

# Rediscovering joy in costly and radical discipleship in mission

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The research attended to the call by the World Council of Churches in the mission affirmation *Together towards life* to renew methods of evangelism and to communicate the good news with persuasion, inspiration and conviction, by providing a theological framework for reflection on joy and flourishing life, and its place in mission studies.

The link between mission, evangelism and discipleship was developed as a basis to expand the understanding of evangelism as an invitation to personal conversion and discipleship. Discipleship was defined as participating in the Triune God's life-giving mission and as being on a journey towards flourishing life.

It showed that the gospel message of joy, good news and life in fullness serves as a counterculture against the prevailing rhetoric of religious and secular prosperity gospels, consumerism and individualism. It also warned that discipleship in mission is costly and radical. Discipleship is a life of generosity and service, where the true disciple delights in justice, gives generously and cares for the weak.

The research concluded with a discussion of practical holistic practices of embodied discipleship – practices that will form habits where disciples will live a flourishing life.

## Background

The revival of happiness studies is clearly evident in popular culture. Bookshops, conferences and mentorship programmes overflow with promises of joy and happiness. One could even go as far as saying that the world is obsessed with happiness. It seems that the more chaotic and volatile the world becomes, the more intensive the resultant search for happiness is.

Yet the theme and issue of joy, strangely enough, receives little attention in mission studies and reflections on discipleship. This anomaly raises important questions because the proclamation of the good and joyful news of salvation in Jesus Christ belongs to the core of evangelism and, thus, mission studies. The World Council of Churches (WCC) stated, in its mission affirmation *Together towards Life* (TTL), that 'the Creator's joy and wonder in creation is one of the sources of our spirituality' (Keum 2013). TTL calls on the church to '... renew its methods of evangelism to communicate the good news with persuasion, inspiration, and conviction' (Keum 2013:para. 109). This contribution will attempt to participate in this renewal process by providing a theological framework for joy and flourishing life, and its place in mission studies. It is the author's conviction that the concept of flourishing life and a renewed appreciation for the joy of the gospel can give much needed theological perspectives to Christianity in Africa and enrich the discussion about discipleship.

## Discipleship is a journey in search of flourishing life

There can be no holistic discourse on mission and discipleship without aligning the discourse with the *good news* of the gospel, and thus exploring discipleship – not only as being on a journey together towards life, as the WCC does – but as a journey towards *flourishing life*, and the joy brought about by participating in the gift of flourishing life. If one of the core practices of mission is evangelism, and if evangelism is sharing one's faith and conviction with other people and inviting them to discipleship, then discipleship must be an invitation to joyful and flourishing life. Discipleship is costly and radical in the very sense that it inaugurates a different kind of joy and peace. Discipleship is to participate in the Triune God's caring control of the whole of life, while celebrating the great gift of God – liberation from everything that oppresses people and prevents them from knowing God, and being known by him (Bosch 2008:9).

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The argument to combine reflection on discipleship with the concept of joy and flourishing life is especially relevant in the broader African context. Volf's (2015b:2) conviction – that a vision of flourishing life found in Christianity as well as other world religions is essential to individual thriving and a global common good – applies to Africa as well. He states that world religions shape the lives of more than two-thirds of the world population (2015b:63–64). Religion provides people with a sense of meaning and purpose, a way to cope with the many crises of life and direction on the relationship between individuals, communities and creation. Religion guides people regarding how they should relate to others and what good they should strive to achieve. It also influences the feeling and reality of well-being (Van der Merwe 2015:313). Volf argues, that all the world religions share the broad idea of flourishing life, and this constitutes a point of convergence and unity that makes more sense than the mere pursuit of life that goes well:

Religions can situate the pursuit of life that goes well into a more encompassing account of flourishing life in which life being led well has primacy over life going well and life feeling good; they can help generate both a healthy sense of contentment, even joy, and foster commitment to global solidarity, thereby helping achieve a greater measure of global justice. (Volf 2015b:55–56)

If accounts of the good life are the most important gift world religions can give to the world (Volf 2015b:75–76), then the reflection on costly and radical discipleship in the African context certainly must be broadened by ideas on the joy of the gospel and human flourishing.

The 10th Assembly of the All African Conference of Churches (AACC 2013:15–16) underscored the importance of a theology that promotes and enhances life in order to ensure holistic growth for everyone. The conference declared that abundant life must be accentuated and celebrated, expressing the hope that, 'With the attainment of protection and promotion of life we are able to have abundant life and really celebrate life' (AACC 2013:16).

The Routledge Companion to the Christian Church also mentions the connection between Africa and the concept of flourishing life:

The third aspect of the struggle for African identity is the more political concern to witness to the gospel of life in the midst of the politics of death. The 1982 Belhar Confession and the 1985 Kairos Document were the culmination of the Christian witness for freedom and justice in which humans could flourish ... The Christian struggle for human flourishing within Africa also engaged lay Christians in the wider political movement for independence and freedom. ... Their witness, giving expression to what they had learnt from the missionaries about human dignity and the value of African people to God, remains a significant legacy ... (De Gruchy & Chirongoma 2008:300)

The astonishing rise of the prosperity gospel in Africa (see Heuser 2015a) necessitates a proper reflection on the theological and practical meaning of abundant life, and what it would mean in the life and liturgy of the church in Africa

specifically to really celebrate life. Although the prevalence of the prosperity gospel can be ascribed to complex interrelated reasons, of which prevailing poverty is certainly one of the most visible, the fact that more than half of the Christians in sub-Saharan Africa believe in the prosperity gospel (Heuser 2015:21) raises important question on our understanding of both discipleship and abundant life.

## Recent contributions in joy and human flourishing

A number of recent theological studies have focussed specifically on joy and human flourishing. Volf's, project at Yale University, has already produced two important books on joy and human flourishing (Volf 2015a, 2015b). Marais (2015:8) has also listed seven books and a number of journal articles on the topic.<sup>1</sup> It is significant that the first encyclical issued by Pope Francis was *Evangelii Gadium*. These contributions strengthen the idea that joy stands at the very core of Christian faith, life and practice.<sup>2</sup> Moltmann (2015: loc. 296) says that 'Christianity is a unique religion of joy', expressed in its liturgical feasts, its depiction of God and its treatment of theodicy.

The volume edited by Heuser (2015) gives a focussed perspective on the particular understanding of flourishing life in Africa, advocated by what can broadly be called the proponents of the 'Prosperity Gospel'. Heuser (2015:15) argues, that ideas on well-being are well kept in deposits of diverse religions. Africa embraced American prosperity teachers: 'Over the years the African adepts of American prosperity teachers grew into Pentecostal megastars that reputedly inspired and mentored a variety of African prosperity theologians themselves' (Heuser 2015:17).

## Disciple-making in mission: Evangelism as an invitation to discipleship

The goal of this section is to reflect on the relationship between mission, evangelism and discipleship. This reflection is situated within the broader discussion on mission and the *missio Dei*. The progression is to start with the *missio Dei*, briefly discuss mission as evangelism and then position discipleship as one of the core practices of evangelism.

God is mission (Bevans & Schroeder 2011:10). The good news, the gospel, is that the Triune God is a fountain of love poured out on all creation and inviting all of creation into a renewed relationship with God. The God of the gospel is a God who calls persons and communities to God's own self, to engage in praise and obedience (Brueggemann 2008:219).

1. In the South African context, Naudé (2011) published 'Models of "happiness" – A South African Perspective' and Van der Merwe (2015) published 'Happiness – A primer for theological engagement'. Marais (2015) completed a PhD on 'Imagining Human Flourishing? A Systematic Theological Exploration of Contemporary Soteriological Discourses' at the University of Stellenbosch.

2. It must be mentioned, however, that Van Ruler (2009:121–122) addressed the issue of the relationship between humanity and God and enjoying God in God's world. He made the point that one praises God by enjoying God's world.

God's mission has a church. Mission not only precedes the church but also includes it: 'Mission calls the church into being to serve God's purposes in the world' (Bevans & Schroeder 2011:16).

Evangelism is a vital part of God's mission and the church's calling. The call to share this message and tell the story of God's mission – in brief, the call to evangelise – is part and parcel of this mission. It belongs to the very being of the church. This is not the same as saying that evangelism must be equated with mission, for mission is more and broader than evangelism (Bosch 1991:411). Bosch (1991:418) says evangelism is calling people to mission. Evangelism is a vital part of the *missio Dei* and, although it is distinct but not separate from mission, it is the core, heart and centre of it all (Bosch 2008:8). TTL (Keum 2013:29) brings together the eventual consensus between the Lausanne Movement and the WCC, by using the classic Lausanne formulation of evangelism as the communication of the whole gospel to the whole of humanity in the whole world: 'Evangelism, while not excluding the different dimensions of mission, focuses on explicit and intentional articulation of the gospel, including the invitation to personal conversion to a new life in Christ and to discipleship' (Keum 2013:29).

One of the core practices of evangelism is disciple-making – evangelism is the invitation to personal conversion and discipleship. The formation of authentic followers of Jesus the Christ is the work of the Holy Spirit, and the church participates in this mission of God through evangelism. Chilcote and Warner (2008:xxvi) state that '... evangelism is concerned with discipling people in Christ'. The invitation to follow Jesus Christ is an invitation to discipleship. It is a call to people to commit their lives to Christ and to be incorporated into Christ. God's call to mission is a call to discipleship, that is, to follow God's presence, purpose and promise with the lifestyle and disciplines necessary for this life of obedience and praise (Brueggemann 2008:219–220). Tolmie (2014:243) says that to be church is to follow Jesus and to be disciples. He emphasises that the gospel of Matthew describes the church in terms of discipleship.

The Lausanne Movement (2010:26) states very clearly that evangelising without discipling is deficient, even dangerous. The relationship between evangelism and discipleship is part and parcel of the core identity of Christians:

As disciples of Jesus, we are gospel people. The core of our identity is our passion for the biblical good news of the saving work of God through Jesus Christ. We are united by our experience of the grace of God in the gospel and by our motivation to make that gospel of grace known to the ends of the earth by every possible means. (Lausanne Movement 2010:15)

It is clear that evangelism cannot be separated from gospel obedience and discipleship. This discipleship means transformation. One can say that the purpose of evangelisation is the transformation of people to become members of God's kingdom community. The WCC affirms that mission in the

Spirit is transformative (Keum 2013:38). This transformation, and this discipleship, has spiritual, relational, social, cultural and political dimensions.

The conclusion is that mission, evangelism and discipleship are closely linked and intertwined. The church is indeed called to invite the whole of humanity in the whole world to a costly and radical discipleship in mission.

## Discipleship as participating in the Triune God's gift of flourishing life

What is the relationship and interaction between the mission of the church, discipleship and the joy of flourishing life?

The search for a meaningful life is part of the core of biblical theology, and is closely related to the notions of 'calling' and 'mission' (Van der Merwe 2015:315).

Bosch (1991:413) argued that to evangelise is to communicate joy. It conveys a positive message exhibiting an attractive lifestyle. Precisely, the reason is that the church exists for the sake of the world, people are called to become Christian – not only to receive life, but rather to give life (Bosch 2008:15). Evangelism is an invitation to joyful life in Christ. It is sharing one's faith and conviction with other people and inviting them to discipleship (Keum 2013:30).

Discipleship is, thus, participating in the Triune God's life-giving mission. The mission affirmation of the WCC (TTL) emphasises the concept of life, while combining it with the mission of the church: 'God invites us into the life-giving mission of the Triune God and empowers us to bear witness to the vision of abundant life for all in the new heaven and earth' (Keum 2013:4). The WCC includes 'all of life' in its understanding of life. It has a cosmic perspective on the *missio Dei*, as can be seen when the statement refers to all life, the whole *oikoumene*, as being interconnected in God's web of life (Keum 2013:5). Kaoma (2015:282) argues, for a new paradigm in the formation and nurturing (discipleship) of Christians to help them to become ecologically conscious Christians, a paradigm that focusses on the mission of the Creator – the *missio Creatoris Dei*.

This concept of life must be expanded to include flourishing life. Flourishing life and joy are first located in the *missio Dei* and life in the Trinity. Thompson argues, that God creates the conditions for joy, and, therefore, God is finally responsible for human joy and human flourishing (Thompson 2015:loc. 687–688). Joy is a response to God's activity. Human flourishing is linked to, and dependent on, participation in God's creation and recreation.

The gospel message is all about joy, good news and life in fullness. In the words of *Evangelii Gadium*, 'the joy of the gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus' (Francis 2013:3). Goheen (2014:246) argues, that the gospel gains its power from a community that embodies something

of the life that the gospel promises. He refers to Nietzsche's critique of the church for its lack of joy, vibrancy and delight in creational life and pleads for a renewed appreciation of a life of joy in community.

Mbiti captures the joy of creation and life itself when he refers to one of the beautiful creation stories from Africa:

God made humans out of clay of different colours ... Then he gave humans legs with which to walk and run, hands with which to plant grain, eyes with which to see that grain, and a mouth with which to eat it. Afterwards God gave them the tongue with which to sing and talk; and finally ears, so that they may enjoy the sound of music, of dance, and of the talk of great persons. Then God sent humans out, each a complete human being. (Mbiti 2013:44)

He (Mbiti 2013:44) then asks: 'What beautiful creatures these first humans must have been: How well and perfectly equipped they were, to live, to plant grain, eat, talk, make music, sing and dance. What more would they have needed?'

TTL has a number of statements that lay the groundwork for a deeper exploration of joy and flourishing life and the relationship between these two concepts:

- It calls on the church and all the faithful to be 'vibrant messengers of the gospel of Jesus Christ' (Keum 2013:6).
- It places mission in the context of all creation and states that mission invites us to celebrate life in all its dimensions as God's gift (Keum 2013:38).
- In one of the concluding affirmations, it states: 'We affirm that the purpose of God's mission is fullness of life (John 10:10), and that this is the criterion for discernment in mission' (Keum 2013:37).
- TTL sees the mission of the church as to invite all people to the feast of life. The feast is a celebration of creation and fruitfulness overflowing from the love of God, the source of life in abundance (Keum 2013:37).

The relationship between the feast of life, the love of the Triune God and love is also echoed by Moltmann's perspective that the secret of flourishing life is *love*. He argues that compassion is the other side of living joy (Moltmann 2015:loc. 414). The connection between joy and flourishing life, especially as discussed by Volf and others, gives deeper content to the invitation to the feast of life. Crisp (2015:loc. 139–141) argues, that joy is 'the crown of the good life'. Joy is the expression and manifestation of the good life, and the good life cannot be envisioned in its fullness without reference to joy. Joy casts a positive vision of what life is truly for (Crisp 2015:loc. 183).

This global significance of flourishing life is clear from Volf's (2015b:82) remark, that world religions stand or fall on their ability to connect people to the transcendent realm, thereby making it possible for them to truly flourish, to find genuine fulfilment, and human dignity and lives marked by joyous contentment and solidarity. He labels religions as 'the most

significant repositories of the visions of human flourishing that do not foreground material goods and consumption and in which solidarity plays a key role' (Volf 2015b:170).

The church participates in God's mission, and thus also in the recreation of the cosmos to reflect the joy of the Trinity. Chilcote and Warner (2008:xxvi) underscore the importance of community and define evangelism as a habituated way of being in community. This places the discussion of evangelism, mission and the pursuit of flourishing life in the realm of ecclesiology. We need an ecclesiology of joy, conceiving of the churches as the sites in which God makes us 'fit to bear the joy that is our eschatological destiny' (Volf 2015a:loc. 113–114). Discipleship, seen from this perspective, includes communal participation in the joyful, life-giving mission of God in order to allow and assist life to flourish. Discipleship is to celebrate that which is good, just and righteous. It is a celebration of peace and dignity. It is to reflect God's own rejoicing in the world and its goodness in the liturgy of the church and in the way we care for creation. Discipleship is to love and to open ourselves up to all the different experiences that life has to offer, for it is in this love of life that we become happy (Moltmann 2015:loc. 414).

## Costly discipleship as counterculture

Discipleship in mission is also costly and radical. The joy of the gospel and the love for life in fullness do have a cost. To bring the good news of salvation is to call for a commitment to Jesus Christ and discipleship. The Lausanne Covenant (Section 4) declares that 'in issuing the gospel invitation, we have no liberty to conceal the cost of discipleship' (Sider 2008:186). Goheen (2014:242) also states that authentic, contextual evangelism will be both relevant and challenging, accommodating and confronting. Van der Merwe (2015:315) argues, that theology can contribute towards our happiness discourse exactly because the notion of 'sacrifice', which can be modelled on the life of Jesus Christ, brings a much needed corrective to the discussion.

Two issues come to mind regarding radical and costly discipleship as a pursuit of flourishing life: (1) flourishing life as a life of generosity, service and justice and (2) the joy of discipleship as counterculture against the prosperity gospel and consumerism.

## Flourishing life as a life of generosity, service and justice

Participating in God's life-giving mission results in a life where the inner relationship in the Trinity shapes the imagination of what it means to participate in God's mission (*imitatio Trinitatis*). According to Volf (2006:7), the content of *imitatio Trinitatis* means – at least – creativity, generosity, reconciliation and identity. Life in the Trinity is a life where God gives freely, and where God delights in giving. This serves as an image or example for disciples of Jesus Christ.



Discipleship is a life of generosity and service, and enjoying every moment of it. Volf (2006:9) calls this the eternally moving circle of exchanges:

The whole ritual is a feast of delight – delight in things given, delight in acts of giving and receiving, delight in persons giving and receiving, and delight in the community enacted by the whole process. (Volf 2006:9)

This is why Gorman (2015:loc. 196–197) orientates his missional hermeneutic on the cross. He states that the cross of Christ reveals a missional, justifying, justice-making God and creates a missional, justified, justice-making people. Enjoying flourishing life as a gift of the Trinity is a celebration of righteousness and justice. Thompson (2015:loc. 721–722), makes a strong case for the fact that joy is joy exactly because it understands and responds to that which God desires for the world – wholeness, abundance, justice and peace. To live life well is to do justice, give generously and care for the weak.

The importance of justice, service and generosity has been discussed in many theological discourses. The contribution on joy and flourishing life helps this discourse further along by providing a more holistic outlook on mission and discipleship, and by approaching it from the delight of service and generosity. Joy pre-empts the new life, the *shalom*, brought about by the final rule of Jesus Christ. It anticipates a new dispensation when all that limits flourishing life and human well-being has been removed.

### The joy of discipleship as counterculture against the prosperity gospel and consumerism

The rediscovery of the joy of discipleship can provide a framework and spiritual basis that represents a counterculture against the prevailing rhetoric of religious and secular prosperity gospels, consumerism and individualism.

Bosch warned against degrading the gospel to a consumer product, and stated that personal enjoyment should never become the central theme in biblical conversion stories. I find his balanced argument very helpful: 'It is not simply to *receive* life that people are called to become Christians, but rather to *give* life' (Bosch 1991:414). Discipleship means that churches become training grounds for the right kind of rejoicing. They participate in the process where the Holy Spirit transforms people, and Volf warns that the formation and transformation of persons has immediate and far-reaching political ramifications: 'fostering resistance particularly against the anesthetizing effects of joyless consumer capitalist culture' (Volf 2015:loc. 114–116). The WCC (Keum 2013:10) warns against consumerism because it triggers endless exploitation of the earth's resources. TTL (Keum 2013:11) states that life in fullness is affirmed by the liberation of the oppressed, the healing and reconciliation of broken communities, and the restoration of creation. 'God's Spirit is often subversive, leading us beyond boundaries and surprising us' (Keum 2013:11).

Here, focusing on the distinction between joy and fun is helpful, for joy is not the same as fun. Moltmann (2015:loc. 370–371) shows that, in wealthier societies and the rising middle classes, we are living in a 'fun society' (*Spaßgesellschaft*). He argues that humans are created for joy. We are born for joy:

The difference between joy and fun is as great as the distinction between joy and a gamble of chance, or between a meaningful life and a lottery win. Joy is enduring and puts its mark on one's attitude to living. Fun is short-term and serves amusement. True joy is only possible with one's whole heart, whole soul, and all one's energies. The feeling about life that underlies the party-making fun society is, I suspect, more boredom with life than true joy. True joy opens the soul, is a flow of spirits, giving our existence a certain easiness. We may have fun, but we are in joy. In true joy, the ecstatic nature of human existence comes to expression. (Moltmann 2015:loc. 377–383)

Joy is deeper than fun or happiness. According to Moschella (2015:loc. 1673), it is more embodied, more acute. It can only be described as an animating force – 'akin to aliveness'.

Van der Merwe (2015:315) also pleads for theological engagement in the happiness discourse, and says that the value of income, for example, is placed into perspective by a theological discussion on materiality and consumerism.

Costly discipleship means participating in the subversive work of the Holy Spirit, and entails resisting the prevalent consumer culture, including the economisation of the Christian faith found in the prosperity gospel.

### The praxis of the joy of discipleship

Volf (2015b:60) argues, that 'religion is more a matter of everyday practices than of spectacular feats, above all a promoter of ordinary goodness, which tends to be much less fascinating than the many faces of evil'. Smith (2009:226) wrote that spiritual formation happens over time, that is, there must be a rhythm and regularity to formative practices in order for them to sink in.

To develop discipleship from a missional perspective, and more specifically as a counterculture to the prosperity gospel and consumerism, new ideas on discipleship and discipleship training must be developed. The early church practised an embodied discipleship that included practices and beliefs. The following thoughts might act as a primer to stimulate more creative ideas on holistic and embodied discipleship:

1. Missiology needs to develop a missional hermeneutic<sup>3</sup> that includes a hermeneutic of life, as well as reading strategies and theological training based on an in-depth knowledge of exegesis. I am thinking of contributions such as those of Gorman (2015:loc. 194) with his missional hermeneutic, summarised as: '... the cross of Christ

<sup>3</sup>See, for example, the work of Gorman (2015) and his missional hermeneutic, summarised as '... the cross of Christ reveals a missional, justifying, justice-making God and creates a missional, justified, justice-making people'. Also see the work of Flemming (2015), who states the *raison d'être* for his work as '... to engage in an intentional, self-involved, missional reading of scripture as a whole'.

reveals a missional, justifying, justice-making God and creates a missional, justified, justice-making people'. Flemming (2015:loc. 147) also comes to mind when he states the *raison d'être* for his work as being '... to engage in an intentional, self-involved, missional reading of scripture as a whole'. This will have to focus on a missional interpretation that tries to read scripture not only in light of God's comprehensive mission, but also in light of a rediscovery of the joy of the gospel and the delight of participating in God's mission.

- Leadership development that focusses on the importance of discernment, amongst other priorities. The WCC emphasised the importance of being able to discern '... wherever life in its fullness is affirmed and in all its dimensions, including liberation of the oppressed, healing and reconciliation of broken communities, and the restoration of creation'. The church also needs to discern '... wherever forces of death and destruction of life prevail' (Keum 2013:11). Discernment is the first and most decisive step in the life-giving missional journey. It is the most prominent contour of missional leadership, and a core practice of Christian leadership (Niemandt 2013: 70–73). Missiology must attend to discernment practices, especially because congregational practice makes it tough to engage in discernment.<sup>4</sup> Roxburgh (2015:loc. 1633) developed a practise guide for congregations, and studies in the discernment practices of denominations are emerging (see Lourens 2016).

In terms of discipleship, Smith's (2016:loc. 91) proposal is very promising. He describes the question 'What do you want?' as the most fundamental question of Christian discipleship:

Our wants and longings and desires are at the core of our identity, the wellspring from which our actions and behavior flow. Our wants reverberate from our heart, the epicenter of the human person.

Discipleship, we might say, is a way to curate your heart, to be attentive to and intentional about what you love. So discipleship is more a matter of hungering and thirsting than of knowing and believing. (Smith 2016:loc. 99–103)

- Developing a transformative missional spirituality that, in the words of the WCC, '... seeks to transform all life-destroying values and systems wherever these are at work in our economies, our politics, and even our churches' (Keum 2013:13). It is a spirituality that assists the church to become a sign of the transforming power of the Spirit, a foretaste of redemption and reconciliation, and an instrument to convey the joy of the gospel (see Niemandt 2016:89). Missiology must assist in the development of practices beyond Sunday, a spirituality for the road (in the famous words of Bosch).<sup>5</sup>

4. Roxburgh (2015:loc.1577–1596) identified a number of issues that stifle discernment in congregations: (1) congregations are organised counter to the practice of discernment and (2) congregations see discernment as the individual work of a few 'spiritual' people.

5. See Pretorius (2015) for a more comprehensive discussion on the importance of a missional spirituality.

Smith (2016:loc. 87–88) describes the importance of spirituality well:

If you are passionate about seeking justice, renewing culture, and taking up your vocation to unfurl all of creation's potential, you need to invest in the formation of your imagination. You need to curate your heart. You need to worship well. Because you are what you love. (Smith 2016:loc. 87–88)

- The joy of flourishing life can only be celebrated in *koinonia*. The WCC (Keum 2013:38) says, 'Mission spirituality ... reconnects us with one another and with the wider creation'. Flemming (2015:loc. 1416–1418) refers to Luke's portraits of Christian communities like those in Jerusalem (e.g. Ac 2:42–47; 4:32–37) and Antioch (e.g. Ac 11:19–30; 13:1–3) as congregations engaged in the mission of God. He says that the Jerusalem community models uncommon unity, radical generosity and joyful worship in a joyful community.
- Developing practices of compassion. Moschella (2015:loc. 1661–1662) describes joy as an embodied awareness of holy presence and extravagant love. Smith (2014:loc. 212) argues, that a disembodied faith wrecks our world. Christians must become an embodying presence of Christ's love (a contextualisation of God's presence). This includes a commitment to downward mobility and servitude. Smith (2014:loc. 1934–1945) says, that downward mobility is exactly what the church needs in a culture obsessed with upgrading. The life of Jesus is a 'rhythmic engagement with downward mobility'.

Moltmann (2015:loc. 424) says, compassion is the other side of living joy. I have argued that missional spirituality is relational and formed in love, and that love, not faith, is the final criterion (Niemandt 2016:95).

- All of these practices presuppose liturgy and worship. To be human is to be a liturgical animal and to worship (Smith 2016:loc. 431). Worship is the heart of discipleship. The joy of discipleship is expressed in, nourished by and formed during worship. Liturgy prepares and guides us to participate in God's mission and to enjoy God's kingdom in the way God intended.

The joy of discipleship can provide a counterculture against the prevailing rhetoric of religious and secular prosperity gospels, consumerism and individualism. We live in a world filled by liturgies of what the good life is. The best strategy to follow is Christian worship, as joyful worship is a counterformation to all the rival liturgies of consumerism and individualism. We need liturgies of love and life with a vision of flourishing life formed by God's kingdom.

## Conclusion

Smith (2016:loc. 268) argues, that to be human is to be animated and oriented by some vision of 'the good life'. Christ's disciples are participating in the flourishing life inaugurated by the breaking in of the Kingdom of God. We are called to focus our love and life on the joy of the gospel. This is possible by strengthening the link between mission,

evangelism and discipleship. Evangelism is the invitation to personal conversion and discipleship – the invitation to discover the joy of the good life in Christ. Discipleship is thus participating in the Triune God's life-giving mission.

This gospel message of joy, good news and life in fullness serves as a counterculture against the prevailing rhetoric of religious and secular prosperity gospels, consumerism and individualism. But this kind of discipleship in mission is costly and radical. Discipleship is a life of generosity and service, where the true disciple delights in justice, gives generously and cares for the weak.

The challenge is to develop discipleship as God intended even without our thinking about it. This is the basis of a true missional spirituality and discipleship.

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### Competing interests

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