as found in other letters of Paul²⁵. It is important to take careful note of the unique way in which Paul refers to it here in this letter: in a phrase resembling that of Romans 12:6 he refrains from using the term χάρισμα, using only ἡ χάρις in combination with τὸ μέτρον τῆς δωρεᾶς (grace according to the measure of His gift). This along with the use of the definite article before χάρις emphasises the grace aspect of the gifts (χαρίσματα) that Christ bestows on each believer. This shows that the grace-gifts are presented here in terms of their effect in the lives of individual believers who have experienced grace (O'Brien, 1999:287). What believers receive from Christ here is none other than His own grace that enables them to serve others, using their unique gifts in love and humility. In this manner His body increasingly comes to resemble Him (2:10; 4:15). From this, it can be deduced that the grace-gifts given according to Christ's measure (v.7) are related to the work of διακονία (ministry) and the resulting growth of the body in verse 12. Fowl (2012:126) points out the importance of the fact that this same term is found in just the previous chapter of Ephesians, in 3:2, 7. There Paul spoke of the ministry according to the gift he has received. This shows that here in 4:7, ἡ χάρις again relates to the calling (4:1) that rests on each believer and the ministry that revolves around that calling.

In **verse 8-10** Paul makes use of an indirect quote from Psalm 68:19 to support and explicate what he has said in verse 7 (Fowl, 2012:136; Hoehner, 2002:530). When the text that Paul quotes from the Septuagint is compared to Ephesians 4:8-10, it becomes clear that Paul has adapted this verse. The quotation reads that Christ has “given” gifts to the people, rather than “received” gifts from them. Several exegetical surveys done by commentators (Best, 1998:378-388; Hoehner, 2002:523-538; Lincoln, 1990:242-248; O'Brien, 1999:286-296) have paid thorough attention to this matter. This dissertation takes the view of Fowl (2012:137) and Roberts (1990:115) that Paul uses this quotation in a christological way and with a singular purpose in mind, namely, to highlight Christ's triumphant victory over sin and death and His reign over all

²⁵ The grace-gifts are diverse and cannot be forced into specific categories – they vary according to each believer's character and capabilities: see also Romans 12:6, 1 Corinthians 1:4,7; 12:4; 1 Pt 4:10; (Best, 1998:378; O'Brien, 1999:298).

things (Ephesians 1:20-22). This is the clear link between the Psalm and Ephesians 4:8-10. In verse 9 and 10 the quotation is explained. Here it's seen that Paul interprets this Psalm Christologically by likening Christ's descent (incarnation, crucifixion, victory over death) and his ascent into heaven, to a king that has conquered in war and triumphantly enters His city to take His place on the throne (Roberts, 1990:115). The fact that this King in Ephesians 4:8 gives, rather than receives gifts, shows what Paul understood to be true of Christ: He is stating the fact that the grace given to all believers in 4:7 and the gifts given to His church in v 11, are bestowed on the church by her sovereign Head, Christ, who rules over all of creation while seated at the right hand of God.

Verse 11 states that along with the grace-gifts (v.7), Christ also gives certain people as gifts to the church, namely ministers with a certain function in His body (Best, 1998:388). The purpose of these ministers is found in their names and described in verse 12 which is introduced by the preposition πρὸς combined with the accusative – denoting a certain goal. It is important to note that, although the emphasis shifts towards the functioning of the church as a body from verse 11 and onward, the Lordship of Christ over His body remains central, as seen in Psalm 68 in 4:8-10 discussed above (O'Brien, 1999:317). Christ's dominion is, in fact, seen in and through the gifts that He gives to His body.

The relation between the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers is not the focus of this dissertation. The researcher takes the general reformed position on the matter, namely that the apostles, prophets and evangelists played a foundational role in the building up of the New Testament church by their proclamation of the gospel and their planting of the first churches (cf. Ephesians 2:20, Martin, 1991:52, O'Brien, 1999:298, Van Genderen & Velema, 2008:738-739). During the time of the writing of this letter, which was a time of overlap between the apostles and the other ministers, a shift started to take place where the work of ministry was taken over from the apostles by evangelists (cf. 2 Timothy.4:5; Acts. 21:8) pastors (Philippians 1:1; Acts 20:17/28; 14:23; 1 Timothy. 4:14; 5:17, 19) and teachers (1 Timothy.4:13,16 2 Timothy 2:2). These services became fixed in the service of pastors and teachers or overseers (1 Timothy 5:17).²⁶

For the purpose of this dissertation it suffices to clarify the work of the last two, namely that of the pastor and teacher as expressed in Ephesians 4:11.

²⁶ For an extensive discussion of this matter, see the remarks of van Genderen and Velema (2008:738-740)

The function²⁷ of these gifts as defined by their names, include the work of teaching the Word and instilling the truth as guiding and caring shepherds. It is clearly linked to the teaching of the apostolic faith, and has an evangelistic thrust to it, so that unbelievers may hear the gospel, and believers may live worthy of their calling in line with the gospel, standing fast against heresy (verse 14). Floor (1995:153) clearly connects it to eldership. Although he is vague in his discussion, this seems to be correct as it is in line with Paul's own reference to elders in Acts 20:17 as "guardians and shepherds" (Bruce, 1988:388-389). These two terms, therefore, represent the elders and ministers of the word as shepherds and teachers of the church.²⁸

O'Brien (1999:301) understands these two as overlapping terms that should be taken to have a very close link. He calls them "leader-teachers". From a general overview of these terms in the New Testament it's clear that the elders as shepherds and teachers are not only to teach and instruct but also to urge their hearers through relationship and spiritual guidance to live as new creatures. The danger in O'Brien's (1999:301) designation of them as leader-teachers, is that the teaching-aspect may be overemphasized, and the shepherd-aspect may be underemphasized. These elders as pastors and teachers are themselves examples and mentors in the faith. They should live with and teach others how to walk worthy of their calling (4:1) as can be clearly seen from 1 Timothy 4:13; 16 and 2 Timothy 2:2 (O'Brien, 1999:301). As with the rest of Ephesians, one cannot overlook the deep connection these terms have with the Old Testament (Best, 1998:392). When Paul speaks of the elders as pastors and teachers, he does not only have the Greek idea of a διδάσκαλος in mind, but also the shepherd-leader of the Old Testament. There God Himself is portrayed as the Shepherd of His people (e.g. Isaiah. 40:11; Psalm. 23); the Messiah is described as shepherd of the Lord's flock (Zechariah 13:7) and kings and priests are understood to be shepherds of their people. In the New Testament, Jesus is portrayed as the great Shepherd of His flock (Hebrews 13:20; 1 Peter 2:25), and through the Spirit He appoints some to be shepherds who tend His flock (apostles such as Peter in John 21:15-17; and elders in Acts 20:28). As shepherds they are to care for, protect and guide His flock with His authority and His teaching.

Contrary to Lincoln (1990:252-253), who finds no hint of services in the church here, Hoehner and others (2002:544; Best, 1998:394; Bratcher & Nida, 1982:102; Floor, 1995:152-153, etc.) have drawn the clear conclusion that with these terms one should think of a believer with a certain function to which he or she is called, in line with the gifts he or she has received. These persons

²⁷ Fowl (2012) notes that it is the purpose of Paul to describe the function and purpose of these persons in this passage, rather than giving a description of how such a person can be identified.

²⁸ The distinction between pastors and elders as found in the contemporary church cannot be discussed here. It suffices to state that the pastor is also understood as an elder with a specific task (see e.g. 3 John 1 where an apostle calls himself an "elder")

should minister to the troubled believers, exhort and comfort all believers, be their teachers in the truth of the gospel and manage the activities of the local congregation as a shepherd tends a flock and a teacher guides his pupils. Significantly, the connection between shepherds and teachers, shown by using a single definite article for both terms, should remind of the manner in which Jesus acted as both shepherd and teacher to His disciples. In Him, as their Rabbi and Lord, these functions are united, and in line with His office as prophet, priest and king, He calls certain believers to these specific functions. These functions, given to the church in verse 11, are endowed with His authority in as much as they do His will and teach His Word.

Importantly, **verse 12**, which is the focus of this chapter, flows directly from verse 11 as a set of prepositional phrases that describes the purpose of these services. The purpose as well as the problematic nature of this verse will become clear as it is discussed in detail at 3.4.

Although **verses 13 and 14** are still part of the sentence that starts in verse 11, it is important to note the semantic shift that takes place from verse 12 to verses 13-14. Here there's a clear return to the theme of unity and maturity as found in verses 1-6. The use of μέχρι with the aorist subjunctive καταστήσωμεν (Ephesians 4:13) in verse 13, shows that what follows is the end-goal of the process described in 8-12 (Floor, 1995:154, Hoehner, 2002:552). Best (1998:398) explains the significance of the words μέχρι καταστήσωμεν: "The goal is presented as the end of a journey; (that) has not yet been attained...". Martin (1991:53-54) points out the paradox seen here: "Unity is *both* what we already have, since it is the work of the Spirit (4:3-4: we must keep what we have!) *and* the future aim towards which we must work." This is in keeping with Paul's understanding of the church as an eschatological entity that has already been sanctified in Christ, and yet needs to carry on with sanctification in this age until the return of Christ, its Head (Martin, 1991:53). Accordingly, the ministers given in verse 11, must have this end-goal in mind as they equip believers for the work of ministry and the resulting growth or building up of the body (Mbennah, 2012:82-83). Because of the *already* and *not yet* aspect of God's kingdom, the true end of this journey will only be arrived at when God consummates all things in His Son (Ephesians 1:9-10; O'Brien, 1999). This duality in time should not cause confusion as to the value of the process in the present age. Although believers will only fully attain this goal at Christ's return, the present growth is described as a reality they may already start to experience in the present. This can be seen from Paul's reference to the church as already being the "fullness of Him who fills all in all" (Ephesians 1:23, see also the present tense used in 2:10; 22; 3:10; 4:22-24, etc.)

The subject of verse 13 should not be overlooked: those who are involved in this process of maturing are described as οἱ πάντες (we all) (Hoehner, 1999:552; O'Brien, 1999: 305). Paul has a collective view of the growth and building-up of the church – which is also portrayed in the unity and diversity of Christ's body. Believers are to arrive at the end-goal alongside other believers

and through the instrumental work of other believers (v. 11,16). They may not function in isolation and expect growth.

Using three prepositional phrases structured as stair-steps where each step builds upon the previous one, Paul describes the end-goal to be attained (Hoehner, 2002:553):

Prepositional phrase 1: The first phrase describes the goal as attaining the unity of faith and the knowledge of the Son of God. It was already seen in 4:3 that this is the union between believers, the bond of peace which the Holy Spirit gave. The Spirit uses the believers' common faith in Christ and their shared knowledge of Him as the Son of God to bind them together in this union. This knowledge of Him is described as τῆς ἐπιγνώσεως rather than γνῶσις, showing that it denotes a certain or full knowledge of Christ (Louw & Nida, 1989a:334-335). It is concrete, rather than abstract (Hoehner, 2002:554). It's experiential rather than only theoretical (Floor, 1995:155). The knowledge described here is, therefore, a personal and relational knowledge of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, through which they know the truth about Him and know Him as their risen Lord (see Matthew 11:27 for the use of this same word). As to the relationship between the unity of faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, their faith is rooted in their knowledge of Him. This works reciprocally: knowledge of Him strengthens faith in Him and their faith in turn urges them to know Him better (see Hebrews 11:1-3 regarding the relationship between faith and knowledge). As the community of believers grows in this knowledge and faith, the bond that the Spirit has created between them, is deepened.

Prepositional phrase 2 & 3: The second and third prepositional phrases take the above further by using the imagery of a mature man. The mature church is likened to a mature man (ἄνδρα τέλειον), who stands in antithesis to the immature children (νήπιοι) of verse 14. Here immaturity is understood as being susceptible to deceit and false teachings. From this focus on maturity it can be concluded that every believer must be in the process of growing in faith and knowledge of the Son of God, for it is by this means that individual growth takes place (Floor, 1995:156), and that the corporate body becomes mature in its unity. It is also by means of this growth in maturity that they can resist the forces that threaten to corrupt them (Best, 1998:403). Floor (1995:156) sheds light on this process of growth into maturity when he explains it as the result of believers "appropriating" Christ's gift of grace in faith.

The measure of maturity they should strive toward is given in the third phrase. Christ Himself is the measure of that maturity to which they are called. Here we must recall that rich theme already seen in 1:9-10; 1:22-23 and 3:19 – depicting the church as "the fullness of Christ". Without noticing this theme, Paul's understanding of maturity regarding the measure of Christ's fullness will be unclear. The meaning of the phrase: "τοῦ πληρώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ" in 4:13 is controlled by the

meaning of Ephesians 1:22-23 where the church is τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν πληρουμένου (cf. 3.2.2). There it was stated that the church as “Christ’s fullness”, is that community which lives in an obedient relationship with Him who fills all in all. It also became clear that this fullness stands in contrast to the rest of the cosmos, which remains in rebellion. The church as Christ’s body is where His Spirit dwells and where his dynamic rule as King over all of life is obediently received and manifested. The end goal of the maturity spoken of here in 4:13c, is connected to this. If He is the one who fills all in all (1:22-23), the One in whom God will consummate the whole of creation under one Head (1:9-10), then the church as His fullness should in the present age increasingly bear witness of it in the whole of their existence. When the enemies of God look at His body, they should increasingly see the eschatological reality that under one head, Christ, God will reconcile all believing people and all created things to Himself and one another. As Paul says in 3:10 “...that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.” (Bible, 2001)

To summarize the content of verse 13 and 14 then, it can be said that the maturity of the body increases as its members strive to grow in unity and in the knowledge of their Head (the Son of God). This should happen under the guidance of those He has called to equip them, and the result is that they increasingly learn to obey Him as the one who fulfils their whole existence. This is the church’s journey of sanctification, which is driven by the longing for that moment of complete restoration at the Last Day (O’Brien, 1999:308) As believers continue on this path of spiritual growth they grow as witnesses of God’s grace for them in Christ and in this witnessing, they are the first fruits of the new creation that He inaugurates. Without this, believers may fall prey to deceit (Ephesians 4:14).

Thought-block 3:

In thought block 3 (15-16), Paul brings his “indicative” island to a climactic summary. Verses 15a to 16b contain an inclusio-structure, that starts with ἀληθεύοντες δὲ ἐν ἀγάπῃ, and ends with οἰκοδομῆν ἑαυτοῦ ἐν ἀγάπῃ as outer elements of the inclusio (element a). It then connects αὐξήσωμεν (growth) to οἰκοδομῆν as inner elements (element b). The core of this inclusion then (element c) contains a description of Christ as the head united to his body: “κεφαλή...σῶμα...” (Bible, 2012).

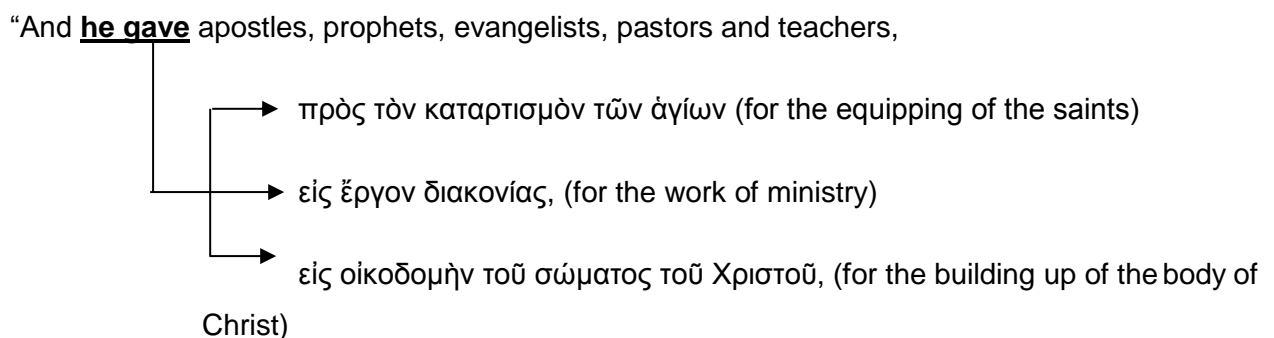
By means of this inclusion Paul climactically restates the main idea of this passage: As we, the body, grow up toward our head Christ, in every way (15b) and as every member becomes fit and equipped to take its place and do its work, the whole body will grow, so as to build itself up in love (16c). At its centre (element c) one finds a depiction of the deep union between Christ and His body with every believer taking his/her place.

3.4 The meaning of Ephesians 4:12

3.4.1 The problematic interpretation of Ephesians 4:12

The focus in this chapter falls on the meaning of Ephesians 4:12. It is, therefore, important to note that New Testament scholars are divided over its interpretation. There's general consensus that verse 12 is dependent on verse 11 and expresses the purpose of the δόματα (gifts, v.8.) in verse 11. The main issue at hand is the interpretation of the three prepositional phrases found in verse 12. The way in which they are interpreted will ultimately determine the meaning of this verse and consequently, its implications for ministry. Kruger (2005:536-540) has shown that verse 12 can be interpreted in at least 4 different ways. In this dissertation attention is given to the two most prominent interpretations:

Figure 3-3: Option A: Ephesians 4:11-12 as co-ordinate.



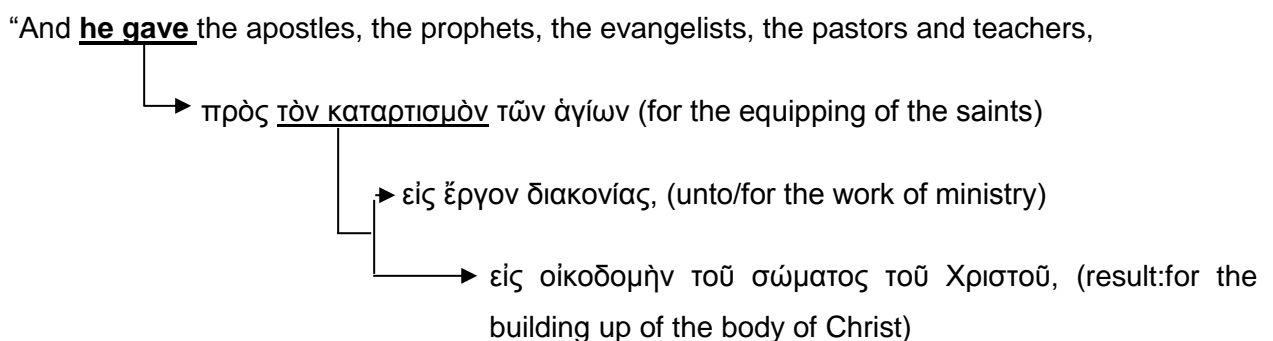
Here the purpose of the ministers that He gave, is threefold – they are to equip the believers, do the ministry (of the Word), and build up the body of Christ.

Gordon (1994:78), along with others such as Collins, (2014:118-119); Lincoln, (1990:253) and Page, (2005:27) opt for this understanding where the ministry of the gifts (Ephesians 4:11-12) is not “reduced” to simply equipping the rest of the saints for their work of διακονία. According to Gordon (1994:78) and those that share his views these three prepositional phrases are coordinate, meaning that the offices are to do all that is described by each of the three phrases. Those that opt for this interpretation, mainly give the following exegetical reasons:

1. The prepositional change from πρὸς to εἰς need not necessarily indicate that these phrases are not parallel (Gordon, 1994:72; Page, 2005:28). There are other examples where prepositions are used interchangeably and strung together in a co-ordinate manner (Page, 2005:30-31)

2. The translation of τὸν καταρτισμὸν τῶν ἁγίων (the equipping of the believers): Gordon (1994:73) contends for translating it as “perfecting” of believers rather than “equipping”. Page (2005:33-34) translates it with the concept of “spiritual maturity”. To equip is to cause to spiritually mature. According to them such translations present καταρτισμὸν as an end that need not be described by a further dependent phrase.
3. There is a possible parallelism of structure between 11-12 and 13-14. Verses 11 and 13 each consists of a main verb, followed by three co-ordinate prepositional phrases (Page, 2005:31), which could indicate that the author intended the structure in verse 12 to be co-ordinate in line with the structure in 13. Baugh, (2016:336-338) gives a thorough visual analysis of the asyndeton found in these verses. His argument is compelling and should be thoroughly regarded.
4. Gordon (1994:71) and Page (2005:32) both mention that Paul could have used a complementary infinitive if he wanted to subordinate the second prepositional phrase to the first.
5. Collins (2014:118) refers to the context of chapter 3:7-8 where Paul spoke in this same manner of his own ministry – which is the ministry of an apostle. He also falls back on the idea that in general people would have thought of this διακονία as ministry done by called ministers (Collins, 2014:118-119).

Figure 3-4: Option B: Ephesians 4:12 as sub-ordinate.



Breed (2015:6), Floor (1995:153) and Stott (1991:166-167), along with others such as Best (1998:396), Gallaty (2015:120-121), Hoehner (2002:549), and O’Brien (1999: 302-3-4) all view the content of the second prepositional phrase as dependent on the first. For them it is the purpose of the “gifts/ministers” (v.11) to equip the whole body for its διακονία which results in the building-up of the body (Ephesians 4:12c, and 13). The following reasons are given:

1. The reference to the interchangeable use of prepositions cannot prove the co-ordinate or the sub-ordinate structure. If Paul could have used these prepositions interchangeably, it doesn't exclude the possibility that he could have changed them with a certain purpose. Hoehner (2002: 547-551) advocates that the first expresses the immediate purpose, while the other two denote direction or goal. There is progression from the first to the 3rd prepositional phrase and this is in line with the whole passage which emphasises the process of growth and maturity in the church.
2. Semantically it seems clear that *καταρτισμὸν* needs an object. If people are equipped, prepared, or perfected, it is done with a certain object in mind (O'Brien, 1999:303). This adds weight to the argument for understanding the second prepositional phrase as subordinate to the first.
3. O'Brien (1999: 302-303) points out the reference to "saints" in 12a and argues that its use, as early as here, underscores the shift in focus from ministers in verse 11 to all saints in 12. If these tasks in 12b and 12c are only for ministers, then why would Paul already refer to the saints in 12a?
4. Context plays a key- role in interpreting this text. As Floor (1995:153-154) contends, if verse 16 is to be taken seriously we cannot conclude that the work of *διακονία* referred to here, is only that of the ministers. Verse 16 shows that the mutual up-building of the body of Christ is the calling of all believers. If we explain verse 12 with this verse in view, it makes sense that the ministers equip the believers for their ministry and that their work of *διακονία* results in the growth of the whole body. Thielman (2010:278-279) expands on this argument by showing that verses 7-16 both start and end with the idea of every believer receiving grace and gifts in order to take up their place in the building up of the body.
5. If verse 13-16 explains the building up of the church in her entirety and 13 is the end result of 12, then it is clear that the equipping must have the church in mind as a whole (Stott, 1991:168).
6. Van Aarde, (2014:214-215) has shown that the *ἔργον διακονίας* (v.12) is related to the *οἰκονομία* of God in chapter 1-3. God has worked out everything according to His will (1:11); through the power He has put to work in Christ (1:19), which is the same power that works in the believer (3:20). The goal of God's power in the believer, is that all believers will partake in the *διακονία* of Christ. This is seen in Ephesians 2:10 where all believers are said to be "...his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:10) (Bible, 2001). This points toward interpreting the work of *διακονία* in 4:12 as the work of all believers – thus pointing to a subordinate interpretation of the three prepositional phrases.

In contrast to those exegetes who understand this text as co-ordinate, such as Collins (2014:118), Fowl (2012:141-142); Gordon (1994:78), Lincoln, (1990:253) Page, (2005:27) , and in agreement with Hoehner (2002: 547-551), O'Brien (1999:302-303), etc, the researcher takes the view that these phrases should be interpreted as sub-ordinate. The following additional reasons supplement this position:

- Contrary to Collins's (2014:118) reference to 4:7-8, the researcher is convinced that the immediate context rather points to the involvement of all believers in the ministry mentioned here. This is clear from the connection between the calling of all believers (4:1), that receive the grace of Christ's gifts (4:7) and ministry (4:12) that overlap in this passage.
- This dissertation takes the position of Van Aarde (2014:201-205) that verses 15-16 are to be understood as a separate thought-block in the passage's structure (see 3.3.1 above). These verses are understood as summarizing and emphasizing the content of the whole passage by means of an *inclusio*. In this inclusion all believers partake in the ministry of the body; therefore, the ministry of verse 12 should probably refer to the ministry of all believers.

3.4.2 The meaning of important concepts in Ephesians 4:12

The overall structure and purpose of Paul's letter to the Ephesians, as well as the place of this passage within that structure, have been discussed. The context of this verse in Ephesians, and especially the immediate context of 4:1-16 has also been discussed along with the problematic syntactical relation between the prepositional phrases of verse 12. Before concluding as to the meaning of this verse, it is necessary to pay attention to the meaning of important concepts found in this verse.

Three important concepts are discussed below. The approach of van Rensburg & Lamprecht (2011:161-173) was used to research them. This method focuses on the synchronic meaning of a word in its semantic domains, as well as the diachronic use of that verb. The Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament based on Semantic Domains (Louw & Nida, 1989) was used for this synchronic meaning of words, while the Theological dictionary of the New Testament (Kittel, G., Bromiley, G.W. & Friedrich, G., 1964) was used as point of departure for the diachronic meaning. The results of this analysis are supplemented and tested against the exegesis of different commentators as well as independent insights from Scripture.

3.4.2.1 Concept 1: τὸν καταρτισμὸν [equipping]

Louw & Nida (1989b:135) find the noun καταρτισμὸς in only one semantic domain (L&N, 75.5) which denotes “adequacy”. They (Louw & Nida, 1989b:135) find the related verb καταρτίζω in three different semantic domains: the domain (L&N, 75) which denotes “making adequate”, the domain (L&N,13) which denotes “producing” and the domain (L&N,42) which denotes “creating”. In Ephesians 4:12 the *noun* is used; therefore, the relevant semantic domain is that of – “adequacy” (L&N,75). This clearly fits the context of Ephesians 4 which is focused on the ministry of believers and the consequent growth of the body (Delling, 1964:475-476)

When this semantic domain is contrasted with those bordering it, the focus becomes clearer. The meaning of domain 75 relates to a particular measure of capability or adequacy rather than being unqualified to a degree of capability (Louw & Nida, 1989a:679) Thus, the focus of the relevant semantic domain is the complete adequacy of the believer for ministry, rather than a general adequacy.

Louw & Nida (1989a:679-680) haven't subdivided domain 75 into different sub-domains. Therefore, καταρτισμὸς can immediately be contrasted with the other words in this domain to determine its meaning even more closely. *ικανόω* (L&N 75.3) means to cause someone or something to be adequate for something - 'to make sufficient, to make adequate, to cause to be qualified.' *ἄριστος* (L& N 75.4) means pertaining to being qualified to perform some function - 'qualified, proficient.' *ἵνα ἄριστος ᾦ ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ ἄνθρωπος* 'in order that the man of God may be qualified' 2 Tm 3.17 (Louw & Nida, 1989a:679). *αὐτάρκεια*, (L&N 75.6) refers to a state of adequacy or sufficiency - 'what is adequate, what is sufficient, what is needed, adequacy.' This refers to having what you need and not lacking anything (Louw & Nida, 1989a:680)

What became clear from contrasting these words found in Louw & Nida's 75th domain, is that the meaning of καταρτισμὸν denotes complete adequacy for a specific function – it needs a specific object²⁹. In other Pauline epistles (2 Timothy 3:17; 2 Corinthians 13:7-9) καταρτισμὸν is used for spiritual training so that someone may become completely furnished for some form of good work in God's service.

In the context of Ephesians this means that believers are already completely furnished in Christ for their ministry (2:10), yet ministers are to make the believers fully adequate to function out of that identity. This can be seen from the semantic connection between the verb related to

²⁹ In contrast to the commentary of proponents of the co-relative view on the structure of 4:12 (see 3.4.1 above) it is clear that Paul could have made use of a different word, for example “αὐτάρκεια”, had he meant to speak of believers being brought only to a state of adequacy without a subject.

καταρτισμὸν, namely καταρτίζω and the verb κτισθέντες found in 2:10. Louw & Nida (1989a:514) place them in the same semantic sub-domain (42.29-42.40) which denotes making or creating. They understand the difference to be that κτισθέντες refers to creation of something that has not existed before, while καταρτίζω refers to creation with the implication of putting into proper condition. This fits the logical progression of Ephesians. In the first part of the letter, the believers are described as being new creations of God in Christ, made to dwell in the good works that God has prepared for them (2:10). In the second part these believers are to start living from that identity (4:1). They become capable of doing this as they are equipped by the ministers of the Word and their lives are put into proper condition by the Holy Spirit.

For the purpose of this dissertation, it's important to note that this word is used in Luke 6:40 in the context of discipleship – pointing to the role of a teacher that guides a disciple into full maturity.

Diachronic focus

Delling (1964:475-476) shows that καταρτισμός and καταρτίζω are derivatives of ἄρτιος and ἐξαρτίζω. He notes that ἄρτιος in Ancient Greek literature and in the LXX has the basic meanings of being “suitable”, “correct”, “adapted for something”; “meeting demands”. It is used from early on in an ethical or religious sense. ἐξαρτίζω, found in the LXX only in Exodus 28:7, means to “bind” or “unite”. In the New Testament this group of words (καταρτισμός, καταρτίζω, ἄρτιος and ἐξαρτίζω) has two basic senses: a) to regulate or bring into order and b) to equip. It is the conviction of the researcher that Paul has a dynamic concept in mind here, which includes both aspects:

2 Timothy 3:17 is an important verse in this regard. Here ἄρτιος and ἐξαρτίζω are clearly related in Paul's thinking. In this verse ἄρτιος denotes being in a “proper state” for doing every good work, while ἐξαρτίζω denotes the equipping that brings one to that state. That which denotes ἐξαρτίζω is mentioned in the preceding verse 16. καταρτισμός is done using Scripture for teaching, reproofing, correcting and training in righteousness (2 Timothy. 2:16). Through all this the believer comes to a proper state for doing good works (Ephesians 2:1; 2 Timothy 2:17). Importantly, as seen from 2 Timothy 3:10-15, this does not take place without mentorship and includes both restoration and training (v26).

Buys (1989:168) includes “repairing” and “helping right” in his understanding of καταρτισμὸν in Ephesians 4:12. He refers to Matthew 4:19 and Mark 1:17 where the verb καταρτίζω is used in reference to the fixing of nets but applied to the “repairing” of disciples to become “fishers of men”. He also refers to Galatians 6:1 where it has the meaning of helping someone right who has fallen into sin, and Thess. 3:10 where Paul “adds what is lacking” in the Thessalonians. Buys's

understanding of *καταρτισμόν* undergirds the argument that equipping believers is not only about co-ordinating and training believers for service, using their gifts, but, as Page (2005:33) emphasises, also about bringing them to spiritual maturity for that service. Kruger (2005:25) has also shown how *καταρτισμός* in Ephesians 4:11 not only refers to a process of skills-training, but also means to repair or complete that which is lacking in a believer. Contrary to Baugh (2016:339); Hoehner (2002:550) and O'Brien (1999:303-304) the researcher takes the view of Buys (1989:168), Fowl, 2012:142); Page (2005:33) and Kruger (2005:25) in this regard, that this equipping includes restoration from a disordered state. Although Thielman (2010:278-279) is correct in stating that this verb has a practical focus, he seems to overemphasise the practical nature of preparing believers for ministry and underestimates the importance of reparation in this practical process.

Delling (1964:475-476) concludes from his diachronic analysis that *καταρτισμός* in Ephesians 4:12 denotes the equipping of the believers for their work of ministry through confirmation. He (Delling, 1964:475-476) shows that this equipping of believers leads to the unity of believers as a body and increases the inner strength of their union. For this he refers to *κατάρτισις* in 2 Corinthians 13:9 which denotes the inner strength of a community found in the organic relationships of its members. Petrenko's (2011:148) description of the relationship between the new identity believers receive in Christ, and the way they are to live according to the second section of Ephesians, supports this: "The new sphere of influence or dominion – based on believers' relationship with God...seem to empower the believers to moral behaviour and harmony in the Christian community."

Conclusion about the meaning of *καταρτισμός* in Ephesians 4:12

From the above discussion it is deduced that *καταρτισμόν* in Ephesians 4:12 has all believers as object; it is related to the calling of believers mentioned in 4:1 and the grace-gifts Christ gives to all believers in 4:7. It constitutes the purpose of the persons given in verse 11 and it means *to prepare or make completely adequate for the work of ministry (discussed below) by means of the continual restoration in the grace of Christ and the preparation to serve with the gifts of Christ* (see also O'Brien 1999:30; Thielman, 2010:280, etc.)

The following qualifications are important:

1. It is equipping for complete adequacy, which means that believers are to continue on a lifelong journey of being equipped for their work of ministry.

2. The goal is not only that believers experience a certain state of being but are made adequate to serve God from that state (Ephesians 2:10, 2 Timothy 3:17). Believers are to use their gifts of grace (v7) to serve others in *διακονία* (v12).
3. The relation between *καταρτισμόν* and the verb from which it is derived (2 Timothy 3:17, 2 Corinthians 13:7-9 etc.), shows that making someone completely adequate for *διακονία* happens through the continual appropriation of Christ's grace. This entails both the *restoration* of the believer's identity through the ministry of the Word³⁰, as well as *preparation* to serve others from that identity through the gifts of grace.
4. Equipping believers is related to the strength of the body's inner unity (4:3). The union among believers deepens as they are equipped for the work of self-sacrificial ministry.

3.4.2.2 Concept 2: *εἰς ἔργον διακονίας* [the work of ministry]

In the structural analysis *ἔργον διακονίας* constitutes the object that *καταρτισμόν* takes. The meaning of *διακονίας* will now be discussed.

Synchronic focus

Louw & Nida (1989b:59) find the following meanings of *διακονία* in the New Testament: service (35.19); ministry (35.21); provision (35.38); waiting upon (46.13) and contribution (57.119). As seen from this, it's found in three different semantic domains 35, 46, and 57. In the context of Ephesians 4 it seems that domain 35, which denotes "help, care for", is the most fitting. Therefore, either "service (35.19) ministry (35.21) or provision" (35.38) could be possible meanings of *διακονία*.

As semantic domain 35 is contrasted with its surrounding domains, the following becomes clear:

- In contrast to 34 (association) it is seen that the work of ministry, for which believers are to be made completely adequate, is not only to associate with others or to view themselves as part of the church.
- In contrast to 36 (guide, discipline, follow) & 37 (Control; rule) the work for which believers are equipped, is not primarily to rule over others, or to control them (37) or to equip them. From this it can be deduced that in Paul's understanding, there is a distinction between the service of the persons in v.11 and the service of all believers in verse 12.

From the above the *διακονία* of the believers in Ephesians 4:12a, seems to be about doing humble work in order to help others out of care for them. Here the context of Ephesians 2:10 is important.

³⁰ This can also be deduced from the fact that those who are charged with equipping believers are called to be teachers/pastors (Ephesians 4:11; 2 Timothy 3:14-17).

As was clearly seen from the structural analysis (3.3), there's a progression in this letter from the external reality of believers' new identity in Christ, and the realization of that reality in their lives. The "work" of *διακονία* for which they are equipped in 4:12, is good work that they learn to do as new creations in Christ (2:10).

Louw and Nida (1989a:458) further subdivide this semantic domain into the following subdomains: Help (35.1-35.18); Serve (35.19-35.30); Provide for, Support (35.31-35.35); Care for, take care of (35.36-35.46) The use of *διακονίας* as a noun in Ephesians 4:12 points to 35.21 as the correct meaning, "the role or position of serving" (Louw & Nida, 1989a:460).

From Paul's use of the noun *διακονία* in passages where he explains his own ministry (Acts 20:24/Ephesians 3:2,7) it is clear that he viewed his own ministry as his *διακονία*. In these texts it's clear that *διακονία* is related to his calling and the gifts of grace that God has entrusted to him. This pattern also features in the current context although here it's applied to all believers. In Ephesians 4:1 the believers are called to walk/live worthy of their calling (see 3.2.2 above *περιπατήσαι τῆς κλήσεως*). Then, in 4:7 Paul goes on to speak about the "grace" they received from Christ according to His measure – which can be understood as His gifts to each believer. In 4:12 their *διακονία* is mentioned. Clearly, the trio of calling, grace-gift and ministry cannot be separated. When the meaning of the verb *διακονέω* is taken into consideration (35.19), it becomes clear that the believers in Ephesians 4 are to live up to their calling³¹ by using their grace-gifts (4:7) in such a way that it builds up the body of Christ.

Louw & Nida (1989a: 460) point out that the use of the verb *διακονέω* in the Gospels refers to the service that Jesus as the Son of Man came to serve with. (Mt.20:28). Jesus fulfilled His calling and ministry (John 17:18) by helping and serving with self-sacrificial love (Philippians 2:6-18), which brought salvation to believers. Paul fulfils his calling and ministry, by following in Jesus' footsteps (Colossians. 1:23-25) not by bringing salvation, but by proclaiming salvation in Christ. Now, believers are to follow in His footsteps³² (Philippians 3:17), by serving one another according to their calling which is to live in the unity of their faith (Ephesians 4:1-3). They are to do this with self-sacrificing love using the grace-gifts that Christ has given them.

Diachronic focus

One of the most influential articles of the 20th century on the *διακον*-word group was written by H.W. Beyer (Collins, 2014:58; Gooder, 2006:34). This article which appeared in the Theological

³¹ They are called to faith in him (1:13,18) as new creatures in Christ (Ephesians 2:10, 4:24)

³² In Ephesians 5:1-2 it's clear that Paul intends this *διακονία* of believers to be in line with that of Christ himself. There he relates the *διακονία*-life of the believers directly to being imitators of God as beloved children. As they imitate Paul, they also imitate Christ – for that is what Paul is doing.

Dictionary of the New Testament (1964), played a major role in the understanding of διακονία by many New Testament scholars³³. Beyer (1964:81-82) starts his discussion of the διακον-word group by stating that διακονέω carries the basic and distinct nuance of personal service. According to him, outside the New Testament it basically meant to wait at tables as a waiter, to care for and to serve in general (Beyer, 1964:82).

By the 1990's the general understanding of διακονία in the New Testament was critically reviewed as a revolutionary shift took place in διακονία-studies. Spearheaded by the likes of John N Collins and later A Hentschel (Collins, 2014:21), this shift was brought about by renewed insight into the meaning of διακονία in Classical and Hellenistic Greek Literature.

According to Collins (2014:57-77), the meaning of διακονία in the ancient Greek and Jewish texts of Plato, Athenaeus, Philo, Josephus and the early church, emphasizes διακονία as obedience to one who commissions you with a certain calling or task of mediation, such as a messenger or prophet. A person carrying out διακονία is therefore rather to be understood as an agent or envoy, bestowed with the authority of his superior to complete a certain task. Collins (2014:76) admits that there are some texts that speak of διακονία as menial service. However, he understands those as examples where one is commissioned for that service. The emphasis still falls on the mission of an envoy, rather than service toward another person. According to him the word-group never expresses menial service in and of itself (Breed, 2017:362).

Contrary to Collins, Beyer (1964:84,86) stated that Jesus brought a corrective of διακονία as Jews and Greeks understood it. According to him, several passages from the gospels show this: in Luke 12:37 the master serves the servants; in Luke 22:27 Jesus is present as one who serves; in John 13:4 Jesus gives a new pattern for relationships within His body when He washes the feet of His disciples. Collins (2014:78-100) discusses some of these διακονία-texts in the gospels thoroughly and comes to the contrary conclusion that Jesus in fact didn't correct the common meaning of διακονία, but rather made use of it.

To Beyer (1964:84-87) the distinguishing mark of διακονέω in the New Testament Scriptures is the fact that διακονία is exalted and related directly to loving God. To the researcher, this is where Beyer and Collins in fact share common ground. Beyer (1964:84-87) goes to great lengths to show that in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament service is to be done primarily out of obedient love for God and should result in loving one's neighbour. This, after all, is God's great command. This understanding partially overlaps with Collins's stance that διακονία is done

³³Calvin and Luther's exegesis on the matter was strongly influenced by their contemporary understanding of διακονία as only being the ministry of mercy (Breed, 2012:2).

as an agent with a commission. Collins (2014:96) starts his own discussion of important *διακονία*-texts in the gospel accounts, by referring to this exact same matter. Breed (2012:6) has correctly shown that Collins's approach may be too narrow in that he only anchors his understanding of *διακονία* in texts where the term is explicitly mentioned. According to Breed (2012:6) the wider context of Scripture should play a decisive role in understanding the underlying concept of *διακονία*. In his article, "*διακονία*: In Conversation with John N. Collins", Breed (2017) evaluates Collins's findings on *διακονία* in Mark 10:45. By means of a thorough structural and thematic analysis of Mark 8-10, Breed's (2017:362-363) article shows that a clear link exists between *διακονία* and discipleship. This *διακονία* in discipleship includes both a commission as envoy of God as well as service out of true compassion and mercy for the needs of others (Breed, 2017:367).

Conclusion as to the meaning of *διακονία* in Ephesians 4:12

ἔργον διακονίας refers to that service which *all* believers are called to by virtue of their regeneration and for which they are equipped. The following qualifications are important:

1. They are not called to take over the task of governing the body, or the pastoral work of the persons in 4:11.
2. They are called for this service with deeds, not only in attitude. These deeds are those good works they have been created for in Christ (Ephesians 2:10).
3. They are called to this by virtue of their call to faith (4:1) and receive the gifts of grace from Christ to fulfil their service (4:7,12)
4. It's clear that this *διακονία* is service they do in order to help others and care for others, yet it is more than humble service, for they do it as agents in obedience to Christ.
5. This *διακονία* fits as the object of *καταρτισμόν*: Believers are to be rooted and confirmed in their new identity in Christ in order for them to live out of that identity and serve one another in love. Considering Ephesians 4:21-24 and Mark 8-10, it should be understood as part of discipleship.

3.4.2.3 Concept 3: *εἰς οἰκοδομὴν τοῦ σώματος* [growth and building-up of the body]

In the structure of verse 12 the equipping of believers for their work of *διακονία*, should result in the *οἰκοδομὴν* (building up) of Christ's body:

Louw & Nida (1989b:172) find three possible meanings for the noun *οἰκοδομή* in three different sub-domains in the New Testament: building (7.1 – subdomain 7.1), construction (42.34 – subdomain 42:29-40) and making more able (74.15 – domain 74.1-28)

οικοδομή in 7.1 (sub-domain 7.1) refers to a physical building or structure which encloses an area (Louw & Nida, 1989a:81). This doesn't fit the figurative use of the word in Ephesians 4:12 and is therefore excluded as possible meaning.

The meaning of οἰκοδομήν as described in 42.34 (Sub-domain 42.29-40) fits the context of Ephesians 4:12 (Louw & Nida, 1989a:514). Within the semantic-sphere of “creating” or “making”, it refers to “the construction of something with the focus on the event of building up or the result of such an event” (Louw & Nida, 1989a:514). This fits the figurative use of the word in the context of Ephesians, where God is described as creating a whole new humanity and gathering them in His church (Ephesians 2:11-22). As new building-material is added to a building so that it can grow in stature and complexity, so God adds members to His church.

The meaning of οἰκοδομήν as described in 74.15 (domain 74.1-28) could also be the meaning of this word in Ephesians 4:12. The meaning Louw & Nida (1989a:677-678) assign to this, is: “...to increase the potential of someone or something, with focus upon the process involved”. Whereas οἰκοδομήν in 42.34 focuses on the event or result of “building up”, here the focus now falls on the process of “making more able”. It's a reference to the maturity of the body. By means of an ongoing process the Spirit roots believers more firmly in the truth of the gospel (Ephesians 3:17) This fits the immediate context of Ephesians 4:12 quite well where ‘καταρτισμόν’ has the same goal.

The difficulty which arises from the above is to decide whether εἰς οἰκοδομήν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ χριστοῦ in Ephesians 4:12 should be understood as the result of building up Christ's body quantitatively, or as a process through which the potential of the body of Christ is deepened qualitatively. Other occurrences of οἰκοδομήν in Ephesians may shed light on this matter. In Ephesians 2:21 the noun is found in the phrase: “ἐν ᾧ πᾶσα οἰκοδομή συναρμολογουμένη αὖξει εἰς ναὸν ἅγιον ἐν κυρίῳ” (Bible, 2012). It is also found in Ephesians 4:16, that summarizes the end goal of the process under discussion. There is a striking similarity between these two occurrences (Ephesians 2:21; Ephesians 4:15-16). In both instances, the noun οἰκοδομή is used in relation to the participle συναρμολογέομαι³⁴ and the verb αὐξάνω³⁵.

The first occurrence: Ephesians 2:21

³⁴ To become greater, grow, increase; the mystical sense of the Christian community growing as a body in its sense of unity and understanding of God's purpose in Christ (BDAG, 2000:151).

³⁵ “increasing” in quantity, growth (physiological) or status (Louw & Nida, 1989a:274-275, 601).

In 2:21 believers are described as a building/structure (οἰκοδομή - noun, nominative – thus the subject of the verb), presently rising or growing (αὕξει – Indicative, Praesens, Active) into a holy temple in the Lord.

- The present nature of the verb αὕξει, along with the metaphor of a building shows that it is a building that currently grows extensively as more blocks are added to it (Arnold, 2010:172). In the context of Ephesians 2:11-16 it makes sense that this refers to growth in the size of the body – where the Holy Spirit adds believers to the body, through faith in Christ.
- The way the “growth” in the building comes about is described by the participial phrase in this verse: it happens as they are joined together/built up (συναρμολογουμένη – participle, praes. passive). This is reminiscent of how ancient construction work was done. The stones of an ancient building were joined together without mortar. This was done by carefully chiselling and grinding each block to fit perfectly between its neighbouring blocks (Hoehner, 2006:409). This points to “building-up” as a process of adding more bricks to the building. Paul’s use of συν-αρμολογουμένη here should be carefully observed: he uses a compound verb where he adds “συν” to the verb “αρμολοζω” – which is used in 2. Corinthians 11:2 of a husband and wife brought together in marriage; and in Hebr. 4:12 for joints where the separation of joints and marrow is discussed (Arnold, 2010:172). This reflects the unity that results from the body being built up. This must be seen in the light of the unification of Jews and gentiles into one covenantal people as described in Ephesians 2.
- The use of these two participles along with οἰκοδομή in Ephesians 2:21 reveals two dimensions of the growth that Paul has in mind: The already-not-yet dimension where believers are already the temple of Christ, and yet this temple is still being completed. And the intensive-extensive dimension where growth entails both the adding of new members to the church and the growth in maturity and unity among the existing members.

The second occurrence: Ephesians 4:15-16

As described in 3.3. these verses are viewed as a climactic conclusion to what Paul had just described in verse 11-14. The image of a building in 2:21, is now exchanged for the image of an organic, growing body (4:16 πᾶν τὸ σῶμα), with Christ, their Head, described as both the source (ἐξ οὗ - 4:16) and goal of their growth (αὐξήσωμεν εἰς αὐτὸν - 4:15).

The verb for growth αὐξήσωμεν (v15) is now used in the subjunctive in conjunction with ἵνα (4:14), denoting purpose (Hoehner, 2002:559-560). This must be understood in relation to verse 14 where the opposite of growth was described: spiritual immaturity, where believers are easily

misled by deceit and lies. The purpose of the growth is the opposite, namely spiritual maturity where believers are steadfast in love and truth, growing toward Christ, their head.

The two participles in verse 16 once again show the way in which growth takes place:

- συναρμολογούμενον: (Present passive participle) As in 2:21 where the members of the church are described as bricks in a structure/building, this participle is again used to describe the parts of a body that fit together in a coherent and compatible manner. There is a skilful and logical process through which each part of the body is placed in its position (Hoehner, 2006:569-570).
- συμβιβαζόμενον – (Present passive participle) Paul now introduces more detail as to how growth comes about. This second participle describes the knitting together of the body. Not only is there a logical and skilful approach to fitting the body into one union but there is also a strong connection between these units as a result of what they are taught. The believers are “intimately joined together” or “knit” together as they grow in faith and community through the teaching and equipping for the work of *διακονία*. The union between them is found in their mutual union with Christ. They are linked to their head, Christ, and thus linked to one another in the truth of what they believe.

The occurrence of *οικοδομή* here in verse 16 brings out another dimension of the growth that Paul has in mind – the corporate-individual dimension: This means that as every individual believer matures spiritually and grows in knowledge and service toward Christ, the corporate body is strengthened and reaches its goal of showing Christ’s fullness in the world (see Ephesians 1:22-23 and 3:10). This is reciprocal in that the individual believer also needs the ministry of the body in order to mature. This is why the growth and building up of the church is described as “building itself up in love”.

From the above it is deduced that *οικοδομή* has a dual nature in the context of Ephesians 4:12. The meanings of both domain 42.34 and 74.15 are thus taken as two sides of the same coin. The exegesis of Buys (1989:25-61) on *οικοδομή* in key New Testament texts supports this view. He has shown that Paul has both the intensive and extensive growth of the body of Christ in mind when using the term *οικοδομή* and that he moves from the one aspect to the other without hesitation in Ephesians 4:12 (Buys, 1989:58).

The contribution of the Theological dictionary of the New Testament

Michel’s (1964:119-159) article on the *οἶκος*-word-group in the Theological dictionary of the New Testament supports the above conclusion. He agrees that Paul especially uses this word in a figurative sense. Michel (1964:138) notes an example of this in Mandanean mythology where it

is used referring to the process through which a new believer is integrated into a faith. Buys (1989:23) concludes from this, that in classical Greek there is already evidence of a dual semantic nature in the οἶκος-word group. To him the image of a building being constructed shows that there is a simultaneous focus on consolidation and expansion.

Both Michel and Buys pay attention to the Old Testament use of this concept. The Hebrew verb “בנה” is the equivalent of οἰκοδομέω and has both a physical and a figurative sense. Buys (1989:23) states that it can be used metaphorically for the building up or restoration of a family, a posterity, a kingdom or a nation. Both Michel (1964:137) and Buys (1989:23) point to the relationship between בנה and כון (meaning “to establish”; Ps. 28:5; Ps. 89:3,5) and בנה and נטע (meaning “to plant”– Jer. 1:10) to show that both the qualitative and quantitative aspects of οἰκοδομῆν are already present in the Old Testament use of this concept. This affirms the intensive-extensive dimension of growth as discussed above.

In the New Testament the meaning of the word is especially developed in Pauline literature. Paul often has spiritual growth and maturity in view. His own ministry, as well as the ministry of every believer, has this as goal. Michel (1964:140) refers to the use of this word in Corinthians where all believers receive the gifts of grace with the purpose of mutual edification. Michel (1964:145) also points out that the verb of this noun is often used as community concept. Believers are to “encourage” and “console” one another (1 Corinthians 14:3). The special use of prophecy that builds up believers and calls unbelievers to faith, plays an important role here. Most importantly, the call of unbelievers to faith, and the edification of believers takes place within the environment of mutual care, truth and love. This affirms the corporate-individual dimension as discussed above.

Michel (1964:139) highlights the importance of eschatology in his discussion of this concept. The “house” of God has a present as well as a future reality of which believers may partake through faith in the present. It is never complete in this age. This confirms the “already-not-yet” dimension of growth as discussed above.

Conclusion about the meaning of οἰκοδομῆν in Ephesians 4:12

From the above it is deduced that οἰκοδομῆν in Ephesians 4:12 contains both the idea of the building up and growth of the church. The following qualifications are important:

1. The word is used figuratively here, which is characteristic of its occurrence in the Pauline literature.

2. In Ephesians the church as a community of believers is likened to both a building that is being built and a body that grows organically. In both images, growth has specific dimensions:
 - It has an “already-not-yet” dimension: the body/building exists in the present yet needs to be completed.
 - It has an intensive-extensive dimension: growth takes place as new believers are added to the body by the Holy Spirit, as well as through the growth and maturity of existing believers who grow in knowledge of Christ and faith.
 - It has a corporate-individual dimension: there is a reciprocal relationship between the growth and maturity of the individual believer and the growth and maturity of the corporate body. The body will not grow if every believer doesn’t grow, and the believer will not grow without the mutual edification among believers.
3. The end-goal of this growth is spiritual maturity where the whole body not only knows Christ, but also becomes more like Him in self-sacrificial service, and in this, experience the deep unity of faith with one another. Ultimately, this results in God being glorified as His grace and wisdom becomes manifest through the church in the world (Ephesians 3:10) In this way the church reaches its purpose of being the fullness of Him who fills all in all (1:22-23).

3.5 Conclusion

The purpose of chapter three was to determine the meaning of “equipping” believers for “ministry” and “growth” in Ephesians 4:12, and the following conclusions are made with regards to specifically that:

From the *historical background* of this epistle, it became obvious that Paul had the general purpose of equipping believers to understand and fulfil their role in God’s great purpose with the whole of history. Importantly, from Acts it was seen that he paid special attention to elders and overseers in this regard. His approach was to equip them to be the equippers of the believers. The main content of his teaching is summarized in Acts 19:8 and 20:25,27 as the gospel of the kingdom of God.

As far as the *literary background* is concerned it became clear that this verse is found within a significant section of this letter. In the first section of the letter (chapters 1:1-3:21) God’s great purpose of uniting all things in creation under His Son (1:9-10), through the work of His Spirit, is confessed. At the heart of this confession lies the understanding that the church is the community in which this reality is already, albeit partially, made manifest. This results in God being glorified. From these chapters it was seen that the letter continually progresses from the external reality of

God's kingdom and its arrival in His Son, toward the practical and internal experience of that reality in the heart of believers as the body of Christ.

In the second section (chapters 4:1-6:24), which is parenetic in nature, Paul focuses on the practical life of the believers. Through a sequence of five *περιπατεῖν*-sections, Paul admonishes believers to live from their identity as new creations of God in Christ in their daily walk of life. This is to be done as children of God through following Christ (5:1-3).

The significance of Ephesians 4:1-16 is that it is found in the centre of the letter. This passage was seen to serve as an indicative island, intentionally wedged between the confessional first section of the letter and the practical second section of the letter. It was concluded from this that the author wanted to show that without the content of 4:1-16, and especially 4:12, there could be no progression from "confession" to "practice" in the life of believers.

From the analysis and discussion of the *thought structure* of Ephesians 4:1-16 it was seen/became clear that 4:12 is part of a sub-section that stretches from 4:7 to 4:14. In the first sub-section, 4:1-6, the main exhortation of this passage is found, namely that all believers are to live, worthy of their calling. This is portrayed as living within the union of Christ's body. In 4:7-14 Paul discusses how believers are to do this – it is through the diversity of the grace-gifts that Christ, their risen King (Ps. 68), bestowed on them, that they should live up to their calling. In verse 11 it became clear that He gave pastors and teachers, from among these believers, as gifts, to equip the believers for the fulfilling of that calling. From verse 12-16 it becomes obvious that when believers partake in this process, the body builds itself up in truth and love, believers become steadfast in their faith, and they experience deeper union with Christ, their head. It is by means of this process that God is truly glorified in the church.

The problematic interpretation of the syntax in verse twelve was thoroughly discussed and it was concluded that the three prepositional phrases in this verse should be understood as subordinate. Thus, it is translated as "...the equipping of (all) believers for the work of ministry unto the building up of the body of Christ...".

As to the meaning of the three main concepts in this verse, the following was concluded:

καταρτισμόν in Ephesians 4:12 refers to the lifelong spiritual training of all believers, in order to make them adequate for the new life they are to live. The Spirit does this using the ministry of the Word in order to repair every believer's identity in Christ and to prepare him/her to serve Christ in *διακονία* by serving others with his grace-gifts.

ἔργον διακονίας is the object of καταρτισμόν and refers to the work every believer is commissioned to by virtue of his/her call to faith and his/her new identity (2:10; 4:1; 4:21-24). Every believer is called to serve Christ by serving others using the grace-gifts that He bestows on him or her (4:7).

οἰκοδομήν refers to the present and continuing growth in spiritual maturity of Christ's body towards Him, which is the result of the process described in verse 12. This growth has *an intensive-extensive dimension*; an already-not-yet dimension and a corporate-individual dimension.

CHAPTER 4 CONCLUSION AS TO THE ROLE OF DISCIPLESHIP IN THE EQUIPPING OF BELIEVERS FOR MINISTRY AND GROWTH IN EPHESIANS 4:12

4.1 Introduction

The central theoretical argument of this dissertation is that the apostle Paul, at least to some extent, has discipleship in mind when he speaks of equipping believers for ministry and growth in Ephesians 4:12. In order to test this hypothesis, discipleship as a New Testament concept was defined in chapter 2, and in chapter 3 the meaning of Ephesians 4:12 was determined by means of grammatic-historical exegesis. The following definition for New Testament discipleship was given:

New Testament discipleship refers to the lifelong state of being and growing toward that which God the Father calls His elect, to be in a committed relationship of total allegiance to and fellowship with His Son Jesus Christ as sovereign King, Saviour, and Teacher, in order to be recreated by His Spirit and His Word within an instrumental community of believers, through a) increasing knowledge of the gospel, b) continuous confession, repentance and faith, and c) obediently following Him into ministry (δῆρακονία) and self-denial in order to build up His church and be His royal witnesses in all of life among all people.

In Chapter 4 the relationship between discipleship and the equipping of believers for ministry and growth in Ephesians 4:12, will be determined. This will be done by bringing the analysis of the previous two chapters to synthesis. The objective is to come to a clear conclusion about the role discipleship plays in the equipping of believers for ministry and growth according to Ephesians 4:12.

4.2 The presence of discipleship as a New Testament concept in Ephesians 4

Before the role of discipleship in the equipping of believers for ministry and growth in Ephesians 4:12 can be determined, the presence of discipleship as an underlying concept in this letter and especially in the immediate context of Ephesians 4:12, must be established. After considering both the definition of New Testament Discipleship in chapter 2, and the exegesis of Ephesians 4:12 in chapter 3, the researcher is convinced that New Testament discipleship is present in the exegetical aspects of Ephesians 4.

4.2.1 Discipleship and the historical background of Ephesians

In chapter 2 (2.3.3), where discipleship in the Pauline literature was discussed, it was concluded that Paul understood himself to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, and that his own approach to ministry was in line with the commission of Matthew 28:16-20 to make disciples of others. He proclaimed the kingdom of God and followed Christ throughout his ministry in order to reveal His grace to others. He also trained elders and other believers to do the same (Acts 19:8; 20:25,27). In chapter 3 (3.2.1), where the historical background of Ephesians was discussed, Paul's ministry was described as a ministry of equipping the church to understand and fulfil its role in God's purpose with all of history. It was described as a ministry of private teaching and mentoring as well as public discourse with the objective of helping the believers to see the reality of the kingdom of God and to live accordingly.

From the historical background to Ephesians, Paul's ministry to the Ephesians can thus be described as a ministry of discipleship. He orientates believers to the reality of the arrival of God's kingdom in Jesus Christ as their King, Saviour and Master, and teaches them to follow Him. From this it can be deduced that discipleship plays a role in the letter to the Ephesians.

4.2.2 Discipleship and the literary background of Ephesians

In chapter 3 (3.2.2.) the literary background of Ephesians 4:12 was researched. The first aspect of the literary background which points to discipleship is found in the structural analysis of this letter. The thought-structure of Ephesians was typified with the words of O'Brien (1999:67-68) "The movement of thought is from the lofty heights of learning Christ and the new creation to the 'nitty-gritty of Christian behaviour' ". This was seen in the fact that the letter starts with the content of God's great purpose with all of history and the mystery of His Son as revealed in the gospel (chapters 1-3), and it ends with a set of exhortations to live from this truth in all of life (Chapters 4-6). It's the researcher's conviction that this characteristic of Ephesians supports the idea that discipleship is present in the mind of its author. This can be deduced from the fact that the New Testament reflects the same thought-process. First, it emphasizes knowledge and understanding of the kingdom of God as it arrives in Jesus Christ, then it requires one to move to the practical and ethical implications of this knowledge in the life of a disciple. Importantly, Ephesians 4:1-16, the studied passage, was described as an indicative island in the middle of these two sections of the letter. This shows, structurally, that the content of the studied passage is instrumental in the progression from the first, more doctrinal section, to the second, more practical section of the letter. It means that believers will only grow from knowing the gospel, to truly living in relationship to God as they experience that which is described here, namely the equipping of believers. This is reflected in the definition of New Testament discipleship, in that it also makes use of personal

teaching and mentoring to help the disciple move from “knowledge” to practical living from that knowledge.

Another structural aspect of this letter which points to the presence of discipleship, is the pattern of repeated περιπατεῖν-phrases found in the second part of the letter. It’s the researcher’s conviction that these phrases, referring to one’s walk in life, points to discipleship in Paul’s mind. This is seen in the fact that New Testament discipleship is often portrayed as following a certain Master’s way or walk of life (Matthew 7:13-14; 22:16; Mark 12:14; Acts 9:2). Thus, these exhortations to walk or live in a certain way, echo the definition of discipleship given in chapter 2 which includes “following” Jesus not only in faith but also in example. Paul’s statement in Ephesians 5:1 confirms this. He says: “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children”. This, along with the exhortation of Ephesians 5:2 to “walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God...”, shows that believers are to imitate God specifically by walking in love as Christ did (Hoehner, 2002:648; O’Brien, 1999:352-356).

Yet another aspect of the literary background that points to the presence of discipleship in Paul’s mind, is the use of certain discipleship-terms around Ephesians 4:12. In the above-mentioned verse (5:1) a specific word is used to express “imitators of God”, namely “μιμηταί”. From Nam’s (2017:66) research (3.2.2) it was seen that Paul used this term for imitators, in the place of μαθητής to carry over the idea of discipleship into his own ministry. Another word which, similarly, reflects discipleship in Paul’s mind, is the verb ἐμάθετε. This verb, derived from μανθάνω (the verbal form of the noun μαθητής, “to learn as disciple”) is found in 4:20 (See 2.3.3.2). As discussed in 3.2.2 this verb has Christ Himself as object and means to “learn Christ”. In the context of 4:20-24, where the transition of the “old” self to the “new” self is described as “being created in the likeness of God”, “learning Christ” means to become like Him. This echoes the contents of Ephesians 2:10 which speaks of believers as new creations of God, created for good works in Christ. From the use of these verbs in reference to the edification of believers, within the context of Ephesians 4:12, it may be deduced that Paul has discipleship in mind when he speaks of equipping believers in 4:12.

4.2.3 Discipleship and the thought-structure of Ephesians 4:1-16

Apart from the presence of discipleship in the overall structure of the letter, it’s the conviction of the researcher that the thought-structure of Ephesians 4:1-16 also indicates the presence of discipleship in the author’s mind.

In chapter 3 (3.3.1) it became clear that this passage may be subdivided into three sections, verses 1-6; 7-14 and 15-16:

In thought block 1 (Ephesians 4:1-6) Paul provides the main exhortation of this passage (the paraclesis). Based on what God has done for and in believers (τοῖς ἁγίοις Ephesians 1:1), described in chapters 1-3, they are to start living worthy of their calling and consequently preserve the union, peace and community that is already theirs through their mutual faith in God-Triune (See structure-analysis 3.3.1 for the relationship between 4:1-3 and 4:4-6) .

In thought block 2 (Ephesians 4:7-14) the focus shifts from unity and calling, to diversity, gifts, growth and maturity. This shift portrays a progression from the exhortation in 4:1, to the way in which that exhortation is to be accomplished. This is seen in the description of the triumphant Christ giving gifts of grace to all believers (v7), and people-gifts (v11) to equip believers for the use of those gifts in διακονία that builds up the body of Christ. This equipping takes place through the ministry of the Word, should repair believers in their identity as new creatures of God and prepare them to follow Christ into self-sacrificing διακονία. The objective, as seen to some extent in 13-14, is that the body may build itself up in love and become mature in knowledge, faith, unity and behaviour. This reflects discipleship in that it also makes use of gospel-teaching, confession, repentance and faith to bring about growth in the disciple. As in Ephesians 4:7-14 discipleship also moves the believer from intellectual knowledge of the truth to living from that truth.

In thought block 3 (Ephesians 4:15-16) the goal of the passage is climactically summarized by means of an inclusio that uses the image of a body building itself up in love toward Christ. From the inclusio it's clear, that this growth of the body, having Christ himself as its source, takes place as each member, equipped to take its rightful place, does its God-given work.

In this regard, it's significant that the structural goal of this passage found in 4:13-16 resembles that which was seen in New Testament discipleship. In the definition of discipleship given in chapter two, the goal was described as: "to build up His church and be His royal witnesses in all of life among all people." In this definition, discipleship should clearly lead to simultaneously building the church up and building it out. Believers should thus mature in their faith and serve one another, while unbelievers should hear the gospel and be called into the community of believers. This should all happen through the ministry of the Gospel and the call to continuous repentance and faith as was seen in the Gospels and is reflected in the rest of the New Testament.

4.2.4 Discipleship concepts in the immediate context of Ephesians 4:1-16

Apart from the surrounding concepts and the structural emphasis discussed above, there are also concepts within the passage 4:1-16 that point to discipleship.

4.2.4.1 The exhortation to live worthy of one's calling in Ephesians 4:1

In the analysis of 4:1-6 it became evident that the main exhortation of this passage is to "...walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called" (4:1). From the exegesis of Ephesians 4:1-16 it became clear that the exhortation to believers to live worthy of the calling with which they are called, gives the main thrust of this whole passage. It was also seen that this calling is none other than the call to faith in Jesus Christ (cf. Ephesians 4:4). It's the researcher's conviction that this clearly points to the underlying presence of discipleship within this passage. In chapter 2 (2.3.1.2) the call to New Testament discipleship was discussed and there it became clear that the call to discipleship should be understood as a call to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. From this similarity between the calling mentioned in Ephesians 4:1, and the call to discipleship that both refer to the call to faith in Jesus Christ, it can be deduced that Paul has discipleship in mind here in Ephesians 4:12.

It's significant that the exhortation of 4:1, which denotes starting (ingressive aorist use) to live worthy of their calling is used in the context where the work of teachers and pastors is described (4:11-12). This shows that to live according to one's calling, is something one should learn from a teacher and mentor. This points directly to New Testament discipleship as a mode of ministry in which one learns to obey Christ's commands (Matthew 28:19-20).

4.2.4.2 Discipleship and the community of believers in Ephesians 4:1-6

It has already been mentioned that the exhortation to live worthy of one's calling is an exhortation to live in union with one another. In verses 2-3 this union is described as a union in the Spirit that is preserved through peace. The effect of this union should be seen in the humility, gentleness and forbearance with which these believers relate to one another in love. From the structural analysis in chapter 3 (3.3.1) it became apparent that this union is rooted in the believers' communion with God Triune (verse 4-6) through faith and hope in the gospel. It was argued that these verses reflect the true community among believers. They have union with one another, because they have been reunited with God.

It's the researcher's conviction that this community among believers should be deemed as another marker of discipleship in this passage. This may, for example, be seen in the correlation between humility, gentleness, and patience (verse 2) and the essential characteristics of the community of disciples which Jesus describes in passages such as Matthew 5-7, Luke 6:17-49, Mark 9:30-37, etc.

Apart from all these aspects of the lives which believers are called to live, the call to do all of this in love for one another, especially, points to discipleship. The love they are called to in verse 2,

agrees with that which Jesus called His disciples to in John 13:35, saying "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." Discipleship and the love for one another is intricately linked.

The fact that verse 4-6 implicitly reflects the content of the commission which Jesus gave His disciples after His resurrection in Matthew 28:19-20, should not be overlooked either. There, baptism into the community of believers in the name of God Triune and the teaching of people to obey Christ's commands, express the purpose of the church as discipleship (cf. Matthew 16:18). Here, in the context of the call to faith and learning to live from that faith within a community of believers, there is also a clear reference to baptism and faith in God-Triune. The emphasis on the community of believers in New Testament discipleship, as well as that in this passage, strongly supports the idea that discipleship is truly present in the mind of its author.

4.2.4.3 The kingdom of God in Ephesians 4:8-10

In chapter 2 it was clearly seen that New Testament discipleship is orientated toward the kingdom of God. It was clear that the call, content and commission of discipleship is none other than a call to acknowledge Jesus Christ as the King of God's kingdom, to repent and live in total allegiance to Him and to bear witness of Him among all people. This was seen in passages such as Mark 1:14-15 and Matthew 28:18 where Jesus stated that all authority had been given to Him in heaven and earth. This same aspect of discipleship is reflected in Ephesians 4:7-11. In these verses Paul makes use of an indirect quotation from Ps. 68:19. He does this in reference to Christ as the divine and triumphant King who has inaugurated the kingdom of God by means of his incarnation, humiliation, crucifixion and resurrection. Importantly, in this passage he is also a king that receives authority over all things as seen in 4:10 (see also Ephesians 1:22-23). Before He ascends to heaven, He gives gifts to His church as the treasure from His victory and these gifts are tokens of His triumph in their lives. As seen from verse 7 and verse 11 these gifts are of a twofold nature, namely the gifts of grace bestowed on every believer (which should be linked to the work of the Holy Spirit) (v 7) and the gift of apostles, evangelists, prophets, teachers and pastors (v11) which are gifts of equipping through the ministry of the gospel. These gifts are reminiscent of Jesus' last days with His disciples, after His resurrection and before His ascension. In the commission texts of Matthew 28:16-20, Mark 16:15-20 and Luke 24:46-49 He clearly gave the apostles to His church as person-gifts which proclaim the gospel of the kingdom. He also gave them the promise of the Holy Spirit who would anoint all believers with the gifts of grace for their service in His kingdom.

This emphasis on the kingdom of God in both New Testament discipleship and Ephesians 4, along with the clear correlation between the commission to ongoing discipleship in the New

Testament church, and the giving of gifts for that discipleship in Ephesians 4, once again point to the presence of discipleship in this text.

4.3 The role of discipleship in equipping believers for ministry and growth in Ephesians 4:12

Through the above discussion it is established that discipleship is present in Ephesians 4:12. This was seen from discipleship-aspects found in the over-all structure of the letter, the thought-structure of the passage, and the presence of important terms and concepts that point to discipleship as underlying concept in Ephesians 4. In order to conclude regarding the role of discipleship in the equipping of believers for ministry and growth in Ephesians 4:12, it remains essential to pay attention to discipleship within this verse itself. The role of discipleship in the structure of this verse and in the main concepts of this verse, will now be discussed.

4.3.1.1 Discipleship and the structure of Ephesians 4:12

In chapter 3 (3.4.1) the micro-structure of Ephesians 4:12 was analysed. In this analysis it quickly became clear that verse 12 cannot be interpreted without the inclusion of verse 11. It was noted that the δόματα of Ephesians 4:8 refer to those persons mentioned in verse 11 and that the purpose of these person-gifts is expressed in verse 12. The problematic nature of verse 12 became apparent as the different interpretations of this verse were discussed. It was seen that the prepositional phrases found in this verse could be understood in 4 different ways, including a co-ordinate interpretation as well as a sub-ordinate interpretation. After thoroughly comparing the commentary of different interpreters and doing independent exegesis of these verses, the researcher concluded that these prepositional phrases in verse 12 are best understood as being in a sub-ordinate construction. This means that it's interpreted as follows:

(V11) And he gave the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, (V12) for the equipping of the saints (πρὸς τὸν καταρτισμὸν τῶν ἁγίων), for the work of ministry (εἰς ἔργον διακονίας), unto the building up of the body of Christ (result: εἰς οἰκοδομήν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ).

From this interpretation it becomes apparent that the ministers of verse 11 are given with the purpose of equipping the believers for their work of ministry (ἔργον διακονίας), and this should result in the building up of the body of Christ which implies growth (as will be seen below).

This interpretation of verse 11-12 points to discipleship. In the titles of the persons in verse 11 there are implicit references to discipleship. This is especially seen in the fact that the apostles spoken of here, are those who have been discipled by Jesus himself and who were called to make disciples of others (Matthew 28:19). The prophets which may refer to either the Old

Testament prophets or other teachers in the New Testament, also point to discipleship – for even the prophets of the Old Testament often functioned within an organic discipleship-relationship (see 2.2.2). Evangelists are those who proclaimed the good news of the Gospel – which inherently means calling people to discipleship (see Mark 1:14-15; Acts 2 for the link between gospel-proclamation and discipleship). It was also seen in 3.3.2 that the pastors and teachers here may well be a reference to elders and ministers of the Word such as those whom Paul taught in Acts 20:17. They were to instill the truth by teaching believers and guiding them to live from that truth as followers of Christ.

While the titles of these persons reflect their service, the concepts found in verse 12 are even more telling as to their work and the role discipleship plays in that. Therefore, these concepts and the role discipleship may play in each of them, will now be discussed.

4.3.1.2 Discipleship and τὸν καταρτισμὸν τῶν ἀγίων in Ephesians 4:12 (the equipping of believers)

In Chapter 3 it was concluded that καταρτισμὸν in Ephesians 4:12 refers to the lifelong spiritual equipping of every believer, in order to fully prepare believers for the new life to which they have been called. The Spirit does this through the ministry of the Word in order to repair believers' identity in Christ and to prepare them to serve Him in διακονία by serving others with their grace-gifts. From the study of this word it became clear that Christ through His Spirit uses the functions in verse 11 as instruments for this training. It also became clear that the Spirit does this by the continual appropriation of the gospel in the lives of believers. The importance of both “repairing” and “preparing” believers in the grace of the gospel was seen throughout the study.

The role of discipleship in τὸν καταρτισμὸν τῶν ἀγίων is seen in several ways:

1. In both New Testament Discipleship and the equipping of believers, the emphasis is on a lifelong journey of spiritual growth toward maturity in Christ. In Ephesians this is described as the re-creation of all believers in Christ (κτισθέντες in Ephesians 2:10) and the continual equipping of believers, which comes through putting off the old self and putting on the new self (4:22-24).
2. The use of ἐξηρισμένος (the perfect passive participle of the verb from which καταρτισμὸν is derived) in 2 Timothy 3:17, shows that equipping believers takes place through the Word of God (2 Timothy. 3:15-16) and it happens within a relationship of mentoring, and closely following someone's teaching and example (2 Timothy. 3:10; 14). This is in line with New Testament Discipleship as defined above, because it takes place as one learns to obey Christ within the instrumental community of believers. “Equipping” also relates to discipleship in that it involves both the repairing and preparing of the believer. In 2 Timothy 3:16 this is seen in reproof and

correction, as well as teaching and training in righteousness. These terms are reminiscent of the way Jesus shaped His disciples. In discipleship this is seen in continual repentance and faith, where a disciple grows in knowledge of the gospel through reproof and teaching and turns away from the old way of life towards the new life in Christ.

3. καταρτισμὸν also relates to discipleship in that it ultimately entails equipping by Christ Himself, the real Agent of that which is described in Ephesians 4:7-14. This is seen in the fact that He gives the services of Ephesians 4:11 to His church and that in 4:16 the growth is not only toward Him but also from Him.

4. Discipleship is seen in the fact that καταρτισμὸν denotes equipping to act with διακονία in service to Christ, who is the triumphant King (Ephesians 4:8-10). This relates to the kingdom orientation of New Testament discipleship.

It's important to note that the equipping of believers in Ephesians 4:12 emphasizes certain aspects of the communion among believers, that aren't as prominent in the definition of discipleship from the Gospels and Acts. The researcher is convinced that this is due to development that took place in the function of the early church after Jesus ascended and after the events at Pentecost. Whereas the definition of New Testament discipleship, only mentions the instrumental role the community of believers plays in discipleship, καταρτισμὸν in Ephesians 4:12 clarifies that role in more detail. In line with discipleship in Acts as well as in Matthew 28:19, καταρτισμὸν in Ephesians 4:12 and ἐξηρισμῆνος 2 Timothy 3:10-17 shows that New Testament discipleship is to be executed by following a mature believer in the faith. This is seen, for example, in the way Timothy followed Paul as described in 2 Timothy 3:10-17. He followed his example, his character, his teachings from the Scriptures, his plans, and, in fact, his whole way of life. He allowed Paul the authority of a father in the faith to affirm and rebuke him. Importantly, the Scriptures played a central role in this. The discipleship of Timothy as described here, along with passages such as Titus 2, where older believers are to teach the younger believers, highlights a certain aspect of discipleship: although the mature believer who leads in discipleship doesn't replace Christ, he is endowed with Christ's authority to be His instrument in the equipping of younger/less mature believers.

From the above it can be concluded that the equipping of believers in Ephesians 4:12 should take place within a relationship of discipleship where teaching and shaping takes place. This should be focused on the repair of a person's identity in Christ and the equipping of that person to live as new creation in the service of Christ as King.

4.3.1.3 Discipleship and εἰς ἔργον διακονίας in Ephesians 4:12 (for the work of ministry)

The second important concept that was studied in this verse, is the object of καταρτισμὸν, namely ἔργον διακονίας. From the structural analysis of 3.4.1 this is what believers should be equipped for. In 3.4.2 it was concluded that in Ephesians 4:12 ἔργον διακονίας refers to the humble work of self-sacrificing service to which every believer is called in order to use the gifts of grace that he/she received according to verse 7. This διακονία is to be done to others as agents in the service of Christ.

The role that discipleship plays in the διακονία of every believer became clear in 2.3.1 where the general characteristics of discipleship were discussed. There it became clear that διακονία is especially linked to discipleship in Mark's gospel-account where it's related to the calling of every believer to deny himself, to take up his/her cross and follow Jesus.

In both the discussion of New Testament Discipleship and the discussion of διακονία in Ephesians 4:12 it was seen that it is rooted in the new identity of believers who have been recreated in Christ for good works (cf. Ephesians 2:10). As believers become more like Christ, they serve others with the grace they themselves received.

From the above it can be concluded that discipleship plays a major role in the equipping of believers, specifically for ἔργον διακονίας. Without discipleship which roots believers in their new identity as children of God and followers of Christ, and which calls them to self-sacrifice, there will be no διακονία.

4.3.1.4 Discipleship and οἰκοδομὴν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ in Ephesians 4:12 (the building up / growth of the body of Christ)

The third important concept is that of the growth or the building-up of the body of Christ. In chapter 3 it was seen that οἰκοδομὴν represents the growth of Christ's body which is structurally expressed in Ephesians 4:12 as the result of equipping believers for their work of ministry. This is clear from the occurrence of οἰκοδομὴ in 2:21-22 and 4:15-16 where it is used in relation to the participle συναρμολογέομαι and the verb αὐξάνω. In the research of the relationship between these three concepts, three important dimensions of the church's growth became clear:

The *already-not-yet* dimension of growth: The concept of building-up or growth is used figuratively in Ephesians, where the church is likened to a) a building that is being built over time and b) a body that organically grows. These metaphors both express a present reality, where the building under construction is a) either already present as a building and the growing body is already living, and a future reality, or b) where the building is yet to be completed and the body should still reach

full maturity. This is confirmed by the use of μέχρι καταστήσωμεν in verse 13, which distinguishes verses 7-12 from 13-16. In verse 7-12 the process of growth is described, whereas verse 13-16 indicates the end-goal of that growth which will only be complete at Christ's return (Floor, 1995:154, Hoehner, 2002:552).

The *intensive-extensive* dimension of growth: From the study of this concept it also became clear that the building-up or growth of the body happens in two simultaneous movements. In one sense the body or building grows as new members are added and put into place among the rest (extensive growth); in another sense the body grows as the existing members mature in their relationship with God and this results in deepened union among the members of the body.

The *corporate-individual* dimension: It was also noted from verse 13-14 and 15-16 that the ultimate purpose of equipping believers is spiritual maturity where the whole body grows in the unity of faith and knowledge of Christ. This happens as every believer takes his/her place and is equipped to do his/her work (v16). When the whole body matures in this way, God is glorified in His church as His grace and wisdom becomes manifest through her in the world (Ephesians 1:22-23 and 3:10). When this happens, the church is reaching her purpose of being the fullness of Him who fills all in all as stated in Ephesians 2:22-23.

New Testament discipleship reflects these dimensions of building-up and growth in the following ways:

1. *The already-not-yet dimension* of growth was seen in the fact that New Testament discipleship is defined as a state of being and growing towards that which the Father calls His elect. This shows that discipleship entails a long-term relationship in which continual growth and development takes place. Disciples have already received a new identity for they are recreated in the image of Christ and yet, they should continue to grow into that new identity which is not yet complete. This is especially in line with Jesus' kingdom-parables in passages such as Luke 13. Thus, in both discipleship and the growth described in Ephesians 4:12, there is an "already-not-yet" element. This is in line with the theme of the arrival of God's kingdom which was described as playing a major role in New Testament discipleship. (See 2.3.1.1.)

2. *The intensive-extensive dimension* of growth and building-up of the body of Christ as found in Ephesians 4:12, is also seen in New Testament discipleship: from the discussion of the general characteristics of New Testament discipleship (2.3.1) it became clear that it entails both a call to discipleship, as well as a journey of growth in discipleship (see 2.3.1.3 on the content of discipleship). This was seen in passages such as Mark 1:14-17 where the call to follow Jesus also contains the mission of becoming fishers of men. This is similarly seen in the commission

texts at the end of the synoptic gospels (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:48; see also John 17:20). From this it can be concluded that in both Ephesians 4:12 and in New Testament Discipleship, growth in the church happens as committed believers grow in their own faith and as new disciples are added to that community.

3. *The corporate-individual dimension* of growth is also reflected in New Testament discipleship. Although the emphasis often falls on the individual growth of a disciple in many of the gospel passages, it's also clear that this growth takes place within the community of disciples. This is included in Jesus' approach to discipleship as was noted from his communal teachings and his communal relationship to them. A clear example of this "corporate-individual" dimension is seen in Matthew 16:18 along with Matthew 28:16-20. There it was clear that although Jesus would build His church (corporately) on the rock of the apostles' witnessing, this became a reality as people were discipled and taught also to individually obey Christ as their King (See Mark 16:15-16 where the call to faith is expressed as an individual matter). From this it's clear that even in New Testament discipleship, the growth and building up of the church is both an individual and corporate matter. It's reciprocal, for the believer needs the body to grow in faith, and the body needs every believer's growth in order to mature.

4.4 Conclusion

The objective of this dissertation was to come to a clear conclusion as to the role that discipleship plays in the equipping of believers for ministry and growth according to Ephesians 4:12.

After bringing the analysis of the previous two chapters to synthesis the researcher concludes that discipleship does, in fact, play a major role in the equipping of believers for ministry and growth in Ephesians 4:12. From the synthesis it has become clear that New Testament discipleship, as defined in this dissertation, is present in almost every aspect of its grammatic-historical exegesis. It was found:

1. in the historical background of Ephesians (4.2.1);
2. in the literary structure of the letter (4.2.2);
3. in the thought-structure of Ephesians 4:1-16 (4.2.3);
4. in certain concepts surrounding this passage such as περιπατεῖν (4:1) μανθάνω (4:20) and μιμηταὶ (5:1);
5. In important concepts within Ephesians 4:1-16;
6. in the macro-structure of Ephesians 4:11-12

7. and importantly in the three major concepts of verse 12, namely: τὸν καταρτισμὸν τῶν ἀγίων (the equipping of believers) ; ἔργον διακονίας (the work of ministry) and οἰκοδομὴν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ.(for the building up [or growth] of the body of Christ)

From this synthesis the central theoretical argument of this dissertation is confirmed, viz. that the apostle Paul, at least to some extent, has discipleship (as found in the rest of the New Testament) in mind when he speaks of equipping believers for ministry and growth in Ephesians 4:12. The researcher is convinced that New Testament discipleship as defined in this dissertation is, in fact, the underlying mode of ministry which the apostle Paul had in mind when he spoke of equipping believers for ministry and growth in Ephesians 4:12. Believers are thus to be equipped for the work of ministry (διακονία) through discipleship which restores their identity in Christ and prepares them to serve Him by serving others. When this happens, the whole body, with every member equipped and doing its part, builds itself up in love and grows towards Christ, her head.

4.5 Further avenues of research

The following avenues for further research have been identified throughout the investigation for this dissertation:

Discipleship research:

- Further New Testament research may be done on the role of the concept of χάρισμα in New Testament discipleship.
- Research may be done on the relationship between different terms used to designate discipleship in contemporary literature such as: Spiritual growth, relational discipleship, faith mentorship, etc.
- New Testament research may be done on the role that the community of believers played within the discipleship of a believer in the New Testament church. The importance of the community of believers is often emphasised in popular discipleship literature, yet conclusions are not always based on careful exegesis.
- Empirical research in the practical discipline of Pastoral Ministry may be done about the use of discipleship within the ministry of contemporary congregations and the fruit it bears (This may be insightful, especially for the Reformed Churches in South Africa as was discussed in the introductory chapter item no. 4.2)
- In the discipline of Ecclesiastical Studies, the implications of discipleship and its role in the equipping of believers for ministry and growth in Ephesians 4:12, for the work of pastors and elders, must be considered. This may be of significance for Church Polity which researches and describes the way Christ governs His church as revealed in Scripture.

- Research may be done in the discipline of Church History as to the role discipleship played in the early church after the time of the New Testament.
- Revelation-historical research may be done on the role of discipleship in the intensive and extensive growth of the church in the New Testament. This is best done in New Testament as subject but will have great implications for the subject of Missiology.
- In either Missiology or Pastoral ministry, the role of discipleship in the planting of churches may be studied.
- In Pastoral ministry research may be done on the role of discipleship in pastoral counselling and continued pastoral care.
- The practical content of New Testament discipleship may be described more fully by means of a thorough revelation-historical study.
- Different hermeneutical approaches in discipleship-research may be of value in testing the results of different researches.

Research in Ephesians:

- The precise meaning of ἡ χάρις as found in Ephesians 4:7 may be researched. This may be important, since this occurrence differs from other instances of χάρισμα in Pauline literature.
- In New Testament research the role of Ephesians 1:22-23 in the structure of the letter may be studied. In most research the focus falls on the structural importance of Ephesians 1:9-10, but not on 1:22-23. The church as the “fullness of Christ” may be viewed as an important theme of this letter.
- Further New Testament research on the word-group of καταρτισμὸν may be useful. Scholars are divided about the relationship between the two aspects of this word namely repair and prepare.
- New Testament research may be done on the structural and semantic link between Ephesians 2:10 and 4:24.
- Further New Testament research on the meaning of ἄφῆς in Ephesians 4:16 may be done. The question remains as to whether Paul understood it as referring to bodily joints, working as understood in modern physiology to carry nutrients to different body-parts, or whether he used it only in reference to that which connects the different members of the body.

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