

AFRICA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

GRACE AND LAW IN DEVELOPING AUTHENTIC DISCIPLES: A SOCIO-
RHETORICAL INTERPRETATION WITH FOCUS ON THE SERMON
ON THE MOUNT (MATTHEW 5)

BY

MICAH ONSERIO MOENGA

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Approved:

Primary Supervisor:

Dr. Nathan Nzyoka Joshua

Associate Supervisor:

Prof. Samuel Ngewa

External Examiner:

Prof. Mumo Kisau

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the theme of grace and law in Matthew's Gospel record in the development of disciples in general. It deals more specifically with the function of Jesus' sayings in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5. The study is an exegetical analysis of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (hereafter SM) in Matthew 5. This is done in pursuit of Jesus' portrayal of the relationship between grace and law in developing authentic disciples. The study argues that grace and law play a critical role in the development of disciples in Matthew 5. Previous studies have failed to show that grace and law play complementary roles in the development of disciples, the indicative and imperative in the life of disciples as depicted in Matthew's Gospel record in Matthew 5. For instance, a reading of the beatitudes in isolation of the section on the law commonly termed as the 'antitheses' is not sufficient in understanding Jesus' disciple-making process at least as depicted in the SM in Matthew 5. Many studies have treated these sections as loosely disjointed and thus making the understanding of Jesus' model of disciple development insufficient. This study shows that there is a literary link between the beatitudes in Matthew 5:1–12 and the section that follows (Matthew 5:13–48) which cannot be ignored in the ongoing discussion of Jesus' disciple development model. This study, therefore, proposes that grace and law are inseparable aspects in discussing soteriological issues and that they constitute God's way of dealing with His people since the Old Testament times. As a point of fact, the deliverance of the Israelites preceded the giving of the law. Similarly, in Jesus' SM, grace (beatitudes) precedes the law (antitheses). Thus, the new community in Matthew's Gospel, just like the old Israel, is also dealt with in a similar manner. Therefore, in this study, we propose that Jesus' depiction of grace and law is foundational for the development of a disciple-making model for the modern church in Kenya.