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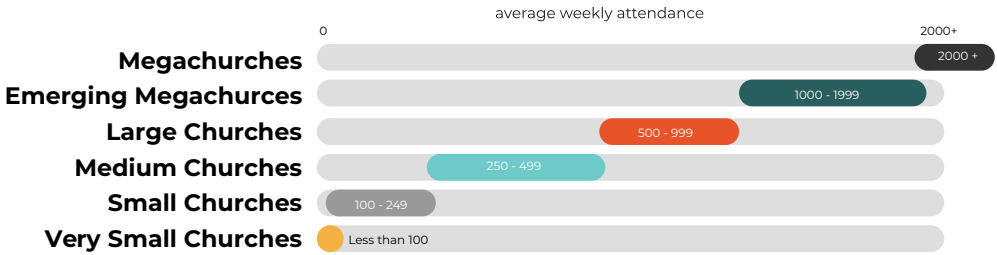
**2020 STATE OF
DISCIPLESHIP
REPORT**

**YOUR MINISTRY
DESERVES TO SURVIVE & THRIVE!**

2020 STATE OF DISCIPLESHIP REPORT

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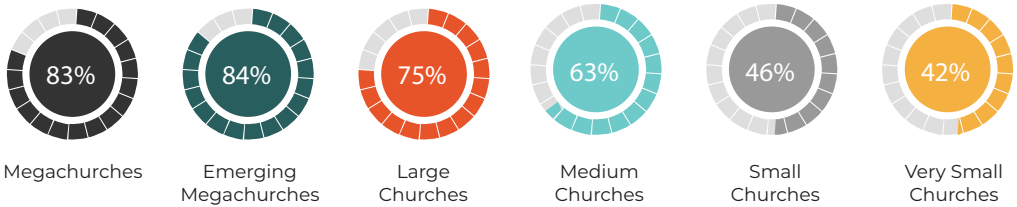
The following research is the result of surveying 440 Christian Churches and Churches of Christ ranging in size from 10 to over 34,000 through the annual *Christian Standard* magazine church survey. These survey responses were received in January/February 2020. The research data was analyzed based on the total average worship attendance of each church and assessed based on the following six church size categories.



The following questions about discipleship and disciple-making were asked for the first-time in this year’s survey. The goal was to gauge the level of discipleship taking place in our churches today and to identify how church leaders assess their disciple-making initiatives.

Would you describe your church today as a “disciple-making church”?

Percentages reflect “yes” answers.



Overall, two-thirds (66 percent) of the churches surveyed said they would describe their church as a “disciple-making church.” As the chart shows, the larger the church, the more likely they were to see themselves as a “disciple-making church.” For example, megachurches were almost twice as likely to rate themselves as a “disciple-making church” as very small churches were in this study (83 percent compared to 42 percent, respectively). Emerging megachurches were slightly more than likely than megachurches to self-report as being a “disciple-making church” (84 percent compared to 83 percent, respectively).

What impact did being a “disciple-making church” have on church growth rates and baptism ratios?

Proverbs 23:7 says, “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he” (KJV). Likewise, the churches that said they were a “disciple-making church” had significantly better growth rates and baptism ratios (the number of people baptized per 100 in attendance) than the churches that didn’t see themselves as a “disciple-making church” in 2019.

This principle held true for all but the large size category of churches (see the chart below). The large churches were the only category where the “disciple-making churches” didn’t grow last year on average. Churches that said they were not a “disciple-making church” declined on average 2 percent overall in 2019 compared to an overall average growth rate of 4 percent for the “disciple-making churches.” The gap was not as significant between the two groups when it came to baptism ratios but overall the churches identifying as a “disciple-making church” had a higher baptism ratio in four of the six church size categories.

Church Size	Disciple-Making Churches		Not a Disciple-Making Church	
	Growth Rate	Baptism Ratio	Growth Rate	Baptism Ratio
Megachurches	3%	6.6	-2%	6.7
Emerging Megachurches	7%	5.9	-7%	6.8
Large Churches	0%	5.4	2%	4.5
Medium Churches	4%	6.2	-2%	4.0
Small Churches	8%	6.0	-3%	3.1
Very Small Churches	2%	5.6	-3%	3.1
Overall Average	4%	6.0	-2%	5.1

While the Great Commission in Matthew 28 provides the marching orders for all Christians and churches to “go and make disciples of all nations” and “to teach these new disciples to obey all the commands Jesus has given them,” the priority level placed on discipleship by the churches surveyed was a mixed bag. Less than half of the churches (48 percent) overall said that disciples making disciples was a “high priority” for the church. Overall, 12 percent of the churches surveyed said “disciples making disciples” was only a “low priority” for them.

What level of priority does your church currently place on disciples making disciples?

Church Size	High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority	Not a Priority at All
Megachurches	67%	31%	2%	0%
Emerging Megachurches	59%	36%	3%	2%
Large Churches	46%	49%	5%	0%
Medium	44%	44%	12%	0%
Small Churches	36%	39%	25%	0%
Very Small Churches	33%	38%	25%	4%

A 2019 LifeWay research study found that nearly two-thirds (65 percent) of Protestant pastors said they were satisfied with the state of discipleship and spiritual formation in their local church, while 78 percent indicate there was room for improvement.

While two-thirds agreed they were satisfied with discipleship, 44 percent are not regularly evaluating discipleship progress to inform that opinion. About 8 out of 10 (83 percent) have an intentional plan for discipleship.

By comparison, 77 percent of the churches in our Christian Church survey rated their church's disciple-making efforts as either "somewhat effective" or "very effective." Again, the larger the church, the more likely it was to rate their disciple-making efforts as being effective.

How would you rate the effectiveness of your church's disciple-making efforts?

Church Size	Very Effective	Somewhat Effective	Neither Effective nor ineffective	Somewhat Ineffective	Very Ineffective
Megachurches	15%	85%	0%	0%	0%
Emerging Megachurches	16%	77%	3%	3%	0%
Large Churches	4%	75%	16%	5%	0%
Medium	7%	76%	8%	7%	2%
Small Churches	14%	48%	19%	15%	5%
Very Small Churches	3%	43%	32%	13%	9%

What is the primary method for adult discipleship in your church?

Church Size	Sunday School/Adult Bible Classes	Small Group Bible Studies	Combination of Classes & Groups
Megachurches	2%	51%	47%
Emerging Megachurches	0%	53%	47%
Large Churches	5%	31%	64%
Medium Churches	3%	41%	56%
Small Churches	24%	21%	55%
Very Small Churches	49%	15%	36%

The primary method used for adult discipleship again hinges somewhat on the size of a church based on years of research on our churches. Offering only adult classes (i.e., Sunday School or Adult Bible Fellowship classes) is not common in churches larger than 250 in attendance. Just over half of the churches surveyed (51 percent) used a combination of adult classes and small group bible studies to help mature their members which was the most popular form of discipleship. Overall, 35 percent of the churches surveyed used only small group bible studies. Again, the larger the church, the more likely they were to use small group bible studies as the primary method for discipleship.

Larger churches were also more likely than smaller churches to rate their efforts to mature believers as either "very effective" or "somewhat effective."



How effective is your church's current process for maturing believers?

Church Size	Very Effective	Somewhat Effective	Neither Effective nor ineffective	Somewhat Effective	Very Ineffective
Megachurches	13%	80%	7%	0%	0%
Emerging Megachurches	10%	83%	5%	2%	0%
Large Churches	9%	73%	13%	5%	0%
Medium Churches	8%	76%	8%	8%	0%
Small Churches	10%	64%	14%	11%	1%
Very Small Churches	4%	58%	23%	10%	4%



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