



## **Calvin and Discipleship: Growing Sanctification in Calvin Times and Its Application in Contemporary Churches**

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### **Abstract**

In general, Calvin is seen more as a Reformation figure and theologian. If one looks for literature in journals or books about Calvin, seldom Calvin is connected to discipleship. Discipleship in Calvin's writing mostly discussed in his commentaries of the Gospels, but not in practical way. How did Calvin practically implement discipleship in his church in Geneva? For this reason, this article will answer this question by describing the things that the church in Geneva did under Calvin's leadership. This will be done using literature research, specifically referring to the books *Calvin's Company of Pastors: Pastoral Care and the Emerging Reformed Church, 1536–1609* and *John Calvin as Teacher, Pastor and Theologian: The Shape of his Writings and Thoughts*. This research concludes that what Calvin attempted in the Genevan church in developing sanctification was a process of discipleship. Sanctification is developed through preaching of the Word and maintaining the sanctity of life with the consistory, namely the supervision of church leaders over the people.

Keywords: Calvin, Discipleship, Sanctification, Presbyterian Church

### **Abstrak**

Pada umumnya Calvin lebih dipandang sebagai tokoh Reformasi dan teolog. Jika seseorang mencari literatur dalam jurnal atau buku-buku tentang Calvin, sangat sedikit Calvin dituliskan terkait dengan pemuridan. Pemuridan dalam tulisan Calvin kebanyakan adalah ketika ia menuliskan komentar tentang Injil, jadi bukan hal praktikal terkait pemuridan. Bagaimana Calvin menerapkan pemuridan dalam gerejanya di Jenewa secara praktis? Untuk itu tulisan ini akan menjawab pertanyaan tersebut dengan menggambarkan hal-hal yang dilakukan gereja di Jenewa dibawah kepemimpinan Calvin. Hal ini akan dilakukan dengan menggunakan riset literatur, khususnya mengacu kepada buku *Calvin's Company of Pastors: Pastoral Care and the Emerging Reformed Church, 1536–1609* dan *John Calvin as Teacher, Pastor and Theologian: The Shape of his Writings and Thoughts*. Riset ini menyimpulkan bahwa hal yang diupayakan Calvin di gereja Jenewa dalam mengembangkan pengudusan adalah sebuah proses pemuridan. Pengudusan dikembangkan melalui pemberitaan Firman dan menjaga kesucian hidup dengan konsistori, yaitu pengawasan para pemimpin gereja kepada umat.

Kata kunci: Calvin, Pemuridan, Pengudusan, Gereja Presbyterian



## **Introduction**

All faithful Christians usually are longing to be wholly sanctified. The church also exists as community of the saints. God clearly commands it in the Scripture: “be holy because I am holy” (Lev 11:44-45; 1Pet 1:16). The question is: how can Christians be sanctified in the discipleship process in the church? This writing is an attempt to answer this question by referring to Calvin and Genevan Church, their theology of sanctification and the practice of growing sanctification in discipleship life of the church. Sanctification which is growing in Christ-likeness is the most important part in discipleship.<sup>1</sup> To be a disciple of Christ one must grow his/her sanctification. While Calvin seldom be seen as discipleship champion, it will be proposed that what Calvin did in his Genevan church to grow sanctification of his church members *is* a process of discipleship.<sup>2</sup> Recent research paralleling Calvin writings with Child Developmental Theory. Carpenter writes: “These intuitions about adolescent and adult moral growth find surprising confirmation in John Calvin’s account of Christian moral transformation. For Calvin, the adult believer’s childlike knowledge of God as a loving parent establishes a relational context in which moral agency is transformed”.<sup>3</sup> On personal level, Calvin had discipling Zanchi, mostly through corresponding.<sup>4</sup> Manetsch write a paper regarding John Calvin’s view on Christian life: he mentions the important of union with Christ as the basic and developing sanctification to be like Christ, but he

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<sup>1</sup> According to Lane, sanctification basically is the transformation on becoming like Christ and this involves discipleship. See Tony Lane, *Menjelajah Doktrin Kristen* (Jakarta: Waskita dan STT Cipanas, 2016) 218-219. This is a translation of Tony Lane’s *Exploring Christian Doctrine*. Manetsch write: the universal rule or goal of the Christian life is the believer’s sanctification, that is, conformity to the likeness of Jesus Christ. As Calvin notes, “For we have been adopted as sons by the Lord with this one condition: that our life express Christ, the bond of our adoption.” See Scott M. Manetsch, “John Calvin’s Doctrine of the Christian Life” in *Journal of Evangelical Theology Society* 61/2 (2018). 267.

<sup>2</sup> Hull see the contribution of Calvin in discipleship is his practicality while teaching his theology. See Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2006) 97.

<sup>3</sup> See Angel Carpenter, “Sanctification as a Human Process: Reading Calvin Alongside Child Development Theory” in *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics*, Volume 35, Number 1, Spring/Summer. 2015, pp. 107-108

<sup>4</sup> See Joseph N. Tylenda, “Girolamo Zanchi and John Calvin: A Study in Discipleship as Seen Through Their Correspondence,” in *Calvin Theological Journal*, 10 no 2 Nov 1975, p 101-141.



never connecting it all with discipleship!<sup>5</sup> This paper contribution will be: connecting discipleship and sanctification in ministry of John Calvin (Genevan Church), especially in church setting.

## **Methodology**

This writing is using literature research methodology to show that what Calvin did to develop sanctification in practice *is* a process of discipleship. At first, it will be gleaning theology and its practice of sanctification in Genevan church by summarizing sanctification process describe in books *Calvin's Company of Pastors: Pastoral Care and the Emerging Reformed Church, 1536–1609*<sup>6</sup> and *John Calvin as Teacher, Pastor and Theologian: The Shape of his Writings and Thoughts*.<sup>7</sup> After that this writing will examine how Presbyterian churches as Calvin successor is developing sanctification as discipleship process. And then, the results will be examined, reflected and applied to the contemporary churches.

## **1. Sanctification in Genevan Church Practice**

Sanctification is a process of maturing in Christ, to be like Christ. It cannot be attained just with understanding that is taught in class or catechism class. Therefore, it is important to construct “the how to” after knowing “the what”. Calvin says: “Doctrine is not the affair of tongues but of the life” (Inst. 3.6.4).

This part of paper will describe how Calvin builds up the faith of the Genevan church<sup>8</sup>, includes the children with its catechism class<sup>9</sup>. Here, Calvin and his Genevan Church are considered as representative of how the theology of sanctification is applied

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<sup>5</sup> Scott M. Manetsch, “John Calvin’s Doctrine of the Christian Life” in *Journal of Evangelical Theology Society* 61/2 (2018).

<sup>6</sup> Scott M. Manetsch, *Calvin’s Company of Pastors: Pastoral Care and the Emerging Reformed Church, 1536–1609* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>7</sup> Randall C. Zachman, *John Calvin as Teacher, Pastor and Theologian: The Shape of his Writings and Thoughts* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006).

<sup>8</sup> Scott M. Manetsch, *Calvin’s Company of Pastors: Pastoral Care and the Emerging Reformed Church, 1536–1609* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>9</sup> Randall C. Zachman, *John Calvin as Teacher, Pastor and Theologian: The Shape of his Writings and Thoughts* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006).



in a church. And most will agree that Genevan church is the best example of how churches lived its theology in Reformation era. William Whittingham, who was exiled from England and later contributed to translating Genevan Bible, wrote regarding Geneva church as “the mirror and model of true religion and true piety”.<sup>10</sup>

### **1.1 Preaching the Word and Its Influence**

In his book *Company of the Pastors*, Manetsch quoted a historian, Susan Karant-Nunn that “No sermon, no Reformation”.<sup>11</sup> He then explained that for Calvin and the ministers who came after him, Christian preaching was the primary instrument that God employed to bring sinners to faith in Christ and guide them toward spiritual maturity.<sup>12</sup> Unlike Catholic churches that saw the Mass was the most important part was the Holy Communion. For the Reformers the proclamation of the Word was the minister’s primary duty. “For God there is nothing higher than preaching the gospel, because it is the means to lead people to salvation”.<sup>13</sup>

One of the first actions taken by Calvin and Farel after the revolution of 1536 was to establish a regular order of preaching services in Geneva’s churches. By 1549, there were two Sunday services in all the three chapels in the city at 08.00 and 15.00. They also arranged daily morning services every morning Monday through Saturday at 06.00. There was also catechetical sermon at noon every Sunday.<sup>14</sup>

Every resident of Geneva was required to attend one of the Sunday services and the prayer service on Wednesday (which was moved to Thursday in 1581 so it wouldn’t conflict with the market day). Also at least one representative of household had to

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<sup>10</sup> Manetsch, *Calvin’s Company of Pastors*. 182.

<sup>11</sup> Manetsch, *Calvin’s Company of Pastors*. 147.

<sup>12</sup> Manetsch, *Calvin’s Company of Pastors*. 146. Taylor agrees that the Christian minister primary responsibility in Genevan Church is preaching. See Justin Taylor, “Calvin’s Pastoral Theology” in <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/calvins-pastoral-theology/>. Accessed 22nd May 2022.

<sup>13</sup> *Shorter Catechism* 8:210.

<sup>14</sup> Manetsch, *Calvin’s Company of Pastors*. 148.



attend daily morning service. The preaching was taken from the books of the Bible and the liturgy is quite the same as Presbyterian churches today.<sup>15</sup>

The preachers must proclaim and apply the Word to God's people for their spiritual profit. As for Calvin: "If doctrine is not supported with exhortations, it is sterile and will not pierce our hearts". In this way, with work of the Holy Spirit, the purposes of the preaching were achieved, which were to declare God's glory, announce the Gospel of salvation in Christ, and reform the church.

Because the Sunday service was mandatory, the services were well attended. Manetsch wrote: "The fact that only a small number of people were disciplined by the Consistory year to year for frequent absence from sermons probably indicates that most city dwellers attended the mandatory preaching services on Sunday and the Day of Prayer".<sup>16</sup> But the daily morning service was not well attended.

While Calvin and his colleagues believed that preaching the Word could transform lives, they recognized that some residents were remained apathetic and resistant. Church discipline therefore had to be exercised so that the residents would live in a manner consistent with the Word.<sup>17</sup> Preaching and church discipline, which will be discussed later, were the key to moral discipline of Genevan church. They gained reputation as a citadel of moral discipline and public probity during and after Calvin's lifetime.<sup>18</sup>

## 1.2 Church Discipline through Consistory

Manetsch wrote a chapter that explain how moral discipline was maintained in Geneva (chapter 7: *The Ministry of Moral Oversight*). He believed that personal sanctification and public righteousness were promoted through the work of Consistory.<sup>19</sup> Consistory consisted of the city's pastors and twelve lay elders who were selected from among the city's councils. In other churches or countries, the church body

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<sup>15</sup> Manetsch, *Calvin's Company of Pastors*. 153.

<sup>16</sup> Manetsch, *Calvin's Company of Pastors*. 177.

<sup>17</sup> Manetsch, *Calvin's Company of Pastors*. 181.

<sup>18</sup> Manetsch, *Calvin's Company of Pastors*. 182.

<sup>19</sup> Manetsch, *Calvin's Company of Pastors*. 183.



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similar to consistory is known as kirk sessions, presbyteries, or Kirchenrat. While Consistory was known for its disciplinary matter, it also had pastoral dimension of moral supervision. The discipline dimension of the consistory, which represented the church, for Calvin was like “father’s rod”. Tuininga wrote that discipline is the extension of the Word:<sup>20</sup> “Calvin viewed discipline as a necessary extension of the church’s ministry of word and sacrament. ... Discipline was necessary to preserve the honour of God and the integrity of the Lord’s Supper, to protect the members of the church from being led astray by other members, and to call those who were straying to repentance”. Calvin wrote in 1543 edition of the Institutes: “as the saving doctrine of Christ is the soul of the church, so does discipline serve as its sinews, through which the members of the body hold together, each in its own place.”. For Calvin, a true reformation of the church happened both in doctrinal and personal behaviour.<sup>21</sup>

The Consistory followed guidelines for church discipline outlined in Matthew 18:15-17. They admonished sinner in private, but if the sinner ignored, he or she would be called to Consistory examination. It was not intended to punitive but primarily remedial, to heal. Manetsch summarized that there were three functions of the Consistory: “First, moral correction helped to preserve the purity of Christ’s church and protect the Lord’s Supper from being profaned. Second, church discipline was intended to protect Christians from the bad influence of wicked people. Third, moral discipline was intended to shame rebellious sinners, thereby hastening their repentance, and making possible restoration to the Christian community”.<sup>22</sup>

How did the Consistory find the immorally act of residents? They assigned the twelve elders to “eye” the residents that they had to supervised. They were assigned in their respective area. The pastors and the city officer called diziniers also did some

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<sup>20</sup> Matthew Tuininga, “Why Calvin Thought Church Discipline is Essential to the Health of the Church” in <https://www.9marks.org/article/why-calvin-thought-church-discipline-is-essential-to-the-health-of-the-church/>. Accessed 12th May 2022.

<sup>21</sup> Manetsch, *Calvin’s Company of Pastors*. 183.

<sup>22</sup> Manetsch, *Calvin’s Company of Pastors*. 189.



supervisions. Here was pastor's part according to Calvin:<sup>23</sup> "But let pastors and presbyters be especially watchful to do this, for their duty is not only to preach to the people, but to warn and exhort in every house, wherever they are not effective enough in general instruction. Paul taught this when he relates that he taught privately and from house to house [Acts 20:20] and declared himself "innocent of the blood of all", because he "ceased not to admonish everyone night and day with tears" [Acts 20:31]. This was a pastoral care. Calvin in his commentary on John 10 described what a shepherd (a pastor) did in his shepherding in more details.<sup>24</sup>

The Consistory had a meeting every Thursday to weigh and judge some cases. Sometime a case was to be discussed in several sessions of the Consistory meeting. They did the examination carefully. But for residents, to be summoned by the Consistory would be inconvenient, even frightening.<sup>25</sup> At the end, Manetsch summarized that though some would raise the question regarding pastoral wisdom and spiritual benefit of the Consistory system, he appreciated the leaders in their efforts to maintain moral discipline and their conscientiousness. He highly regarded face to face and two ways communication, and the efforts to address intimate and personal matter for the sake of spiritual discipline.<sup>26</sup>

### **1.3 Catechism Class**

Zachman, in his chapter: "Building up the faith of children: Calvin's Catechism, 1536-1545" gives us quite comprehensive information regarding how Calvin developed catechism class.<sup>27</sup> In Calvin's time, pastors were trained in piety from Bible reading and understanding doctrines from biblical context. Pastors were called to teach their

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<sup>23</sup> "John Calvin on Church Discipline", in <https://www.monergism.com/john-calvin-church-discipline>. Accessed 12th May 2022.

<sup>24</sup> See David E. Willis, "Calvin's Theology of Pastoral Care: How did Calvin Understand Pastoral Care?" in <https://theologymatters.com/church-and-culture/pastoral-care/2019/calvins-theology-of-pastoral-care/>. Accessed 22th May 2022.

<sup>25</sup> Manetsch, *Calvin's Company of Pastors*. 195.

<sup>26</sup> See Manetsch, *Calvin's Company of Pastors*. 214.

<sup>27</sup> Randall C. Zachman, *John Calvin as Teacher, Pastor and Theologian: The Shape of his Writings and Thoughts*. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006)



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congregation the rudiments of piety, including the children, to apply them in everyday life. This teaching was mainly through preaching.<sup>28</sup> Three times Calvin tried to write doctrinal summary for children, but he dissatisfied. Zachman suggested that the dissatisfaction came from his earlier training in language and liberal arts, of which his standard was high.<sup>29</sup>

In 1545, Calvin published Catechism of the Church of Geneva in Latin to help people who were “poor illiterate and unlearn” to understand Christian faith. This catechism book was for children also. For Calvin, the process was in hurry, and he was conscious that it may not fulfill the needs completely. He intended to revise it.<sup>30</sup> Later the book was used as the material to prepare pastors, not for children. But, whatever happened, Calvin adopted a “simple” and “elementary form of teaching” in order to “transmit certain rudiments by which those who are touched with any zeal for religion might be shaped to true godliness”.<sup>31</sup>

Catechism materials for children were needed because the Institute was not suitable for children. It targeted the adults. Calvin thoughts that the best way to teach children is “clear, brief and simple way the central topics of pious doctrine, according to the order of law, creed, prayer and sacraments.” At first, he hoped that parents would teach children using the catechism book and the pastors would questions and examine the children and would explain further the part that the children did not understand.<sup>32</sup> Though eventually the main teachers were the ministers, but in 1549, the magistrates sent a crier through the city announcing that “all fathers of families should be diligent in instructing both their children and their male and female servants, and require them to attend sermons and catechism classes”.<sup>33</sup> The parents might teach and discuss catechism material or read the Bible with their children and servants at home.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Zachman, *John Calvin as Teacher*. 131.

<sup>29</sup> Zachman, *John Calvin as Teacher*. 131-132.

<sup>30</sup> Zachman, *John Calvin as Teacher*. 133.

<sup>31</sup> Zachman, *John Calvin as Teacher*. 133-134.

<sup>32</sup> Zachman, *John Calvin as Teacher*. 135.

<sup>33</sup> Manetsch, *Calvin's Company of Pastors*. 269.

<sup>34</sup> Manetsch, *Calvin's Company of Pastors*. 272.





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Catechism was written with similar structure of the Institute and Confession of Faith (1536). Calvin wrote in his preface of Latin edition that Catechism and Confession together represent the Church of Geneva's doctrines.<sup>35</sup> But before the Catechism program started in Geneva, Calvin had to get out from Geneva. He continued his work in Strasbourg. In Strasbourg, he realized that there was different approach between being a pastor and a teacher. He rearranged the teaching materials as follow: the Institutes would be for the seminary student, pastors to be.<sup>36</sup> And Catechism, where some materials were similar to the Institute, was considered to be more suitable for the student rather than parents and children. With this consideration, he was confirmed that the one who should teach catechism were pastors, not the parents. He revised the Catechism with questions and answers or dialogues format which was adopted from Bucer.<sup>37</sup> Manetsch believed that Geneva's program of religious education and spiritual formation was significantly indebted to the practice of other reformed churches in Strasbourg, Basel, Zurich, and Bern. Especially from their leaders such as Bucer, Zwingli, Leo Jud, Wolfgang Capito, Mathias Zell, and Johannes Oecolampadius.

The changes of Catechism were reflected in the Draft Ecclesiastical Ordinance (1541). In this writing, Calvin arranged mid-day service for catechism purpose. This catechism service was provided for children. Parents were urged to send their children to this service and catechism class. The pattern was a dialogue so that the children will understand, and the purpose is: "When a child has been well enough instructed to pass the Catechism, he is to recite solemnly of what it contains and so to make profession of his Christianity in the presence of the Church".<sup>38</sup> After they were baptized or had a confirmation, they would be allowed to take Holy Communion. In the preface of 1545 edition, Calvin urged that church doctrine must be owned by the children. They were expected to defend the faith with their own language, inquired the understanding and

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<sup>35</sup> Zachman, *John Calvin as Teacher*. 138.

<sup>36</sup> Zachman, *John Calvin as Teacher*. 139.

<sup>37</sup> Manetsch, *Calvin's Company of Pastors*. 266

<sup>38</sup> Zachman, *John Calvin as Teacher*. 139.



veracity of the faith on their own.<sup>39</sup> In Manetsch's word:<sup>40</sup> "the goal of presenting a basic summary of the Christian message of salvation in such a way that children might embrace it as their own and profess their faith publicly before the church". This catechism class is also for the adults. In their context, they would be examined with the daily sermon, and they would be checked based on their understanding personally.

There were four components of the Catechism: The Creed, the Law, the Lord's prayer, and the Sacraments.<sup>41</sup> The Catechism did not include teaching on free will, election, reprobation, human traditions, and magistrates. The purpose of the teaching was to be right before God and to lead the student to worship Him, not only mastering the doctrines.<sup>42</sup> The characters of the Catechism, according to Zachman, were apologetics, building a worshipping heart and to know and enjoy the benefit of the catechism subjects.<sup>43</sup>

## **2. Sanctification in Contemporary Presbyterian Churches<sup>44</sup>**

This part is a summary of the understanding and application of sanctification process in the churches from two of authoritative figures in contemporary Presbyterianism writer: Fesko<sup>45</sup> and Lucas<sup>46</sup>. These two examples reveal us on how one applies the theology of sanctification in Westminster Standard and Presbyterian tradition to develop sanctified life of Christians in contemporary churches.

### **2.1. J. V. Fesko**

For Fesko, all the aspects of sanctification related to the Word, even the repentance came from the proclamation of the Word. Though the Word could be

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<sup>39</sup> Zachman, *John Calvin as Teacher*. 141.

<sup>40</sup> Manetsch, *Calvin's Company of Pastors*. 266.

<sup>41</sup> Manetsch, *Calvin's Company of Pastors*. 266.

<sup>42</sup> Zachman, *John Calvin as Teacher*. 141.

<sup>43</sup> Zachman, *John Calvin as Teacher*. 144-145.

<sup>44</sup> Presbyterian Church here is regarded as the representative of Reformed churches

<sup>45</sup> J. V. Fesko, *A Christian's Pocket Guide to Growing in Holiness: Understanding Sanctification* (Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian focus publications, 2012).

<sup>46</sup> Sean Michael Lucas, *On Being Presbyterian: Our Beliefs, Practices and Stories* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2006).



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accepted in some event and occasion, but the Word which was preached in the Church and the sacraments was the main diet. Interestingly Fesko pointed out that the Word was audible, but through the sacrament, the Word touched other senses. Daily devotional was only a supplement. Fesko argued that the Word was delivered through the prophet, through Christ, and in the church through certain people. The argument was from the gifts of Spirit's aspect: certain ministries are for certain people.

Fesko believed the supremacy of the Word which confirmed the Westminster Standard. The Westminster Larger Catechism asked: 'How is the Word made effectual to salvation?' The catechism answered: "The Spirit of God makes the reading, but especially the preaching of the Word, an effectual means of enlightening, convincing, and humbling sinners; of driving them out of themselves, drawing them unto Christ; of conforming them to his image, and subduing them to his will; of strengthening them against temptations and corruptions; of building them up in grace, and establishing their hearts in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation." (q. 155)

So, then, what does sanctification process look like in practice? For Fesko the Scriptures portrayed it simple and clear: each and every Lord's Day a person who was united to Christ should go to church and attended to the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments. In the service, all who had been baptized should never be idle observers but participants in the sacred rite.

The other important spiritual diet was prayer. Prayer with faith was an act to look upon him and ask him to help in our struggles in life, confess our sin, and receive his forgiveness. Even in a complex situation, in prayer the Holy Spirit carried our needs to the throne of God: "Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God." (Rom. 8:26-7). We prayed corporately in worship but also one another during times of joy, tribulation, or trial. Fesko wrote: "In this respect, our individual sanctification is not a solitary event. As we pray for one another we ask our faithful Lord to sanctify us all."



In his book, Fesko criticized some thoughts and practices in search and developing sanctification. For him Thomas Kempis was too mystical and only search for inner self. The “What Would Jesus Do” movement was criticized: Jesus’ mission was different from ours so we could not always search what would Jesus do. He also criticized legalism, antinomianism, ascetism and perfectionism were inadequate for developing true sanctification.

## **2.2. Sean Michael Lucas**

Lucas wrote that according to Larger Catechism, the mean of grace were the word, sacraments, and prayer.<sup>47</sup> And all of these are happened in worship. The main thing according to Shorter Catechism is the word (SC 89). Prayer was a form of preparation to receive the word. Anyone who listened to the word should bring forth the fruit in their live (LC 160).

Regarding the Sacraments, Lucas wrote that baptism was to make us remember the privilege and benefit from Christ (LC 167)).<sup>48</sup> It strengthened us through Christ’s death and resurrection (Rm 6:1-4; 1Kor 12:12-13). The Lord Supper made us remember that we were His and we could enjoy fellowship with Him.

Prayer was “an offering up of our desire unto God” (WCF 21.3). With prayer we confessed our sins and be thankful and acknowledged God mercy (LC 178). Sean concerned on how we pray. For him prayer should be transformative process because our “full apprehension that God is our King and with an intense realization that we are sinners who would be totally and completely lost without the initiative of God’s grace”.<sup>49</sup>

All the means of grace which were the word, sacrament and prayer were practiced in private, in family and in the public assemblies (WCF. 21.6). Three of these are mutually reinforcing. Because the word is very important, it made Reformed leaders

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<sup>47</sup> Sean Michael Lucas, *On Being Presbyterian: Our Beliefs, Practices and Stories* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2006). 104.

<sup>48</sup> Lucas, *On Being Presbyterian*. 105.

<sup>49</sup> Lucas, *On Being Presbyterian*. 106.



encouraged Bible translation.<sup>50</sup> The other means of grace were religious oath, vows, solemn fasting and thanksgivings (WCF 21.5). Singing also played important part.<sup>51</sup> Singing spirituality would lead us to communion with God. Singing Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs were also considered a form of prayer. Because all the means of grace were related to Sunday worship, Presbyterians made “Sabbath-keeping” was important part of piety.<sup>52</sup> Every Sunday should be enjoyed as the important day and special for God.

Another aspect of piety was mutual edification (WCF 26.2). The deacons should made themselves as the role model (PCA BCO). The goal of piety was grateful growth in grace.<sup>53</sup> And this was a journey, a long-term growth in grace which progress is in communion with God and practice of true holiness (WCF 13.1). And it needed the continual supply of strength from sanctifying Spirit of Christ (WCF 13.3). And all the growth in grace should be celebrated with an all-encompassing thankfulness to God which flavored every area of our lives.<sup>54</sup>

While Fesko affirmed the important of the word, he did not mention anything of church discipline as the extension of the word. Neither he mentioned the importance of mutual edification and the role of deacons as model which was mentioned by Lucas. So, in Fesko’s scenario there was a lack of supervision from church leader for developing sanctification of the church members. On the other hand, Lucas stated that mutual edification and modelling were part of the process of piety or sanctification, but he failed to elaborate it more.

### **3. Reflection and Application for Presbyterian and Reformed Churches today**

This section is an attempt to refine how to grow sanctification in Reformed and Presbyterian tradition. It will be an evaluation on Genevan Church at Calvin times and Presbyterian and Reformed Churches on how to grow sanctification in the church and

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<sup>50</sup> Lucas, *On Being Presbyterian*. 107.

<sup>51</sup> Lucas, *On Being Presbyterian*. 108.

<sup>52</sup> Lucas, *On Being Presbyterian*. 108.

<sup>53</sup> Lucas, *On Being Presbyterian*. 110.

<sup>54</sup> Lucas, *On Being Presbyterian*. 112.



refining it with biblical principles and the later part it will a proposal of application for contemporary Presbyterian and Reformed churches.

### **3.1 Evaluation and Refining Calvin and Church of Geneva**

As mentioned earlier, in Calvin's time, church of Geneva combined altogether preaching in Sunday services, catechism class and Consistory as vehicles of sanctification of the church's member. This part of writing will be an evaluation and comment of these three practices.

There is no doubt that understanding and practice of the primacy of the word, that is the church must be anchored in the word, must preserve. The Apostles and missionaries in the New Testament exposed parts of Old Testament in their preaching and teaching. In our time, the good expository preaching is still relevant because its basic nature: explaining God's Word. But expository preaching should be accompanied with relevant application to our contemporary congregation. If this does not happen, the congregation would feel that they were listening to ancient stories and felt a gap or distance for their context and situation, they would feel that the preaching had nothing to do with them.

There is a limitation in preaching to encourage the spiritual grow. The word can become only knowledge! The Bible says: "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only" (James 1:22 ESV). Jesus teaches in what we call "Sermon on the Mount" in Matthew chapter 5-7, and at the end of the teachings he says: "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock." (Mat 7:24, ESV). The teaching of Jesus is not to be understood only, but to be done.

Genevan church's leaders were aware of that for maturing Christians in their daily lives and guarding moral and good behaviors cannot be dependent on preaching



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and teaching alone. One of the critics wrote:<sup>55</sup> “Calvin focused more on knowledge transference, with believers hearing the preached Word, than a day-to-day activity with believers who practiced fellowship-style catechesis and the breaking of the bread (Acts 2:42–46).” Part of the critics may be true. But in his teaching and practice, Calvin and Genevan church did try to embody the word in daily lives. The church supervised congregation daily lives with the Consistory. The leaders of the church supervised the congregation, guided them pastorally, and sent them to the Consistory if one did not repent after ordinary pastoral guidance.

But Consistory with its judgmental nature can't work in our churches today. The practice, generally, is left out by our contemporary Presbyterian churches, as evidence by Fesko's and Lucas' writing which do not mention Consistory as moral guiding vehicle of the church. Our context is different from Genevan church. Psychologically, no one is willing to be judge and nowadays churches have less authority to their congregation. If one caught sinning in the church, they tended to leave the church and moved to other church and started a new journey. In Genevan church, there was only one church, so they had no option but to face the Consistory if they were called upon, unless they were willing to move to other city.

While consistory practically can't be effective today, the function, which was to check the accountability of each congregation members is still important. And because the leaders of the churches such as pastors, elders and deacons as structural officers are unable to supervise all of each congregation members, the church *can* intentionally form small groups for the congregation to form communities and these communities function as accountability vehicles. The leaders of the small groups do not only lead in moral accountability but he or she might function as a role model.<sup>56</sup> Pastors, elders and deacons are encouraged to participate and lead these kinds of small groups. One can see that the modification of the accountability function is shifted from structural to be more

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<sup>55</sup> Matthew Fretwell, “Why isn't the Church Growing: a Discipleship Dilemma,” in <https://matthewfretwell.com/2017/08/29/why-isnt-the-church-growing-a-discipleship-dilemma/>. Accessed 18 May 2022. Fretwell is a Baptist, and a lecturer at Regent University in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

<sup>56</sup> Deacons must be a role models for the congregation as suggest by Presbyterian Church of America's Book of Common Order 9-1. See Lucas, *On Being Presbyterian*. 109.



functional. The reason for this change is the context: in the past there was only one church in every city/village, now there are more. In the past, the states/governments were with the church to guard morals of the citizen, now states and church are separated.

Going further, the accountability community of small groups can also become a community of mutual edification to grow sanctification, which is for Lane happened in the discipleship (group): *“Inti dari pengudusan adalah mengalami keserupaan akan Kristus, menjadi lebih seperti Dia. ... Pengubahan dalam keserupaan Kristus melibatkan pemuridan.”* (“The heart of sanctification is being transformed into the likeness of Christ, becoming more like him. ... To be transformed into the likeness of Christ involves discipleship”).<sup>57</sup> Earlier, Martin Luther as the Reformation Father believed in discipleship as Fretwell wrote: “Martin Luther, believed that discipleship guided the believer into deeper devotions toward Christ. For Luther, discipleship referred to Christ’s inner working power and “not our attempts to imitate” the deeds of Christ”.<sup>58</sup>

Lane stated important connection between sanctification and discipleship which all should affirm. Jesus preached to the crowds, but the discipleship process was when someone following him as in Luk 9:23 “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow.” Just as he called Simon and Andrew: “Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men.” (Mar 1:16, ESV), and to Philip: “The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, “Follow me.” (John 1:43).

For contemporary churches today, it is more suitable if the function of church’s discipline as extension of the word<sup>59</sup>, which embodied in Consistory, is replaced by

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<sup>57</sup> Lane, *Menjelajahi Doktrin*. 218-219.

<sup>58</sup> Fretwell, “Why isn’t the Church” which quote Allan Rudy-Froese, “Learning from Luther on Christian discipleship.” *Vision* (Winnipeg, Man.) 13, no. 2 (September 2012): 55–63.; Reformation period (c. 1517–1648), Martin Luther (c. 1483–1546).

<sup>59</sup> Tuininga wrote: “Calvin viewed discipline as a necessary extension of the church’s ministry of word and sacrament ...”. See Tuininga, “Why Calvin Thought Church Discipline”.





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discipleship groups. In discipleship group, one can learn how to follow Jesus and be sanctified. There are some aspects of discipleship group that can grow sanctification:

1. **Centered in the Word.** The Word is the center for disciples' lives (and so were for Reformers). As Jesus said repeatedly in John 14: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." (verses 15, 21, 23). Not only the disciples know the Word but doers of the Word (James 1:22).
2. **Mutual edification.** Whether there is a leader or not in the group, the nature of the group as accountability community, which is to follow Jesus and obey his command, must be preserved. In this group, each members share their lives to strengthen each other and learn from each other. This group can also be support group when one of the member fall or amidst of life's challenge or even one can be gently rebuked for his or her sin in family-like manner.
3. **The goal is to be like Christ more and more.**

Catechism class, as Calvin and Genevan church practiced, was the platform for younger generation or non-Christian to learn the Word. Nowadays catechism class or membership class function for the same purpose. But generally the catechism/membership class emphasizes only in teaching Christian doctrines. There is a need to modify it to a discipleship class. What kind of modification do we need? The paradigm must shift from teaching class to more relational community. Of course, there will be some materials of teaching including doctrines, but catechism/membership class can be transformed into discipleship journey. While catechism/membership class usually centered on the teachers, usually the pastors, the class should be divided into groups with each group has a mentor or a facilitator. They will accompany the class in their discipleship journey. The class then is not only to fulfil the requirement for their baptism. If discipleship group is introduced in earliest part of the church's membership process, we can hope and anticipate that the discipleship culture will follow them in every phase of church's members after their baptism.



### **3.2 Contemporary Presbyterian Churches**

Fesko and Lucas are representative of the contemporary Presbyterian churches on growing sanctification practice. Both emphasize the preaching of the Word as main menu, and the other spiritual disciplines are the side dishes. The challenge of the local churches in pandemic context is there are a lot of messages of the Word to choose. Churches, organizations, or people targeting Christian audience to see or listen to their channels or podcasts. We can agree that the enormous “Word” in the virtual media can be a blessing and edify our church members but some of the “Christian” content may not align with our Presbyterian/Reformed belief. Other challenge is some of the contents may attract our members because of the relevant topics which address daily lives issues. The danger of stressing on relevancy and addressing our contemporary issues is lacking biblical base. It will tend to be motivational messages or personal development messages which may be similar to “secular” messages, and it does not build biblical literacy.

With the dangers and challenges mentioned above, the local church must keep rooted in the Word. Expository preaching is still the best practice of “Preaching of the Word”.<sup>60</sup> But it should intentionally keep its relevance with contemporary context so that it can cater to our members’ needs in their daily lives. The message of the Word should address our situation with relevant applications and not only stating biblical teaching. Beside the relevant application in expository preaching, the church can facilitate the embodiment of the Word in daily lives with modelling. David Powlinson in his book *How Does Sanctification Work?* wrote that the good role model is called wise men, “Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise” (Prov. 13:20).<sup>61</sup> Paul give himself as a model for the congregations: “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ” (1Cor 11:1; also 1Cor 4:6; 2 Tes 3:7, 9). Paul also instructed Timothy and Titus to be example for the congregations that they were ministered (1Tim 4:12; Ti 2:7). Lucas mentioned the role of the deacons as model for congregation. Modelling is a relational part, two

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<sup>60</sup> Shorter Catechism 8:210.

<sup>61</sup> David Powlison, *How Does Sanctification Work?* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2017). E-book format. Ch. 6 paragraph 9.



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ways communication, which does not happen in preaching. And two ways communication in relational setting of community is important within the church.<sup>62</sup> Unfortunately Lucas did not elaborate it more. There was no indication of intentionality on how the deacons will be a role model for others. Paul instructed Timothy to entrust the teaching to faithful men (2Tim 2:2). I believe this encouragement continues the Great Commission from Jesus: to make disciples (Mat 28:19-20). And to make disciples there should be someone to be a discipler and a role model.

Both Fesko and Lucas, in their writing, missed proposal on how to check the accountability of the congregations in obeying the Word and applying the Word in daily lives. In Calvin's time at least there were Consistory as the vehicle of congregational accountability. As discussed earlier, Consistory would be irrelevant for our contemporary churches. For me, discipleship group can substitute Consistory. Discipleship group is better than Consistory because it more biblical and organic, compared to Consistory which is too structural and formal.

In discipleship group, the Word is not only listened but would be discussed and applied together. Modelling could happen in this groups because there are personal relationships among the members of the group. The group also facilitated environment to edify one another. It will be a good thing that the churches to build this discipleship culture as early as in Catechism Class or membership class.

The setting of the discipleship as shown by Jesus is in daily lives together when the disciples followed Jesus. In church, the most similar setting is the family! Family is the most conducive setting for discipleship in our contemporary churches. Parents must give themselves to be the primary discipler. Martin Luther and John Calvin strongly encouraged teaching and discipleship at home ("Every family of the pious ought to be a church," Calvin said).<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> See Jim Putman, *The Power of Together: Discover the Christian Life You've been Missing* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016) and Dan Lovaglia, *Relational Children Ministry: Turning Kid-Influencer into Lifelong Disciple Makers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016).

<sup>63</sup> Elesha Coffman, "Where did small groups start?" in <https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/2008/august/where-did-small-groups-start.html>



Pious parents will lead their children to God and growing in Christ. This calling for parents is taken from Deuteronomy 6:6-7 “And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children”. Parents love God and teach their children to love God, too. Parents therefore should give themselves as a model for their children. Because of this strategic setting, the churches should equip parents to disciple their children. Timothy Paul Jones edited a book call *Perspectives on Family Ministry* and gave us three models to encourage churches to start and emerge family ministry in the church as a process of equipping parents to be the primary discipler of their children.<sup>64</sup>

### 3.3 Application

All of studies should be not just to gain knowledge or facts finding. It should come out with some applications for the knowledge we found. This last section of the writings is an attempt to do such thing.

The following chart is the summary of the findings and its applications based on different churches:

Aspects	Genevan Church	Presbyterian Churches	Biblical Church
Preaching of the Word setting	In the services and catechism class	In the services and in the modelling lives of the church’s leaders	In the services and in the modelling lives of the church’s leaders
Content of the preaching	Exposition of the Bible	Exposition of the Bible	Exposition of the Bible <i>with</i> some relevant application for daily lives.
Accountability or church discipline	Consistory	No references in Fesko’s and Lucas’s writings	Discipleship group, start with catechism/ membership class
Community	City as a large Christian community	Church as a large Christian community	Small group as authentic Christian Community and family as the ideal discipleship setting

<sup>64</sup> Timothy Paul Jones, *Perspectives on Family Ministry: 3 View* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2009).



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Proposal for applications:

1. **Primacy of the Word: expository preaching with relevant application.** The practice of expository preaching is to be continued because of its benefit to develop biblical literacy. Exposing Scripture verse by verse or a pericope of Bible text will help congregation familiarity with Scripture. But familiarity is not enough because “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” (2 Tim 3:16-17). It is important for preacher to point out the possible outcomes after exposing Scripture. Then the congregation can more easily contemplate and follow up the message in their daily lives after listening the message.
2. **Church discipline: discipleship group as accountability community.** It is easier and more biblical for the church to develop discipline of the church in small group vehicle. It would be family like and based on personal relationship if some of the leader shepherd the members of the church. Discipleship group is the best vehicle to serve this purpose because there is a leader or some leaders in discipleship group. The leaders if intentionally prepared and developed will be the persons who will preserve discipleship culture which is rooted in the Scripture and Christ. To this process the churches are called: to make disciples (Mat 28:19-20). A leader in the discipleship group, in his loving manner, seeks his or her fellow to grow in following Christ. In the process the leader can become “the wise man” who counsel other fellow when he or she in time of difficulties, questioning their faith or gently rebuking sin so that the members of the church will grow in sanctification.
3. **Modelling: Relational and intentional mentoring of the leaders to others.** In the small group, preferably discipleship group, the leader not only the one who take the role to discipline the members but he or she at the same time be a role model for the members of the discipleship group. So, the leaders of these groups



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would have to fulfil certain qualifications. Maybe the best biblical qualification is taken from the qualification of the deacons (1 Tim 3:8-13) or elders (1Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). With this proposal, the leaders of the church, deacons and elders, should have some experience in shepherding the congregation, at least in small group context and knowing the life of the church's members: their growth and their struggle. The deacons and the elders do the personal ministry by modelling, not only by leading the organization. This kind of leaders will be better in assessing church situation because they are rooted in the small community of its members. The small group infrastructure also creates a chain of relationship so that the leaders of the small groups can be an intermediary for all community in the church to build up and edify each other.

#### 4. **Catechism: Rooted in sound teaching and building community of the saints.**

Catechism or membership class is strategic in Presbyterian Churches because everyone who wants to be baptized, confirm his or her baptism or transfer from other churches are required to attend this class. It would be beneficial for the attendants to have a good experience in learn the doctrines but also to get into community of the church as a young adult, a new believer or a new member of the church. The class should be like discipleship class, divided into small groups (3-5 persons) with same gender and the church assigns leaders in all of these groups. At the end of the class, the group can be continued as discipleship group or other form of small groups.

#### 5. **Family discipleship: Church equips parents to be the primary discipler.**

Almost every church worries about their younger generations, which range from babies to young adults. These young generations, especially Secondary school students and above are not too interested in the church. They come to the church because the parents ask them so. If we want to solve this problem, the church must improve our young generation ministry. But for me, more importantly, the church should invests their time and energy in equipping the parents. Let the parents disciple their own children. The impact will be more powerful because



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the parents and the children live together, as compared to Sunday school teachers or teens/youths fellowship minister who can only minister to the children for only several hours a week. The church can arrange parenting class and develop small groups which the members are organized according to the age of the children. The materials for discussions and learning can be parenting/family materials. The book "Perspectives on Family Ministry" edited by Timothy P. Jones will be very helpful. This book provides us three models for the church to equip its members to disciple their children.

### Conclusion

Even though there is no literature that explicitly states that what Calvin did to grow sanctification in the Geneva church was a discipleship process. As argues in this writing, one can be concluded that Calvin carried out the process sanctification by continuing to teach the Word of God and encouraging his congregation to put the Word into practice. To supervise the congregation in applying the Word in their daily lives, Calvin used the consistory institution, namely church leaders supervising the congregation, including admonishing them. All of this *is* a process of discipleship and as written earlier, sanctification will be effectively developed in discipleship setting of the church. This was seen as effective at Calvin time: the Genevan church was used as an example of a pious Reformed church then and now.

Data from authors with a Presbyterian church background when surveyed how they proposed a practical sanctification process was limited to an emphasis on studying and doing the Word. The process of accountability for practically implementing the Word is very minimally discussed. Based on Biblical theology, discipleship and sanctification are very interrelated. Discipleship is the sanctification process, that is to following Christ and to be more like him. It should be based on learning and implementing the Word. It has to be an accountability and exemplary that can only be obtained through relationships. Therefore, churches are encouraged to carry out



discipleship small groups, catechism with small groups setting and equipping parents to be able to disciple their own children.

One of the purposes of this study is to glean and gain the best theology and practice in growing sanctification in discipleship setting for church members from the Reformed and Presbyterian tradition, but it will be insightful and helpful for all the contemporary church in all tradition to develop sanctification in discipleship setting of their churches also. May all His churches continue to grow in sanctification and discipleship!

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