

# Discipling a Culture of Trauma and Chaos: A Discipleship Paradigm for Police Subculture

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## Abstract

The nature of police work frequently requires officers to engage in a world full of suffering and evil. Exposure to horrific acts of violence and disorder in society, such as murder, death, rape, and child abuse, are ordinary experiences for police officers. However, officers are not immune to the malevolence and chaos in their subculture. Instead, it can negatively affect their well-being and create obstacles for discipleship transformation to thrive. Consequently, Christians wanting to pursue discipleship in a police subculture full of trauma and chaos must be appropriately equipped. This article will offer a sociological perspective on how Christians can pursue discipleship for police officers in a subculture characterized by trauma and chaos. It defines intercultural discipleship and provides an overview of police work as a subculture in close relationship with trauma and chaos, and its negative effects. Sociologists recognize that religion can positively affect mental health, and Christianity provides a set of beliefs and practices that can be helpful for the police community. For Christians seeking discipleship in the subculture, some useful missiological tools include contextualizing Christian beliefs, developing the meaning behind communion for officers, and understanding the importance of relationship building.

**Keywords:** Intercultural Discipleship, Police, Police culture, Christianity, Trauma, Chaos

Trying to use words to describe true beauty is difficult. Language always seems to fail when confronted with the task. Even among the great poets and storytellers who have accepted the challenge, many have yet to hit the mark. After all, how does one accurately depict in words the way a married couple of fifty years gaze at each other when they dance together, or the music of Bach's Cello Suite No. 1. Though it may be challenging to describe true beauty, we intuitively know it when we see it, hear it, or feel it. Our heart stops momentarily,

and we experience a sense of peace. It is as if the cosmos is in order, and we know in the depths of our souls that it is good.

It is easy to see God in beauty. However, teaching someone to recognize and grow with God in a culture filled with disorder, death, violence, suffering, and evil is much more challenging. For many Christians who want to disciple within a police subcultural context, this is a barrier that they must confront and overcome. As a member of the police community, I can testify that to disciple individuals effectively to know, experience, and trust God within a police subculture where people carry scars, angst, and blurred vision from being engulfed in a work culture of trauma and chaos requires knowledge of the subculture and helpful discipleship tactics.

Using a sociological lens, this article will offer a Christian discipleship approach to police officers who are part of a subculture plagued by trauma and chaos. This perspective will be achieved by first briefly describing intercultural discipleship, the police subculture's unique relationship with trauma and chaos, and the subculture's negative effects on the officers. Once the foundation of the subcultural knowledge and the discipleship challenges that must be overcome are articulated, this article will argue for the contextualization of Christianity's beliefs into meaning systems and the practice of the sacrament of communion, as well as the significance of relationship development for missiological tools for Christians wanting to approach discipleship for police officers.

## **Intercultural Discipleship**

Every Christian has a built-in mission that was given to them by Jesus. In "The Great Commission" (Matt. 28:19-20), the followers of Jesus were commanded by Jesus to go out into the world and make disciples, not mere believers. The Greek word for disciple is *mathētēs*, meaning "a learner" (Moon 2017:45). Dallas Willard (2014) describes a disciple in the Christian context as a person who is an apprentice or student with the aim of Jesus' Kingdom living. The journey of the Jesus discipleship paradigm is not a quick process. It requires an individual to go through a transformational journey, which means that the purpose is not only to learn new behaviors or beliefs, but to achieve a transformation of the person.

However, people are diverse and complex. Consequently, there is no universal approach to disciplining individuals. Transformation happens within a particular space and in the context of various norms and influences. An individual's culture influences the way they interact and view the world. Discipleship aims to enter a specific cultural context and transform their worldview, making their lives Christ-centered (Moon 2017). Navigating between different cultures can make discipleship particularly challenging. For Christians to disciple police officers

effectively, they need to understand and grasp the subculture officers are a part of and influence how they see the world.

## Defining a Subculture of Trauma and Chaos

One of the unique characteristics of police work as a subculture is its intense relationship to trauma and chaos. This paper will define trauma as any disturbing experience that results in disruptive feelings that are powerful enough to interrupt an individual's stability and functioning (American Psychological Association 2023). There are multiple forms of trauma, such as physical or psychological (Collins 2007). Though people often intuitively recognize trauma when they hear it or see it, a critical characteristic is that it is not objective, but rather is subjective. Trauma is unique to the context of individuals (Straussner and Calnan 2014). Something may seem traumatic to one person, but the same situation or context may not be traumatic for another.

Police officers would be classified under the category of complex trauma, which is characterized by experiencing prolonged or multiple forms of trauma (Straussner and Calnan 2014). In their subculture, officers can encounter persistent and multiple traumatic experiences because of the nature and mission of their work. The primary focus of policing is to address negative aspects of human behavior, including acts of evil and disorder such as murder, drug abuse, child abuse, and rape. This creates a unique and challenging environment that makes police officers vulnerable to traumatic experiences and the resulting impact those experiences can have on their lives. The police profession continuously subjects officers to traumatic experiences at an immensely higher rate than the average civilian (Colwell et al. 2011). These higher-than-average experiences are the core of a police officer's mission.

The well-known Los Angeles Police Department's motto "to protect and serve" can be a helpful reference to explain why the mission of police officers contributes to higher-than-average traumatic experiences. The mission of the police is to protect their community, which means an officer's calling is inherently exposed to various types and ranges of life-threatening traumatic and chaotic experiences, making the nature of police work intrinsically dangerous. An officer must respond to life-threatening events and acts of violence to stop those threats and save lives. Officers are themselves even the targets of many violent acts. Beyond confronting acts of violence and putting their lives in danger, officers' mission is to serve their community. Officers serve their community by responding to investigations in traumatic and chaotic environments. Investigations such as homicides, rape, child abuse, overdoses, death investigations, suicides, and many other horrific acts of violence are part of an officer's duty and experience. Consequently, these events leave police officers susceptible to frequently experiencing abnormalities becoming their norm.

This complex and multidimensional exposure can last for an extended period throughout a police officer's career, for many spanning multiple decades. An example of this harsh reality is displayed in Daniel Rudofossi's (2016) research within the New York Police Department. His research indicated that the average officer could experience up to 900 traumatic events throughout their career. However, it is not only officers' longevity and variety of types of experiences of trauma and chaos that are unique in police subculture, but also police officers' mindset about trauma and chaos.

The mission of an officer's profession is to confront extreme trauma and chaos regularly. This call towards consistently engaging with trauma and chaos influences the mindset within the subculture. In police work, officers are not only willing to embrace traumatic and chaotic experiences but also have a mindset of eagerness to be confrontational and go through trauma to help others (Paton et al. 1999). The police culture's mindset of willingness and eagerness is a characteristic that can separate it from other civilian communities and cultures. For example, if someone is swinging dangerous weapons at people, instead of the response of actively avoiding or running from the traumatic and chaotic event, an officer's response is readiness and motivation to engage. Additionally, officers have the willingness to participate in traumatic experiences with others in their police force community as they are also engaging in traumatic events.

## **Negative Effects of Trauma and Chaos**

The amount and type of trauma play a significant role in an individual's psychological and physical well-being (Collazo 2022), and police officers are no different. The unavoidable, dangerous nature of the profession and the overwhelming number of traumatic investigations and chaos can drastically affect officers' overall well-being (Arnetz et al. 2009; Strydom et al. 2015; Craddock and Telesco 2022). For example, research has shown that job-related stressors caused by the dangerous nature and traumatic investigations can damage an officer's overall physical health, including being at high risk for cardiovascular diseases and various other health concerns (Papazoglou and Tuttle 2018; Patton et al. 1999; Violanti et al. 2013). As a result, research has revealed the heartbreaking reality that police officers' life expectancy, on average, is shorter than that of the civil demographic (Violanti et al. 2013).

Beyond physical health, the impact of the officer's culture can affect the officer's emotional and mental health; the psychological health of a police officer is a significant part of an officer's well-being that is negatively affected. Research has shown that the stressors of being immersed in a culture of trauma and chaos make officers at a high rate of being susceptible to PTSD and other various forms of mental health issues (Arnetz et al. 2009; Ballenger et al. 2011; Civilotti et al. 2022; Craddock and Telesco 2022; Jetelina et al. 2020;

Soomro and Yanos 2019; Violanti et al. 2013). Consequently, research has shown that police officers are also vulnerable to high substance use and abuse rates (Craddock and Telesco 2022; Irizar et al. 2021; Violanti et al. 2013) which can harm and destroy officers' well-being.

The most notable of the mental health issues in police culture is suicide; it is well known to plague the culture. Police officers have a higher-than-average suicide rate than civilians – 18 per 100,000 compared to 11 per 100,000 (Violanti et al. 2012). Suicide is so problematic in police culture that it claims more officers' lives than job-related deaths (Craddock and Telesco 2022). As a member, I can testify to the severity of the problem in the police culture from my own experiences. Throughout my career, I have known countless co-workers, many of them friends, who have lost their lives to suicide, including classmates from my police academy class.

As a subculture, police often celebrate officers' ability to handle trauma and chaos, but this can negatively affect their lives. While outsiders and insiders admire their courage in facing these difficult experiences, the constant exposure to chaos and trauma can become the norm for officers, potentially affecting their ability to cope with these experiences healthily. A helpful analogy of trauma in police subculture is that it is like water to a whale, so present and a part of their life patterns that they do not take the time to think about or evaluate its impact. Douglas Paton et al. (1999) point out that because police officers are willing to engage with trauma and chaos, it can make it a struggle for them to acknowledge and examine the reality of how harmful the experiences are to them. Also, the officer's mindset contributes to their lack of coping or reaching out for help.

While the subculture may have a higher prevalence of disorders, it is inaccurate to assume that all officers are inherently predisposed to develop conditions like PTSD or suicidal tendencies. According to Rolf Kleber (2019), experiencing trauma does not necessarily guarantee the development of such disorders. However, Kleber (2019) also points out that this does not mean individuals will not develop other symptoms or difficulties which can affect relationships. Consequently, a failure to properly deal with traumatic and chaotic experiences can harm an officer's other characteristics (e.g., emotional, spiritual, intellectual).

The powerful force of traumatic experiences can spill into other areas of an officer's life outside their police profession (e.g., family, friends, religion) and make it difficult to consistently transition between their multiple roles (Papazoglou and Tuttle 2018; Patton et al. 1999), which can have destructive impacts on an officer's relationships. Notably, the impact can be felt harshly in officers' marital relationships. Kerry Karaffa et al. (2015) note that the harmful effects of police work can damage a marriage or create obstacles to overcome. The subculture impacts not only the officers but also their spouses. Though police subculture is overwhelmingly full of trauma and chaos, Christianity can positively disciple and transform members within the

subculture. However, the reality of the trauma and chaos in the subculture should not be ignored when approaching discipleship in the subculture.

## Religion as a Response

As argued earlier, one of the significant negative impacts of the subculture on officers is its effects on their psyche and well-being. Christians wanting to disciple police officers need to be attentive to the mental health aspect that can stem from trauma and chaos, and also the needs of the officers, in order to address them. From a sociological of religion perspective, religion has always had a relationship with the mental health of individuals (Idler and George 1998). Idler and George (1998) argue that sociologists have observed the linkage between mental health and religion since the genesis of the sociology of religion, most notable from one of the key architects of sociology, Emile Durkheim.

In Durkheim's (1997) work *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*, he studied the phenomenon of suicide and the social factors around the phenomenon. One of the outcomes of Durkheim's research was the effects of religion on suicide. Durkheim's analysis revealed that religion was not only a factor in suicide prevention, but that specific religions were shown to have drastically less suicide than others, particularly Catholicism and Judaism. Durkheim concluded that the reason why religion was helpful in suicide prevention was that religions offer a set of beliefs and practices that contradict the act of suicide that can be socially rooted.

Since the book's publication, Durkheim's work has fallen under much contemporary scrutiny (Idler and George 1998). For example, Rodney Stark et al.'s (1983) critique of Durkheim's research showed that Durkheim may have been correct that social integration of religion was a factor in suicide prevention. However, the positive effects of religion were not limited to social integration. Their data also revealed "a strong religious effect on suicide independent of social integration" (Stark et al. 1983:129). Though Durkheim's work has fallen under critique, the focus of this paper is not to argue for or against Durkheim's argument. Instead, Durkheim's work is valuable in showcasing religion's important and influential role in an individual's life, even in something dramatic and individualistic, such as suicide. Religion provides a structure for an individual, which can counter anomie and bring normalness (Idler and George 1998).

Christians wanting to disciple police officers effectively need to utilize the inherent qualities that Christianity as a religion can offer to a community inundated with trauma and chaos. Durkheim's definition of religion can help provide a framework for a missiological methodology for Christians to utilize when discipling in a police subculture. Durkheim defined religion as "a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say,

things set apart and forbidden—beliefs and practices which unite into a single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them” (1995:44). Christian beliefs and practices are two key elements at the core of Christianity that intercultural disciple-makers must contextualize for discipleship development. For Christians wanting to be effective in intercultural discipleship for police officers, two helpful tools are contextualizing Christianity’s beliefs into meaning systems and practicing communion.

## Meaning Systems

As a religion, Christianity has meaningful qualities that are useful and helpful for individuals in the police subculture. Religion is a social phenomenon that helps people construct a system of understanding of the world (Berger 1990; Roberts and Yamane 2016; Rynkiewicz 2011). This characteristic of religion is why people usually understand religion as a collection of practices and beliefs that answer life’s ultimate questions and aid people in making sense of the world (Rynkiewicz 2011). All major religions try to provide both an individual and collective sense of meaningfulness in humanity (Milner 2019). Consequently, one of the main reasons religions are practical is that they offer individuals a system of life meaning that can be shared (Brandt 2018). Crystal Park et al. (2017) define meaning systems as strong beliefs about ultimate meaning and purpose, and who an individual is and their place in the cosmos, which consequently offer a way of ordering their values and goals.

Meaning systems are necessary for individuals to navigate through life. As people go through the complexities of life, they aid in people’s ability to identify and interpret their experiences (Park et al. 2017). Meaning systems are particularly beneficial in navigating through the storms of life, such as experiences of suffering, trauma, and wrongs (Park et al. 2017; Roberts and Yamane 2016). Traumatic experiences are powerful enough to interrupt a person’s worldview (Straussner and Calnan 2014), creating distortions of a worldview, which can negatively affect a person’s well-being and how they view the world. Without a proper meaning system, officers are left vulnerable to the harmful and unhealthy impacts of being involved in a subculture plagued by trauma and chaos. Thus, for police officers, having a meaning system strong enough to withstand the damaging effects of the subculture is significantly valuable.

Providing a Christ-centered meaning system can promote intercultural discipleship. When Christians engage in such discipleship, they can offer and adapt effective meaning systems rooted in shared Christian beliefs. This approach can be particularly valuable to individuals in traumatic and chaotic environments, as it helps individuals find meaning and purpose. It also helps officers transform their worldview into a Christ-centered one within their subcultural context. However, to contextualize and support officers in forming a meaning system around Christian beliefs, it is crucial to be mindful of the realities and needs of the

police subculture. Mere preaching, prayer, and offering Bibles on street corners is not enough to establish meaningful systems.

Aiding in forming meaning systems requires a more intimate understanding of the person and their needs. Meaning systems are helpful because they are practical for people. People use them as they go through life and interact with experiences (Park et al. 2017). Thus, Christians pursuing discipleship must discover what Christian beliefs are meaningful and practical for officers in their particular subcultural context. In doing so, Christian beliefs become more than mere concepts, but rather are rooted in an officer's meaning system for their everyday life. A helpful guide for Christians about what to focus on for developing meaning systems is Paul Hiebert's "excluded middle."

### ***Excluded Middle Issues***

Paul Hiebert's (1982) influential work, *The Flaw of the Excluded Middle*, stated that the West generally views reality in a two-tier system: the visible (science) and the invisible (religion). He argued that the Western two-tier approach was faulty because there are excluded middle issues that science could not explain. At the same time, there are questions that religion has to be able to answer that go beyond understanding who God is, such as how God interacts with human history. Hiebert asserted that middle issues are essential to people because they deal with crucial problems that have practical implications in everyday life.

Responding to Hiebert's work, Moon (2017) states that recognizing the excluded middle issues within a culture is critical to intercultural discipleship. Moon summarizes the four most common cross-culturally excluded middle issues:

- Why does someone live or die, such as in an accident or because of a sickness?
- What is the cause of someone's hardship or well-being?
- How, in a world of uncertainty, can someone obtain guidance?
- Where can someone find protection and justice during evil?

For Christians who want to pursue intercultural discipleship in police subculture, it is easy to see how all four excluded middle issues that Moon summarizes should be addressed, and how valuable contextualizing Christian answers to the issues will influence the formation of a meaning system for a police officer. One of the critical middle issues for a police culture context is finding protection and injustice during evil.



### ***Theodicy***

The struggle to grasp a world full of suffering and trauma is not a new concept or only problematic for specific cultures; instead, it is universal. All major religions recognize and address the issue of a world that is not as it should be, but they differ in the cause (Netland and Carson 2022). In the theology of religion, theodicy is the term to describe this problem. Theodicy is a term used to explain suffering in the world (Park et al. 2017) and how the justice of a good God is present in a world full of evil (McGrath 2017). Park et al. (2017) argue that theodicy is vital for meaning systems. In the middle of trauma and chaos, meaning systems equipped with addressing theodicy can provide a person comfort, cohesion, and stability.

The police subculture is immersed in injustice and suffering. A meaning system is needed for officers to remain stable and provide comfort while they experience the sting of evil and anguish. Police officers witness some of the vilest and most violent acts of which humanity is capable, such as murder. Seeing bodies lying in blood, hearing the sounds of people screaming, and smelling dead people at a scene can stay with officers and have unhealthy effects on their psyche. It can be hard to rationalize or explain such a horror, leaving traumatic and chaotic experiences to have lasting effects on the officer. For example, it is common for police officers to remember vividly the sight of murder scenes, the sounds they heard, and the smell of the decaying bodies.

For Christians doing mission work in discipleship within a police subculture, theodicy is critical for discipleship transformation. For example, from the Christian perspective, the root cause of the world not being as it should be is the result of humanity's sin against God, and reconciliation is through Jesus Christ alone (Netland and Carson 2022). Contextualizing core Christian beliefs concerning theodicy will help form Christ-centered meaning systems and equip them. Instead of being vulnerable to trauma, their meaning system will equip officers to identify and put meaning to their experiences in their environment. More importantly, they can see, experience, and grow with God within their cultural context.

### ***Relation with the Sacred***

Another characteristic that is also significant for meaning systems is officers' relationship with the sacred, which is foundational to religion (Berger 1990). The idea of religion as being related to "sacred things" is at the core of Durkheim's (1995) definition. Sacredness is a fundamental aspect that grounds and influences religious meaning systems. There is no one definition of sacred. For sociologists like Murray Milner, sacredness should be considered "the highest form of status" (2019:12). Other sociologists, such as Peter Berger, describe the sacred as "a quality of mysterious and awesome power, other than man and yet related to him, which is believed to reside in certain objects of experience." (1990:25). One characteristic of

scaredness is a sense of transcendence, as it helps us understand the world and acknowledge the reality of transcendence. Individuals and communities can embrace and experience transcendence (Shon 1990).

An individual's relationship with the sacred is vital to be able to navigate through life, as Berger (1990) notes that the right relationship with the sacred can help people transcend chaos. Sacred experiences are practical because they can aid people in transcending experiences of trauma, suffering, and injustice and make sense of their harsh reality, which is vital for police subculture. Furthermore, sacred experiences can make people feel a sense of belonging and that they are a part of something grander than themselves (Roberts and Yamane 2016). For Christianity, the relationship with the sacred is one's relationship with God.

A Christian's spiritual life is the aspect of their life regarding the discussion and participation in their vertical relationship with God. One of the most impactful meaning systems influencing an individual is their spirituality (Brandt 2018; Park et al. 2017). An individual sense of self in relationship with a transcendent spiritual reality provides a powerful narrative of meaning throughout an individual's life and experiences (Reimer and Dueck 2012). For example, Christian narratives that guide Christians could be God's love for humanity (Deut. 7:9, Eph. 1:5-6, John 3:16, Psalm 36:7, Rom. 8:38-39, 1 John 3:1, 1 John 4:7-8) or hope (Isa. 40:31, Jer. 29:11, Ps. 9:18, Ps. 33:22, Tit. 1:2, 1 Pet. 1:3, 1 Thes. 1:3). Consequently, a better understanding and development of an individual's spirituality can positively enrich an individual's psychological development (Hoenkamp-Bisschops 2000), especially by providing much-needed hope in traumatic experiences (Collins 2007).

Strengthening one's spiritual life can benefit an individual going through trauma or chaos. Many people turn to their spiritual lives for answers and strength. For example, Karaffa et al.'s (2015) research on police marital relationships revealed that most police officers and spouses relied on spiritual beliefs to deal with stressors. Additionally, most officers and their spouses (89%) turned to their spiritual beliefs for strength. For Christians, God is the highest (sacred) value and truth and is dependable, like a fortress that can withstand attacks or a rock that cannot be moved (Milner 2019). For Christians, one's spiritual life can be an anchor to withstand life's storms. However, Christianity is not only rooted in sacred beliefs, but also provides room and structure for sacred experiences.

## **Communion**

The communion celebration is an important way that Christians can come together for a sacred experience in a time and space. The communion sacrament is packed full of meaningful religious symbolism, and symbolism is valuable because it can do more than mere words can

do. Symbols can penetrate a person's being so the meaning behind them can become more apparent and stay with individuals for a long time (Moon 2017). At the heart of Christianity is the gospel message, which can be thoroughly understood and felt through communion.

Roberts and Yamane (2016) note that communion is the most significant sacramental ritual in the Christian faith. Rituals are valuable because they allow Christians to restructure and express their worldviews (Moon 2017) and provide much-needed reminders (Berger 1990). Rituals also provide a time and space to separate oneself from everyday life patterns and instead embrace God and provide opportunities to remember to commit oneself to God continuously. After the ritual, Christians can feel a sense of closeness with others and their faith (Moon 2017).

Providing a sacred moment that can remove an officer from the trauma and chaos in police culture can be a welcoming experience for the officer. The environment of police work can cause an extreme amount of harmful stress and burnout in the officer (Queirós 2020), and providing time and space can help the officer recharge mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Also, it can have the ability to unite people and provide a sense of identity (Roberts and Yamane 2016). In Christianity, communion is the pinnacle of unity. It unites people of faith regardless of socioeconomic status, past experiences, struggles, or cultural differences.

For Christians disciplining in a police subculture, the sacrament of communion is a powerful tool that should be fundamental to their discipleship approach and contextualized for their audience. When Christians meet with officers for discipleship, they should seize as many opportunities as possible to insert the practice of communion, whether done during one-on-one time or in a group setting with other officers. Times to do so together can be before, after, or during activities such as lunch meetings, Bible studies, service opportunities, or Sunday church service, or even when the officers reach out for ministerial guidance or support when they face obstacles, challenges of faith, or stressors from work. There are countless ways and settings in which to experience communion together. Rather than confine communion, every interaction between officers and a Christian discipler presents a chance to partake in communion together and learn through the sacrament. Communion is observed in various forms across the globe and within diverse cultural frameworks. Rather than prescribing a singular approach to communion, an intercultural approach to discipleship should embrace creativity and adaptability to the unique circumstances and the time and space available.

A helpful way to contextualize communion for discipleship in the police subculture is to take time to reinforce central beliefs for developing their meaning systems before partaking in the sacrament. For example, it is best not to start communion by immediately participating in the elements and reading of Scripture. Before partaking in the elements, it is best to provide time

and space to contextualize theodicy, God's transcendence, love, and hope, and relate to the communion sacrament. This time should be used as a teaching moment to help explain how impactful this sacred time with God can be for them. Also, because symbols are powerful, they should not be undervalued. Instead, the bread and wine should be tools for teaching and meaning in a person's faith journey. For example, the bread can be torn as imagery of Jesus' body breaking, and the color of the wine can spark the imagination of blood split. This highlights the significance of Jesus' suffering as not being distant from trauma and chaos, and His victory as producing hope.

Additionally, Christians engaging in discipleship transformation should emphasize the importance of unity that communion can develop. Instead of passing out crackers, Christians can physically rip the bread or join together in a circle and pass bread around to each other. The purpose of communion is not to be a religious ritual accomplished quickly or without attention. Instead, it should cultivate sacred time for officers. Christians engaging in intercultural discipleship in a police subculture can develop an atmosphere where communion can be a sacred time and space shared away from the traumatic and chaotic environment.

## Relationships

When Christians approach discipleship in police subculture, employing cultural knowledge, forming meaning systems, and building connections are essential. However, establishing genuine Christ-centered relationships between those involved in the discipleship relationship is the key to success. These relationships are crucial in fostering growth and ensuring that the approach used is effective. Nothing can replace the power of a strong and authentic connection between individuals in intercultural discipleship. Humans were not created to be alone but in relationships (Pipper 1999). Building Christ-centered meaningful relationships is where transformation and discipleship happen. Relationships allow Christians to speak openly and honestly about Christianity so it can be heard, understood, and felt. A Christ-centered meaningful relationship must be at the heart of any discipleship paradigm. So, Christians pursuing discipleship have to think of creative ways to rub shoulders and be relational with them (Hybels and Mittelberg 1994).

In missiology, this concept is called the incarnational approach. The incarnational approach is centered around the Christian belief that through Jesus Christ, God entered and became part of the world to reach humanity (Hirsch 2006). In the incarnational approach, Christians are to follow the example of Jesus and exercise a genuine identification and affinity with those they are attempting to reach (Hirsch 2006). Therefore, Christians must do more than merely observe and minister from a distance. Instead, they must be directly involved in the community so they can live, learn, and grow with, and care for the police officers. The more an

individual becomes a part of a community, the more they gain their trust and confidence and can cross over cultural barriers (Hendry 2006). Also, the more Christians immerse themselves in the culture, the more they can intimately know the community, allowing Christians to address the whole person with the transformational power of the gospel message (Rynkiewicz 2011).

The relational approach of discipleship is a familiar idea within Christianity and has been a consistent model that Christianity has utilized for its growth throughout the history of the religion. Stark (1997) convincingly showed and argued that it was not through theology, apologetic arguments, or miracles that the Christian movement grew rapidly. Instead, it was through relationships and strong attachment to the members of the Christian Church. Relationships have always been at the core of the Christian discipleship paradigm and should continue to be moving forward.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, a police subculture can be challenging for Christians pursuing discipleship. However, it is not impossible. This article has argued that all Christians have a calling to make disciples and to do so in various cultural contexts, which can become challenging, particularly for a police subculture immersed in trauma and chaos. An effective discipleship methodology for police is cultural knowledge. Once there is cultural knowledge, disciplers can utilize Christianity's beliefs to develop a Christ-centered meaning system that contextualizes theodicy and the sacred, and then puts the Christian beliefs into practice by contextualizing the sacrament of communion. Also, it is vital to utilize the development of authentic Christ-centered relationships as the foundation of the discipleship approach so discipleship can thrive within the community.

This article hopes to encourage more Christians to live out their mission in the police community and encourage more research to equip Christians to reach the community. Discipleship within a police subculture can be difficult. There are a lot of scares and damage from a life immersed in an environment of chaos and trauma. The harmful stings are only becoming more problematic and destructive within the community. Just as Christians need police officers in their community, so do police need Christians discipling them in their community.

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