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TRAINING THE PEOPLE OF PARKWAY BAPTIST  
CHURCH, FORT MYERS, FLORIDA,  
TO PRAY EVANGELISTICALLY

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A Project  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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Doctor of Ministry

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by  
Leonard William Anderson  
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**APPROVAL SHEET**

TRAINING THE PEOPLE OF PARKWAY BAPTIST  
CHURCH, FORT MYERS, FLORIDA,  
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To Richard and Reva,  
my parents, whose lifelong support and love  
have always been a source of godly encouragement.

To Jerri,  
my wife, whose spirit in this process has proven  
the words of the apostle Paul: "Love is patient" (1 Cor 13:4).

And to Aaron, Matthew, and Derek,  
our sons, whose lives have  
blessed me beyond measure with a godly  
heritage from the Lord (Ps 127:3)

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## PREFACE

With the writing of this preface, I come very close to the end of a course of study that has been both challenging and fulfilling. The completion of each stage has brought its own reward, giving a sense of achievement that gratifies and inspires. It marks an accomplishment long before set as a goal, a destination that could not have been reached alone. There have been professors, signposts along the way, whose passion for ministry and deep devotion have pointed me onward, back to my first love experience of Christ (Rev 2:4). Much appreciation goes to Dr. Bill Henard, my project supervisor, for his tireless attention to detail and his clear desire to build into the lives of so many. His spirit is that of the apostle Paul whose practice was to pass on to other men the knowledge he himself had received, that they might be better qualified for ministry (2 Tim 2:2). The criticisms, suggestions, encouragement, and ideas, surfaced in discussions with my student cohort group, have also challenged and inspired: “As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another” (Prov 27:17). I had long sought a supportive group of such peer mentors. I was not disappointed.

The leaders and members of Parkway Baptist Church, from my first suggestion of this course of study, enthusiastically offered their support and encouragement, even contributing tangibly with their finances. Without such support, this journey would not have taken its first step. Nor could it have come to completion without the willingness of so many volunteers who gave demonstrable endorsement to the goals of this project through their active participation. I asked God to begin building up from this small congregation a Gideon’s army. That prayer is being answered.

My wife has demonstrated that patience is a virtue, graciously foregoing date nights and even accepting a short delay of a long overdue vacation as my self-imposed



deadlines approached. I always sensed her full support. My parents, too, have encouraged me onward, rejoicing with me as only doting parents can. Though often feeling unaccomplished and unworthy of any praise, I have constantly benefited from the strength of theirs. My experience of them has never been otherwise. I am blessed!

My thanks would fall tragically short should I fail to acknowledge my God and my Savior Jesus Christ. His grace is sufficient and his faithfulness continuous: “. . . to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen” (Jude 25).

Finally, the completion of this journey is only the beginning. This project would result in loss and failure if allowed to become an end in itself. The principles learned, the concepts taught, and the experience gained is a stewardship entrusted. Building upon what is past, with a commitment to stay the course, must follow. “Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward” (2 John 1:8 AV).

Leonard William Anderson

Fort Myers, Florida

December 2012

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to encourage engagement in evangelism by equipping the members of Parkway Baptist Church in Fort Myers to pray evangelistically. The offer to pray for the needs of others would also be presented as a means of building bridges of relationship with unbelievers. Those bridges could then be crossed over with the gospel. In this way the members learned not only how to pray for the lost, but also received direction in how to utilize the practice of prayer itself as a tool to evangelize.

#### **Goals**

The first goal of this project was that members would come to understand New Testament principles foundational to evangelistic praying. One reason people do not pray evangelistically is a misunderstanding of the sovereignty of God as it relates to prayer. Some ask, “If God is sovereign, why should Christians pray?” This fact is especially true in matters of salvation. If God has preordained from eternity past those who will inherit eternal life, is not prayer for the lost, thereby, rendered superfluous? Others say that nowhere in Scripture are believers specifically commanded to pray for the lost. While there are no direct commands to do so, there are an impressive number of verses that touch upon and address this very issue. Dare the church err in a matter of such eternal consequence?

The second goal was to stimulate a burden for the lost that would compel church members to engage actively in evangelistic praying, both privately and corporately. It seems that much of western Christianity is guilty of wishful thinking.

Secretly, hope is held out that, when all is said and done, God will give the nod for some to enter eternal life without ever having professed faith in Jesus Christ before death.

Robert C. Brow, an annihilationist, observes a shift in evangelical thinking on the subject of hell. Describing himself and other evangelicals, he states that though modern evangelicals “may use old-model language and assume that we believe as before . . . our hearts are changing our minds.”<sup>1</sup>

If failure to share one’s faith and lack of prayer is any indication, Brow may be right. Fifty-three percent of the pastors in a recent survey admitted not sharing their faith once in the previous six-month period.<sup>2</sup> Such studies suggest that there are many closet universalists and annihilationalists within the church today. Certainly there are those who hold out for a God who will be far more inclusive than has otherwise been the historic teaching of the church. These mostly unspoken speculations undermine a burden for the lost. After all, they might not be as lost as previously thought. Even the current nomenclature is euphemized with terms such as “unchurched” or “seekers,” rather than lost sinners. Only when the church sets aside all such notions and embraces the true condition of mankind apart from Christ will the church be spiritually propelled to evangelistic praying.

The third goal was to equip members with useful skills that would promote confident and effective evangelistic praying. How does one pray for the lost—not just generically, but for the lost neighbor, associate, friend, or family member? Many pray for lost people to be saved with little thought for the spiritual dynamics involved. The natural man does not simply decide to accept salvation. Prayers must be made for the overthrow of what a person naturally is—alienated against God. Unregenerate mankind is in a serious way. The devil has deceived the lost. “The whole world lies under the

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Brow, “The Evangelical MegaShift,” *Christianity Today* 34 (1990): 14.

<sup>2</sup>Alvin Reid, *Evangelism Handbook* (Nashville: B & H, 2009), vii.

sway of the wicked one” (1 John 5:19).<sup>3</sup> The lost have been blinded. “But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded” (2 Cor 4:3-4). Believers must be taught to pray strategically, wielding prayer as a spiritual weapon. Evangelistic praying asks God to send conviction and enlightenment, praying that God would call and draw, attracting them to Christ.

The fourth goal was to take prayer and make prayer itself a program for relational evangelism. Prayer often becomes part of, or an addendum to, an existing evangelism program. The problem is it often becomes no more than that—an attachment, an afterthought. With a tip of our hats given to prayer, we hurry on to what “really counts.” Given the tendency to lose prayer in the process, why not prioritize prayer by making it part of the process? What if prayer became the primary tool in building evangelistic relationships? This project attempted to go beyond the practice of prayer itself and to use it as a tool for garnering prospects, developing ongoing relationships, and opening doors of evangelistic opportunity through the offer of prayer.

The fifth goal was to enhance my own effectiveness in evangelism by giving increased attention to prayer in my personal life and ministry. I cannot expect of church members what I do not practice myself, nor do I wish to find myself negligent in a matter of such grave and eternal consequence. As a pastor, the tendency is to exercise dependence upon oneself through plans and programs. The need is to honor God through dependence upon Him. E. M. Bounds writes,

What the church needs today is not more machinery or better, new organizations or more and novel methods, but men whom the Holy Spirit can use—men of prayer, men mighty in prayer. The Holy Spirit does not flow through methods, but through men. He does not come on machinery, but on men. He does not anoint plans, but men—men of prayer.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references from the New International Version.

<sup>4</sup>E. M. Bounds, *Power through Prayer* (Chicago: Moody, 1985), 10.

## Ministry Context

Parkway Baptist Church is located in Fort Myers, Florida, situated along the southwest coast in Lee County. The US Census Bureau reports that in 2009 there was an estimated population of 586,908.<sup>5</sup> Explosive population gains in Lee County nearly flat-lined in recent years due to the current national recession. In spite of that, however, a study released March 1, 2010, by the University of Florida's Bureau of Economic and Business Research projects that Lee County will experience a modest increase of 1,500 in 2010 over 2009. More significantly, it projects that as many as 75,000 more could follow in the next five years, and the population could reach more than 1 million by 2035.<sup>6</sup>

The growth in the community has not been reflected in Parkway Baptist Church. Attendance in both Sunday school and morning worship has remained static over several years. The average morning worship attendance leveled off at about 80, remaining constant since. Any new gains in regular attendees and membership have been largely mitigated by losses. The losses do not reflect negatively. “Back door” attrition has not been a significant problem. Rather, the attrition has come largely from deaths and out-of-state moves. Nonetheless, this has been a predictable pattern over many long years. Any new gains simply cover the losses.

The transfer to baptismal growth ratio has been about 10 to 1. Given this disparity, the issue of evangelism must be addressed. While there has been some level of conversion growth, our numbers largely reflect transfers from other churches. We have reached one of several predictable church growth plateaus (85-100). If attendance is to increase, major “breakout” efforts must be implemented—large enough to insure

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<sup>5</sup>“Lee County Quick Facts from the US Census Bureau” [on-line]; accessed 10 September 2010; available from <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/12/12071.html>; Internet.

<sup>6</sup>Cited in Rachel Revehl, “Lee County Set to Take Off Again: It Could Top One Million by 2035,” *Fort Myers News Press* [on-line]; accessed 10 September 2010; available from <http://www.newspress.com/article/20100303/NEWS01/100302089/Lee-County-population-set-to-take-off-again>; Internet.

sustained net-growth. Likewise, if our church is to be a Great Commission church, with a kingdom focus, we must target those efforts on reaching lost people.

With a few exceptions, our church is primarily composed of Caucasians. This composite, however, is a direct reflection of the surrounding demographics. Moving outward in a one, three, and five mile radius, the percentage of Caucasian population is 98.6 percent, 96.6 percent, and 93.2 percent respectively. Even within the three surrounding zip code areas, the white-only percentile is 84 percent. Along with a predominately Caucasian population, the community also reflects Florida's reputation as a popular retirement hotspot. Over 20 percent of the population is 67 to 84 years of age, as compared to a national average of 9.4 percent, making this segment the most over-represented group in the area. Another 3.6 percent of the population is 84 years of age and older, again well above the national average.<sup>7</sup> This demographic is also reflected in our congregation.

If our church is going to project an image of health and vitality, and if we are to secure a future, we must reach young families and youth. There are challenges, however. As noted previously, if sorted by age, the elderly are the most over-represented group in our area. Additionally, those in or entering the empty-nester stage of life (45 to 54) represent the largest segment of the population. The number of youth, from infancy to age 24, in our demographics is under the national average, but there are still youth and young families to be reached as evidenced in the existing and rapidly growing number of public schools constructed over the last several years. Within a five-mile radius, a growing community college exists, as well as a new state university. This trend is the good news, and in spite of lowered expectations due to a worsening economy, the forecast is for households to continue a growth rate of 17.9 percent over the next five years. Our

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<sup>7</sup>Percept Group, "Ministry Area Profile for Zip Codes 33912, 33908, and 33967," 2009 [on-line]; accessed 10 July 2009; available from [www.perceptgroup.com](http://www.perceptgroup.com); Internet.

problem is not a lack of potential, but a question of how to reach the young while continuing to build upon our strength among the elderly.<sup>8</sup>

Our evangelism strategy has largely been one of attraction. Studies show that the best prospects for evangelism are those who have previously visited the church.<sup>9</sup> Without visitors a church cannot grow. We have attempted to “stock the pond” out of which we fish. With more visitors comes greater opportunity for follow-up, and with follow-up comes greater opportunity for evangelism. Attracting visitors is the means of “greasing the wheels” that roll the process forward. We recognize the fact that when visitor flow diminishes the process slows and, if non-existent, it grinds to a halt.

Historically, due to a low-visibility location, we have suffered from a correspondingly low visitor flow. Beating this visibility handicap by increasing exposure and visitor flow has been yet another challenge. We have used a variety of mediums. We have made use of high quality, professionally prepared and licensed cable TV spots. Recently we made available, via various search engines, the online viewing of a thirty minute video entitled, *Are You Going to Heaven?*<sup>10</sup> At the conclusion, the opportunity was extended to contact us via e-mail. A mass mailing campaign was launched a few years ago, targeting the same twenty-thousand homes four times in six months. These professionally designed giant postcards advertised four consecutive attraction events: a Fall Festival, a Thanksgiving open house, a Christmas Eve service, and an Easter Sunrise service. We have posted large numbers of yard signs at key intersections a week in advance of special attraction events. For several years we sponsored our own preschool and daycare. We have made our church available to a Cub Scout pack and a Boy Scout

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>D. James Kennedy, *Evangelism Explosion*, rev. ed. (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale 1977), 10.

<sup>10</sup>Derek Packard, “Are You Going to Heaven” [on-line]; accessed 7 July 2011; available from [http://www.shareheaven.org/media/heaven\\_640\\_250k.html](http://www.shareheaven.org/media/heaven_640_250k.html); Internet.

troop. Additionally, we have made our facilities available to two neighborhood organizations for their regular association meetings. Where community regulations do not disallow it, we have also gone door-to-door with literature distribution. We have made use of signage on bus stop benches and occasional advertisements on Christian radio and in local newspapers. These efforts have met with very limited results and have done nothing to visibly increase our flow of visitors. More positive results, however, may have been hampered by a lack of consistency.

A combination of contextual factors have limited our church's growth. As noted in the previous paragraph, limited visibility is a huge issue. Our church is isolated one mile off of the closest main highway. It is situated on a street with no outlet. The immediate neighborhood adjacent to our church has only one point of access and exit, nor are there any businesses to draw people into it.

In regard to the larger surrounding area, Percept Group identifies the region as "highly dispersed." They write,

In the study area, the top three quarters of the population resides in approximately 67 percent of the geographical area. In the U.S. as a whole and in the average community, the top 75 percent of the population resides in just 25 percent of the populated geographical area. In comparison, the study area population is highly dispersed within the overall area.<sup>11</sup>

From a practical standpoint, this feature makes it more difficult to get a handle on the community at large and to focus outreach for maximum effectiveness.

Turning the attention back to the immediate neighborhood adjacent to the church, it might be described as a small conclave of 400-500 homes. The largest portion of this community accommodates homes on lots between 1-5 acres in size. It is a prized area in which to live because of its bucolic ambiance where a rustic, rural feeling prevails. It is couched and largely hidden within a surrounding suburban community that has experienced rapid growth in businesses and homes over the years. Some would view it as

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<sup>11</sup>Percept Group, "Ministry Area Profile."



affording the best of both worlds, and, as one might expect, it has its share of spacious estate-style homes.

Increasingly, the neighborhood's reputation for being largely affluent has grown. Many in the larger surrounding communities mistakenly assume that this perceived affluence must, by association, be reflected in our congregation as well. Over the years, the occasional comment has been made that, though having once considered visiting our church, the option was ruled out because of a misguided assumption that they would not "fit in." In reality, the majority of our congregation comes from outside the immediate neighborhood and is exclusively middle-class.

Our church might also have been viewed as a church under assault. For a number of years, it was the victim of an eminent domain process, which repeatedly became a topic of interest before, during, and after. It was covered by the Fort Myers News Press and the local ABC, NBC, and CBS news affiliates. We survived, but only after being brutalized by the Florida Department of Transportation. Financial constraints imposed in the settlement process led to our church's two buildings being cut up into five separate pieces and relocated just across the street and slightly east of its original location. In the midst of one of our most active hurricane seasons, most infamous for Hurricane Charlie, our buildings were left open and exposed to severe weather conditions. Meanwhile, the community watched in disbelief.

Our church's recent history demonstrates these strengths: First, there is loyalty, stability, and a cooperative spirit. Our congregation remained supportive through a very long-term, difficult, and uncertain period of eminent domain, and contributed hundreds of volunteer hours. Second, we have debt-free facilities, a good financial base, and generous contributors. Eminent domain left the church nearly \$500,000 short of the needed funds. Our congregation contributed well over \$200,000 toward retiring that deficit. This absence of debt leaves greater freedom to fund evangelism. Third, we have attractive facilities and grounds. With the relocation of our facilities, we were able to implement

interior and exterior renovations that have greatly improved curb appeal. Fourth, we enjoy adequate space in grounds and parking. Fifth, our community is growing. Sixth, our church has a good blue collar/white collar mix.

The weaknesses of our church are apparent in the data and demographics previously described. They are as follows: first, we have a poor age mix. The older the membership, the more difficult it becomes to attract younger families. Second, we suffer from poor visibility. Out of sight is out of mind. Third, attendance and membership have peaked. Revitalizing a plateaued church is not easy. Fourth, children and youth ministry is minimal. Fifth, most members have been Christians for a long time—a negative influence on evangelistic potential. Additionally, overcoming a sense of congregational drift is an issue to be addressed. Though the Great Commission may be phrased in different ways from church to church, it all comes back to Matthew 28:19-20. While our members may be aware of this purpose, there needs to be clearer leadership, bringing direction and thereby cohesiveness with an identifiable strategy for the execution of that purpose.

Our church desires breakout. The land it currently sits on is vital to that goal and key to our church growth strategy. It was purchased for its promise of future frontage on the proposed six-lane highway. This road project necessitated the earlier mentioned eminent domain proceedings. It was a major setback when unexpectedly, due to rising costs, construction was delayed indefinitely. Finally, after five years of waiting and uncertainty, funding from the stimulus package put it back on the calendar. Ground breaking took place in October of 2009. The deadline for completion is October of 2012. With its completion the benefit will be excellent exposure.

This new frontage is a unique opportunity to literally “breakout.” It is an opportunity to break out of seclusion, increase visitor flow, and grow. It is also an opportunity to reinvent ourselves as a regional church. It is an opportunity to drop the baggage that has come with false public perceptions, linking us to an “exclusive” neighborhood. To distance ourselves further from that association, we have changed our

name from Briarcliff Baptist Church to Parkway Baptist Church. Briarcliff is the name of the adjacent community. Parkway is a regional name reflecting our future location on the new Metro Parkway.

Rather than waiting for completion of the parkway, now is the time to pursue church health and vitality. We must be organized and positioned to capitalize upon new growth potential. With the promise of excellent visibility, we can very realistically project a new future. It is a future that we must plan and prepare for now. An emphasis upon evangelistic praying is part of that preparation.

### **Rationale**

Many churches today have embraced the “purpose driven” concept, popularized by Rick Warren in *The Purpose Driven Church*.<sup>12</sup> Others boast themselves to be “Bible driven” churches. Obviously, both purpose and biblical truth are essential to effective church ministry. We forget, however, that the early church was birthed in a prayer meeting. After Pentecost, the young church continued in prayer, and, when prayer was jeopardized by other ministries, the apostles quickly reacted to preserve its primacy. If anything, the early church was driven by a triage of all three: purpose (the Great Commission), the Bible, and prayer.

Sadly, the great neglect of many churches is prayer. Churches are driven by programs, methods, personalities, finances, traditions, and even buildings. Some simply ride along with the status quo. Depending upon the precise moment in our history, our church has been driven to one degree or another by many of these things. Still, our church has failed to achieve significant progress in advancing the Great Commission within our neighborhood and community, as have our members among their friends and acquaintances. Once again the words of E. M. Bounds come to mind: “The Holy Spirit

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<sup>12</sup>Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995).

does not flow through methods, but through men. He does not come on machinery, but on men. He does not anoint plans, but men—men of prayer.”<sup>13</sup>

The biblical and historical pattern is that both private and corporate prayers are critical to the advancement of the gospel. If Parkway Baptist Church is to experience God’s power sufficiently, we must restore a lost emphasis upon prayer. God’s vision for the world can only be fulfilled through the Body of Christ. A strategic way for the church to pursue it is through evangelistic prayer. To the churches of the United States where serious prayer, and particularly corporate prayer, have all but disappeared, this emphasis is needed.

Research teams at the Billy Graham School of Missions and Evangelism concur. They have surveyed thousands of growing churches. One consistent trait remains constant in almost every such church. It is prayer. Growing churches have praying people, and they are led by praying pastors. Prayer is non-negotiable in reaching nonbelievers.<sup>14</sup>

Though Parkway Baptist Church of Fort Myers, Florida, has historically placed a strong emphasis on the ministry of the Word, congregational participation in organized evangelistic efforts had been all but missing. In addition, prayer had become more of an “add-on” to existing meetings and programs than the fuel that fired the engine. The training provided by this project not only attempted to promote coordinated prayer efforts in the church, but it also attempted to train members to reach out actively to nonbelievers through relational prayer witnessing. The desire was to incorporate prayer into the corporate church and individual believer’s lifestyle, producing an approach to evangelism that would be effective and non-threatening. The hope was that prayer itself would become

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<sup>13</sup>Bounds, *Power through Prayer*, 10.

<sup>14</sup>Charles E. Lawless, *Serving in Your Church Prayer Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 27.

its own kind of evangelism program, which could be field-tested and evaluated for effectiveness.

### **Definitions and Limitations**

The purpose of this project was to train the people of Parkway Baptist Church to pray evangelistically. In doing so, the goal was to integrate evangelism and prayer, producing a more effective outreach for Christ. In a report entitled *Toward the Conversion of England*, English Archbishop William Temple defined evangelism in these terms, “To evangelize is to present Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, that men shall come to put their trust in God through him, to accept him as their Savior, and serve him as their King in the fellowship of his church.”<sup>15</sup> This definition itself placed a limitation upon this project. It must be conceded that the effectiveness of evangelism depends entirely on the work of the Holy Spirit. We cannot force the issue of conversion to create “success.” The measure of this project’s success, therefore, was the degree to which church members became more active in praying and reaching out evangelistically, and not by the number of converts that might ensue.

In a formal definition, the Westminster Shorter Catechism states, “Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God, for things agreeable to His will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgement of His mercies.”<sup>16</sup> God’s will in evangelism is “not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Pet 3:9). He “wants all men to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim 2:4). By praying evangelistically, we align our desires with His, pleading “for things agreeable to His will.” These two disciplines of evangelism and prayer go hand in hand.

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<sup>15</sup>William Temple, cited in Michael Green, *Evangelism through the Local Church: A Comprehensive Guide to all Aspects of Evangelism* (Nashville: Oliver-Nelson, 1990), 9.

<sup>16</sup>Westminster Shorter Catechism, cited in John D. Hannah, “Prayer and the Sovereignty of God,” *Bibliothecasacra* 136 (1979): 345.

Project guidelines limited this project to sixteen weeks. This restricted the extent to which we were able to connect relationally with the community. Canning Hunger thru Neighborhood Connections, an outreach program to be described in greater detail later, required repeated doorstep visits.<sup>17</sup> This program advises that each visit be separated by no less than eight weeks. Due to the sixteen-week limitation, our visits were separated by a minimum spacing of six and seven weeks respectively, and restricted to three. This limitation allowed time to assess success in meeting people but not so much in growing relationships over a longer period of time. It allowed only one opportunity to verbally solicit prayer requests, but this single opportunity still provided a basis upon which to measure openness.

### **Research Methodology**

The first goal was that members would come to understand New Testament principles that are foundational to evangelistic praying. A sermon series, which addressed head-on the longstanding debate regarding free will and the sovereignty of God in salvation, helped achieve this goal. The series advanced and defended the view that prayers for the salvation of the lost are in theological agreement with Scripture. Further, these messages showed that the practice of such prayer is consistent with the life of Jesus, the Apostle Paul, and the early church. Scriptural principles, methods, and guidelines were identified and applied, with appropriate exhortation.

The second goal was to stimulate a burden for the lost that would compel church members to engage actively in evangelistic praying, both privately and corporately. At the beginning of this project, members completed a survey designed to encourage soul-searching and spiritual evaluation. The desire was to evoke an honest assessment of

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<sup>17</sup>Neighborhood Connections, “Canning Hunger thru Neighborhood Connections” [online]; accessed 7 July 2011; available from <http://www.neighborhoodconnections.org/index.html>; Internet.

the corporate condition of our church and to prompt personal self-inventory as well. Awareness of neglect would hopefully bring conviction and give birth to prayer. The hope was that this reminder of God's intent, and how short we fall, would create deep dissatisfaction with the status quo, promoting change. After completion of this project, the same survey was administered a second time, and the results compared. As a measure of the people's readiness to pray for the lost, prayer commitment cards were distributed. These cards were issued and tabulated in the early stages of the project's implementation. They solicited a commitment to pray for at least two individuals daily for a period of ninety days.

The third goal was to equip members with useful skills that would promote confident evangelistic praying. The aforementioned survey became dual in its function, serving as a useful before and after measure of improvement. Attendance in the sermon series was encouraged. The purchase of excellent how-to resources, made available to the church, also encouraged and promoted skill development and acquisition. After their display on a book table in the main foyer, they are now housed in the church library. Opportunities, incorporated within the context of corporate prayer meetings, also helped develop new skills and enhance existing skills. Theories and principles were put into practice, with an effort to ease people out of their comfort zones and actually involve more in praying verbally in group settings.

The fourth goal was to take prayer and make prayer itself a program for evangelism. To accomplish this goal, this project adopted, adapted, and integrated two existing programs. Praying for You introduced the people to, and instructed them in, the concept of relational prayer witnessing.<sup>18</sup> This approach to evangelism capitalizes upon the fact that very few people are offended by an offer to pray for them. Prayer becomes

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<sup>18</sup>Howard Tryon, "Praying for You: Equipping Churches in Relational Prayer Witnessing" [online]; accessed 9 November 2010; available from <http://www.prayingforyou.org>; Internet.

an opportunity to begin a spiritual relationship. The unbeliever is asked if there might be a need in his or her life for which prayer can be made. Once the offer of prayer is made and accepted, the unbeliever shares a request for prayer in a needed area of life. In a most natural way, a door is opened for a growing relationship. After a few weeks, the unbeliever can be reminded that prayers have been faithfully offered up for him or her, and an inquiry made as to the status of that need. When done genuinely, intentionally, and prayerfully, this approach encourages meaningful relationship building, as conversations are taken to a deeper level. Such a relationship opens the door to evangelistic opportunities. Once introduced to the concept and trained in the technique, relational prayer witnessing can be utilized as a lifestyle approach to evangelism.

This program did not stand alone, however. For the purpose of this project, it was launched in tandem with a second program, which had been chosen to compliment, expand upon, and merge with the first. Canning Hunger thru Neighborhood Connections<sup>19</sup> creates a context in which the techniques taught in Praying for You can be practiced. It is a program that capitalizes upon the fact that everyone is concerned about feeding the hungry. Feeding the hungry is a thoroughly biblical concept, something we are commanded to do, and it is a “common-ground” concern that is shared with most of the unsaved people in the world. Rather than approaching the lost as “targets” for a church’s outreach efforts, feeding the hungry allows a church to come alongside them as partners, asking them to help meet hunger needs in the community. This approach is a way of coming together and opening doors for evangelism with which both the church member and the neighbor can accept and feel comfortable.

Canning Hunger thru Neighborhood Connections was modified and customized to accommodate and more directly target our church’s goals. These

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<sup>19</sup>Neighborhood Connections, “Canning Hunger thru Neighborhood Connections.”



modifications will be addressed in chapter 4. The marriage of the two programs itself comprised a significant adaptation. Their strengths are uniquely suited for each other. The two working in conjunction is an innovation unique to this project.

Through this outreach, church members found themselves periodically knocking on doors in our church's neighborhood and collecting canned goods to feed the hungry. Each participant received, as his or her assignment, the same section of homes to visit each time. By the third visit, with growing acquaintance and familiarity, volunteers became confident enough to ask for any prayer requests residents might be willing to share. Hopefully, neighbors would share significant needs, and participants would find themselves praying for our community in an entirely different way—if not for the first time. In the course of these neighborhood visits, many did make food donations, and relationship building began. Canning Hunger thru Neighborhood Connections also provided an official church-sponsored, organized structure in which the Praying for You concepts could be practiced and effectiveness monitored, as part of an official church program of evangelism.

The fifth goal, increasing my own effectiveness in evangelism through greater attention to my own prayer life, came as I did just that. In preparation for the implementation phase of this project, a foundation of personal prayer was critical, even in advance of the project itself. As a measure of success, a personal prayer journal tracked and recorded my progress throughout the entire sixteen-week period. An accountability partner, enlisted to support me in my goal, provided an added measure of accountability.

### **Conclusion**

Notable in the early church was its reputation in the community. Acts 2:47 describes them as “. . . enjoying the favor of the people.” Additionally, it notes, “And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” Here is a strategy for the church to “enjoy the favor” of its neighborhood. In a national survey unchurched adults were questioned as to what they thought the church could be doing to more effectively

fulfill its purpose. The vast majority replied that “the church ought to do more to alleviate poverty and hunger.”<sup>20</sup> This is a goal that is consistent with the commands of Scripture to feed the hungry. The prophet Isaiah wrote, “Feed the hungry and help those in trouble. Then your light will shine out from the darkness” (Isa 58:10, NLT). “In the same way,” Jesus said, “let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Matt 5:16).

Hopefully, this project would help our church establish a reputation for good works that might become a platform from which to share the gospel through positive neighborhood connections. It was a way of moving from “prayer walking to neighbors talking.”<sup>21</sup> At the outset of this project, my prayer is that our actions will give credibility to our message. Most of all, it is hoped that the need for evangelistic praying as a lifestyle, and as an effective tool of outreach, will be indelibly impressed upon the members of Parkway Baptist Church, being incorporated into their lives.

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

CHAPTER 2  
THE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL PRECEDENT  
FOR EVANGELISTIC PRAYING

**Evangelistic Praying Is Consistent with the  
Examples of Scripture**

Is there a biblical precedent for evangelistic praying in Scripture? If the answer to this question is yes, then, regardless of any theological questions that may be raised, it becomes apparent that such praying is incumbent upon every believer. The truth of the matter is this: Jesus, the apostle Paul, and the early church are all examples of people who prayed evangelistically. Each is a powerful case study, leading to one conclusion—effective evangelism is inseparable from prayer.

**Jesus and Evangelistic Praying**

Jesus is depicted in the role of an itinerant rabbi who is very much the evangelist. His ministry is summarized in three words—teaching, preaching, and healing. Matthew summarizes the breadth and reach of Jesus’ ministry:

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.’ (Matt 9:35-38)

Jesus’ ministry announced and introduced “the good news of the kingdom.” This kingdom was both present and future. Though the Kingdom is ultimately future, its formation began with Jesus and his ministry. While it would one day come fully, the kingdom was invading now through him. It was a kingdom made available to those who would receive the greatest blessing of the kingdom—the forgiveness of sins. Such

forgiveness would come to all who through repentance and confession of sin would receive Jesus as their promised Messiah, the Savior and Lord.<sup>1</sup>

“Good news” (*euangelion*) is itself an evangelistic term. W. A. Vine writes, The Eng. word gospel, i.e. good message, is the equivalent of *euangelion* (Eng., Evangel). In the N.T. it denotes the good tidings of the Kingdom of God and of salvation through Christ, to be received by faith, on the basis of His expiatory death, resurrection, and ascension, e.g., Acts 15:7; 20:24; 1 Pet. 4:17).<sup>2</sup>

Jesus then is certainly being pictured here in the role of an evangelist.

Not surprisingly, in the course of this passage, the reader discovers an evangelistic need. The crowds are vast and the villages are many. Reaching a population and a geographical area so extensive requires many workers. This need leads to the commissioning of the Twelve and also to the subsequent discourse (Matt 10:1-4; 5-42).<sup>3</sup> Of this connection R. V. G. Tasker writes, “It might not be unreasonably supposed, from the way the evangelist arranged these sayings, that all of them were spoken by Jesus when He sent out the twelve men, whose names are recorded in 10:2-4, on a mission through Palestine.”<sup>4</sup>

In its most literal sense, this account exemplifies incarnational evangelism.<sup>5</sup> Jesus is in the towns and in the villages, shoulder-to-shoulder with the people, eye-to-eye,

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<sup>1</sup>Darrell L. Bock, *The Kingdom of God in New Testament Theology: The Battle, The Christ, The Spirit-Bearer, and the Returning Son of Man* [on-line]; accessed 6 June 2011; available from <http://bible.org/article/article/kingdom-god-new-testament-theology-battle-christ-spirit-bearer-and-returning-son-man>; Internet.

<sup>2</sup>W. E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (McLean, VA: MacDonald, n.d.), s.v. “*euangelion*.”

<sup>3</sup>D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, in vol. 8 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein and J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 235.

<sup>4</sup>R. V. G. Tasker, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*, The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1961), 102-03.

<sup>5</sup>For a discussion on incarnational evangelism, see Alvin Reid, *Evangelism Handbook* (Nashville: B & H, 2009), 362-64.

very much living and breathing at their level, making himself a part of their lives. He was in the streets, in their homes, and in their synagogues. He was leading his disciples. He himself was going about, encompassing the whole region of Galilee. Leading, going, encompassing—all of these different nuances are embraced by the word *periago*.<sup>6</sup> The word very much puts Jesus in the midst of the people. It is God coming to His creation. The Word now flesh has come to His own to seek and to save that which is lost (John 1:14; Luke 19:10).

Jesus clearly views the crowds as lost. Barclay writes,

The word that we have translated *bewildered* is *eskulmenoi*. It can describe a corpse which is *flayed* and *mangled*; someone who is *plundered* by rapacious men, or *vexed* by those without pity, or treated with *wanton insolence*; someone who is utterly *wearied* by a journey which seems to know no end. The word that we have translated *dejected* is *errimenoi*. It means *laid prostrate*.<sup>7</sup> It can describe a man prostrated with drink, or a man laid low with mortal wounds.<sup>7</sup>

This description of their spiritual condition is tragic. The added reference to “sheep without a shepherd,” taken in conjunction with Matthew 10:6 (“Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel”), clearly identifies the people of Israel as lost sheep.

Israel’s lost condition qualifies them as a great harvest field. The critical nature of their condition as described by Luke seems to constitute a crisis of such degree as to render them open and receptive to the gospel—ripe for the harvest.<sup>8</sup> For the gospel, crisis is always an opportunity. With the multiplicity of crises current today, the modern church would do well to view its own world through the same lens.

Jesus was deeply moved by the lost condition of his nation and his people.

“When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them” (Matt 9:36a). Barclay writes,

The word which is used for *moved with compassion* (*splagchnistheis*) is the strongest word for pity in the Greek language. It is formed from the word *splagchna*, which

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<sup>6</sup>Vine, *Vine’s Expository Dictionary*, s.v. “*periago*.”

<sup>7</sup>William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The Daily Bible Series, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975), 355-56. Emphasis in original.

<sup>8</sup>Tasker, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*, 103.

means the *bowels*, and it describes the compassion which moves a man to the deepest depths of his being. In the gospels, apart from its use in some of the parables, it is used only of Jesus (Matt 9:36; 14:14; 15:32; 20:34; Mark 1:41; Luke 7:13). When we study these passages, we are able to see the things which moved Jesus most of all.<sup>9</sup>

One of the most powerful and gripping observations derived from this passage is that evangelistic praying begins with exposure. With exposure to people comes awareness of need. Jesus was most frequently moved by compassion when he was with people—individuals and crowds.

Moved with compassion, Jesus did what he could to meet their needs, especially their need for salvation. With all his heart, he strove to mobilize others in reaching the lost. To that end, he solicited prayer. He says, “Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field” (Matt 9:38).

In this instance, it was not solicitation to intercede for lost individuals directly, but prayer requesting more workers—laborers who would reach the lost. Praying for workers is evangelistic praying in the truest sense. Here is something thoroughly biblical that every follower of Jesus can do. Prayer is a starting point for mobilizing believers to reach the lost. Indeed, it is incumbent upon all believers. Christ’s desire is voiced in the imperative. It is a matter of obedience to a command, not compliance to a request. Alvin Reid states the lesson learned:

We should pray that God would awaken believers to the need of the world for the gospel. We must pray for God to call out those who would go to the ends of the earth proclaiming Christ. We should pray for God to raise up more ministers of the gospel who would lead churches to have a gospel passion.<sup>10</sup>

Within the immediate context, the answer to the Lord’s own prayer for workers is evident (Matt 10:1-5). The answer comes in the form of twelve apostles, formally appointed, commissioned, and sent out into the villages and households of Israel. That God used these men as powerful agents in reaching the lost is a matter of historical record.

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<sup>9</sup>Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 354. Emphasis in original.

<sup>10</sup>Reid, *Evangelism Handbook* (Nashville: B & H, 2009), 178.

In the final hours of his life Jesus prayed directly for the lost to be saved. Isaiah predicted that the Messiah would bear the sin of many and make intercession for transgressors (Isa 53:12). This prophetic word was partially fulfilled with Jesus' prayer from the cross. F. Delitzsch writes,

Every word stands here as if written beneath the cross on Golgotha. And this is the case with this clause before us, which was fulfilled (though not exclusively) in the prayer of the crucified Saviour: 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they do' (Luke xxiii. 34).<sup>11</sup>

Can anyone successfully argue that his intercession on the cross was not evangelistic prayer? The "them" for which Christ prayed were lost people. There is no mistaking Jesus' intent. He is praying for a repentance that would bring complete forgiveness, leading to eternal salvation. William Hendriksen writes, "'Forgive them' means exactly that. It means 'Blot out their transgressions completely. In thy sovereign grace cause them to repent truly, so that they can be and will be fully pardoned.'"<sup>12</sup>

While some may argue that nowhere in Scripture is there a specific command to pray for the salvation of lost, there is this example of Jesus' own intercession. His intercession on behalf of sinners sets a clear precedent for believers to follow. Could it be said that Jesus' prayer on the cross directly resulted in the salvation of many? Hendriksen responds,

Part of the answer may well be the fact that Jerusalem's fall did not occur immediately. For a period of about forty years the gospel of salvation full and free was still being proclaimed to the Jews. Not only that but also; *many were actually led to the Lord*. On the day of Pentecost three thousand were converted (Acts 2:31, 42); a little later thousands more (Acts 4:4). Even 'a large number of priests became obedient to the faith' (Acts 6:7). Not the people as a whole, but many families and individuals were converted.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes, vol.7, trans. James Martin (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1982), 340.

<sup>12</sup>William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 1028.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.* Emphasis in original.

Jesus' prayer for his crucifiers had a profound influence upon Stephen, the first Christian martyr. This influence is evident in the comparison with Zechariah, the last of the Old Testament martyrs, who as he lay dying said, "May the Lord see this and call you to account" (2 Chr 24:22). In contrast, Stephen, with words clearly reflective of his Savior, cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them" (Acts 7:60). As with Jesus, this prayer also was a prayer for salvation. It was a prayer requesting forgiveness for the lost, those who were stoning him. Just as Jesus' prayer was a prayer for the lost, so too was this prayer.

Stephen's prayer was not only consistent with Jesus' example, but was in compliance with Jesus' command to "pray for those who persecute you" (Matt 5:44). Just as the evangelistic nature of Jesus' prayer from the cross was evidenced in the conversion of many who previously had shouted, "Crucify! Crucify!" (John 19:6), the evangelistic nature of Stephen's prayer is evidenced in the conversion of Saul. Saul's participation in the stoning of Stephen was a detail noted by Luke for the reader's instruction. Like a fire of coals on his head, Stephen's prayer turned Saul to repentance resulting in his conversion. Augustine said, "The Church owes Paul to the prayer of Stephen."<sup>14</sup>

### **The Church and Evangelistic Praying**

Evangelistic prayer was very much a part of the early church. This practice is apparent in a brief survey of the early chapters in the Book of Acts. First, the New Testament church was birthed in prayer. There was concerted prayer in the upper room preceding and leading up to the Day of Pentecost (Acts 1:14; cf. 2:1). The result was threefold: Initially the Holy Spirit came upon them with power (2:2-4). Then they proclaimed the good news (2:4, 6; 14-40). Finally, about three-thousand believed and were baptized (2:41). Note Luke's clear linkage here of prayer with evangelism.

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<sup>14</sup>Cited by William Barclay, *The Acts of the Apostles*, The Daily Bible Series, vol. 7 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975), 62.



In Acts 2:42, along with “the apostles’ teaching,” “fellowship,” and “the breaking of bread,” the church devoted itself to prayer. Their prayers resulted in “enjoying the favor of all the people.” Their good reputation was an effective platform for evangelism, giving credibility to the message. Not coincidentally, in the same verse, it is reported, “The Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved” (2:47).

Acts 4:1-31 records yet another occasion for prayer in the early church.

Everett Harrison writes,

This section has three successive developments: the arrest of Peter and John by Jewish authorities and their overnight imprisonment (vv. 1-4); the hearing before the Sanhedrin the following morning, featuring Peter’s speech (vv. 5-12); and the deliberations of the Council, leading to the decision to release the apostles but also to forbid further preaching in the name of Jesus (vv. 13-22).<sup>15</sup>

Faced with an enemy counter-offensive, the church united in prayer: “They raised their voices together” (Acts 4:24). There is a spiritual dynamic at work in united prayer that is worth noting. Ecclesiastes 4:12 states, “Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.” Like a cord bound tightly, the church came together in a united front, devoting themselves to prayer. The church prayed for boldness (Acts 4:29) and signs and wonders (Acts 4:30). Again, there was a threefold result, with evangelism being prominent: The place was shaken; they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God boldly (Acts 4:31).

Given the diminished role of corporate prayer in the church today, there is a lesson for modern ears. Thom Rainer writes,

In one of my early research projects on American churches, I discovered that most evangelistic churches placed a strong emphasis on corporate prayer. Those churches did not simply depend on the latest evangelistic program to reach their communities; they prayed in earnest for the salvation of persons, as well as offering many other intercessory needs.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Everett H. Harrison, *Acts: The Expanding Church* (Chicago: Moody, 1975), 79.

<sup>16</sup>Thom Rainer, *Do We Really Pray In Our Churches?* [on-line]; accessed 7 June 2011; available from <http://www.thomrainer.com/2011/04/do-we-really-pray-in-our-churches.php>; Internet.

Noteworthy is the absence of any prayer to be taken out of the battle. Never did it even cross their mind to obey the Sanhedrin's command not to "speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus." They were aware that without conflict there is no progress, no victory, and no new territory for the kingdom of Christ. Nor is there any prayer of reprisal. This is in accord with Jesus who said, "But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matt 5:44). Their only prayer is for enablement and divine attestation—the boldness to share God's Word and the miracles to confirm the word thus spoken.<sup>17</sup>

These two components of evangelistic prayer merit a closer examination. "Boldness" is a translation of the Greek word *parrhesia*. It is a compound consisting of the word *pas*, "all," and *rhesis*, "speech." It primarily denotes "freedom of speech, unreservedness of utterance," or "to speak without ambiguity, plainly." While all aspects of the word's meaning were certainly included in the church's prayer, the context indicates their primary emphasis was upon "the absence of fear in speaking boldly."<sup>18</sup> The word that is to be so forcefully spoken is the gospel. Earnst Haenchen writes, "*Lalein ton logon* is a technical term of the primitive mission and designates missionary preaching. 'Thy word,' the 'word of God' is the glad tidings of Jesus which God has the Apostles proclaim."<sup>19</sup>

The second request in the evangelistic prayer found here in Acts 4 is a petition for supernatural authentication. Such authentication of the messenger and the message was necessary in these early days, especially among the Jews who looked for signs (1 Cor 1:22). John said the miracles of Jesus were done so that the lost might "believe that Jesus

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<sup>17</sup>Harrison, *Acts*, 89.

<sup>18</sup>Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary*, s.v. *parrhesia*.

<sup>19</sup>Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971), 227.

is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you might have life in His Name” (John 20:31). Many believe that with the completion of the canon of Scripture, such signs and wonders ceased, having achieved their authenticating purpose. Others are at odds with this interpretation, arguing for the continuance of all such gifts. Regardless of one’s position, today’s church can pray together for the same result—that those who hear might be convinced and the word authenticated.<sup>20</sup>

In Acts 6 the church faced an administrative problem. In response to a dispute about the distribution of funds and supplies to the widows, seven men were appointed to bear the responsibility. The purpose of their appointment was to leave the apostles free to focus their energy on “prayer and the ministry of the word.” The context does not speak explicitly of evangelistic prayer; nonetheless, this dual emphasis yielded evangelistic results. Luke records, “So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7).

As the early church advanced from Jerusalem to Rome, seven “progress reports” further confirm the value of evangelistic prayer (Acts 2:47; 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20; 28:30, 31). In the last of these reports, Luke records the Apostle Paul’s status and that of the church: “For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 28:30-31). Similarly Barclay writes,

And so the Book of Acts comes to an end with a shout of triumph. In the Greek *without let or hindrance* are one word and that one word falls like a victor’s cry. It is the peak of Luke’s story. We wonder why Luke never told us what happened to Paul, whether he was executed or released. The reason is that this is not Luke’s

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<sup>20</sup>For a discussion of this debate from the cessationist viewpoint the reader may consult John MacArthur, *Does God Do Miracles Today?* [on-line]; accessed 7 June 2011; available from [http://www.gty.org/Resources/Sermons/90-56\\_Does-God-Do-Miracles-Today](http://www.gty.org/Resources/Sermons/90-56_Does-God-Do-Miracles-Today); Internet.

purpose. At the beginning Luke gave us the scheme of Acts when he told us Jesus commanded his followers to bear witness for him in Jerusalem and all over Judea and Samaria and away to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). Now the tale is finished; the story that began in Jerusalem rather more than thirty years ago has finished in Rome. It is nothing less than a miracle of God.<sup>21</sup>

### **Paul and Evangelistic Praying**

A link between prayer and evangelism in the life of Jesus and that of the early church is clearly demonstrable. This link continues with the Apostle Paul. His example teaches that evangelistic prayer is twofold. First, it involves intercession for the saved, which are tasked with the mission of reaching the lost. Much as Aaron and Hur held up the hands of Moses, thereby turning the tide of battle against the Amalekites (Exod 17:12), Paul repeatedly calls upon believers to uphold him with their prayers, tearing down strongholds opposed to his effective communication of the gospel. Paul's own circumstances, frequently soliciting such prayers while imprisoned, give testimony to the spiritual opposition already current. If the great apostle Paul needed such prayer, it is incumbent upon all believers to hold each other up faithfully in prayer.

As did the early church (Acts 4:29-31), Paul also requests prayers for "boldness" or *parresia* on his own behalf. "Pray also for me," he writes, "that whenever I open my mouth words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should" (Eph 6:19-20). Such prayer implies the presence of threat, intimidation, and resistance. Paul, as with Elijah (Jas 5:17), was a man like us and felt the need for prayer. His appeal is for intercession for himself personally—prayers for boldness to speak the word openly and free from intimidation.

Noting their similarities, Reid writes,

Certain truths emerge from these two chapters, Acts 4 and Ephesians 6: boldness to proclaim the gospel is a legitimate request to bring before God. Such boldness

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<sup>21</sup>Barclay, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 193. Emphasis in original.

comes only from God. It cannot be ‘worked up.’ Such boldness comes through the prayers of God’s people.<sup>22</sup>

The “words” that Paul prays might “be given” to him should be regarded as a “grave utterance.”<sup>23</sup> Earlier, Paul, always aware of the great responsibility entrusted to him, refers to the preaching of the gospel as a divine “necessity” that “is laid upon” him (1 Cor 9:16). Wood states that Paul’s request is framed in words that comprise “a common phrase for making a public address. It reflects the formal language of diplomatic procedure and means that he may have permission to speak, especially in regard to his appearance before imperial authorities—perhaps even the emperor himself.”<sup>24</sup> It may be that Paul, a prisoner of Rome, was anticipating his day in court. With his case already on the docket, he requests prayer that it not be a missed opportunity.

This understanding certainly fits his own self-identification as one who is an “ambassador in chains” (Eph 6:20). By extension, all believers are likewise ambassadors: “And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation” (2 Cor 5:19-20). With every opportunity that comes their way, believers need to pray for the right words and the boldness to declare the gospel confidently.

Whereas in Ephesians 6, Paul may already have had an opportunity in mind, in Colossians, using the idiom of an open door, Paul, now apparently without such opportunity, requests prayer for one. He writes, “And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should” (Col 4:3-4). Here again

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<sup>22</sup>Reid, *Evangelism Handbook*, 178.

<sup>23</sup>T. K. Abbott, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1897), 189.

<sup>24</sup>A. Skevington Wood, *Ephesians*, in vol. 2 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein and J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 90.

Paul desires clarity, but he also seeks an opportunity.

The figure of a door being opened for the gospel is not unfamiliar in the New Testament. It can be found in Acts where, after their first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas returned to the church in Antioch and reported “all that God had done through them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles” (Acts 14:27). In 1 Corinthians 16:9 Paul describes “a great door for effective work” that had “opened” to him, and also in 2 Corinthians 2:12 he shares how “the Lord had opened a door” for him “to preach the gospel” at Troas. Just as it is common in popular conversation today, this idiom must have been an expression current in Paul’s day as well. In each of the aforementioned verses an open door is synonymous with the idea of unhindered opportunity for the proclamation and dissemination of the gospel message.

In his instructions to Timothy yet another example of evangelistic praying is found in the life of Paul:

I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time. And for this purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle—I am telling the truth, I am not lying—and a teacher of the true faith to the Gentiles. (1 Tim 2:1-7)

In this passage Paul’s prayer is for environmental, political, and social conditions that are conducive to the spread of the gospel. Governments often present a barrier to the message. Prayers for one’s leaders may influence the creation of policies favorable to evangelism. Prayers for leaders to govern in a way that will allow believers to live out their faith peacefully and undisturbed support the church in its mission. Such an environment is conducive to a free flow of information and ideas wherein the gospel can flourish, allowing the messenger freedom to proclaim the message and unbelievers the freedom to make informed choices.

Also discernable within these verses is a subtle shift. A second emphasis emerges. Each of the previous Pauline passages have given examples of how evangelistic

prayers can be offered up for the messenger. Those prayers have been largely for the removal of impediments to the effective and free communication of the gospel itself. Evangelistic praying has been in support of the messenger who is commissioned with the good news—prayers for opportunity, clarity, and boldness. In the current passage, however, Paul requests prayers specifically *for* the salvation of the lost themselves.

The argument can be made that these prayers “for kings and all those in authority” are to include requests precisely for their personal salvation. A. R. Fausset explains,

As the destruction of Jerusalem drew near, the Jews (including those at Ephesus) were seized with the dream of freedom from every yoke; and so virtually ‘blasphemed’ (cf. 1:20) God’s name by ‘speaking evil of dignities’ (ch. 6:1; 2 Peter 2:10; Jude 8). Hence Paul, in opposition, gives prominence to the injunction that prayer be made for *all* men, especially for *magistrates* and *kings* (Titus 3:1-3). Some professing Christians looked down on all not Christians, as doomed to perdition; but Paul says *all men* are to be prayed for, as Christ died for all (v. 4-6).<sup>25</sup>

He also contends that “our Savior” is a title entirely appropriate to the matter at hand, as intercessions are to be made for salvation:

He who is ‘our Savior’ *is willing that all should be saved* (v. 4; Romans 5:18); therefore we should meet the will of God in behalf of others, by praying for the salvation of all men. More would be converted if we would pray more. He has actually saved *us* who believe, being ‘our Savior.’ He is willing that all should be saved, even those who do not as yet believe, if they will believe (cf. 4:10, Titus 2:11).<sup>26</sup>

That Paul prayed directly for the lost to be saved is readily apparent in yet another passage. In discussing Israel’s place in God’s redemptive program, Paul expresses his prayer for his own countrymen, the Israelites. In the clearest way possible he expresses prayer for their salvation. While one may not find any direct scriptural command to pray specifically for the salvation of the lost, Paul’s own example instructs us to be so engaged:

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<sup>25</sup>A. R. Fausset, *The Pastoral Epistles of Paul the Apostle to Timothy and Titus*, Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Old and New Testaments, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1871), 407. Emphasis in original.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.* Emphasis in original.

Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes. (Rom 10:1-4)

The Israelites in general were labeled by Paul as “zealous for God,” but, though sincere, they were sincerely lost. Their hope for salvation was fixed to the wrong object. They sought to establish their own righteousness, and thereby, salvation through their own good works. Human merit, however, cannot save. Theirs was a salvation of works, which is no righteousness at all. Beyond that, they looked to their descent from Abraham as meritorious (Matt 3:8-9).

In spite of their zeal, ancestry, and works, however, they were not saved. Paul laments, “I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel” (Rom 9:3). Paul expresses the salvation of the Jews as “my heart's desire” (Rom 10:1). His prayer to God for the Israelites “is that they may be saved” (Rom 10:1). Charles Hodge posits, “literally, ‘to salvation,’ as expressing the end object toward which his wishes and prayers tend.”<sup>27</sup>

This observation is important, especially in view of the proximity of Paul's prayer for the Israelites to Romans 9, with its instruction on election and divine sovereignty. Taking all such issues into account, Paul is still found praying for the lost as though prayer makes a difference even in the light of eternal decree. John Murray explains,

Here we have a lesson of profound import. In the preceding chapter the emphasis is upon the sovereign and determinative will of God in the differentiation that exists among men. God has mercy on whom he wills and whom he wills he hardens. Some are vessels for wrath, others for mercy. And ultimate destiny is envisioned in destruction and glory. But this differentiation is God's action and prerogative, not man's. And, because so, our attitude to men is not to be governed by God's secret counsel concerning them. It is this lesson and the distinction involved that are so eloquently inscribed on the apostle's passion for the salvation of his kinsmen. We violate the order of human thought and trespass the boundary between God's

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<sup>27</sup>Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1886), 334.



prerogative and man's when the truth of God's sovereign counsel constrains despair or abandonment of concern for the eternal interests of men.<sup>28</sup>

Paul's itemizes all the blessings and privileges his people, fellow Israelites enjoyed: "Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen" (Rom 9:4-5). In spite of all such privileges, however, he laments that they still were not saved. Their lost condition, he grieves, is a source "of great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart" (Rom 9:2). So deep was his anguish that, sounding much like Moses (Exod 32:32), he wishes that he might himself be accursed from Christ if only it would mean salvation for his people.

Clearly, both Moses and Paul understood what was at stake. Theirs was an example of extreme evangelistic praying. The seventeenth-century English Puritan Richard Baxter wrote,

Oh, if you have the hearts of Christians or of men in you, let them yearn towards your poor ignorant, ungodly neighbors. Alas, there is but a step betwixt them and death and hell; many hundred diseases are waiting ready to seize on them, and if they die unregenerate, they are lost forever. Have you hearts of rock, that cannot pity men in such a case as this? If you believe not the Word of God, and the danger of sinners, why are you Christians yourselves? If you do believe it, why do you not bestir yourself to the helping of others?<sup>29</sup>

The apostle Paul prayed for his people the Israelites. By example, he urges evangelistic prayers directly for people groups. Prayers can be made for the salvation of those in a family, a neighborhood, a workplace, a school, or a region. Prayers for salvation can target tribal, ethnic, and linguistic groups. Prayers can be made for vocational groups—actors, doctors, politicians, military, and so on. One might target

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<sup>28</sup>John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1965), 47.

<sup>29</sup>Cited in John MacArthur, *Do You Pray for the Lost?* [on-line]; accessed 8 June 2011; available from [http://www.gty.org/Resources/Print/Questions/QA060\\_Do-You-Pray-for-the-Lost](http://www.gty.org/Resources/Print/Questions/QA060_Do-You-Pray-for-the-Lost); Internet.

religious groups for prayer. The list seems endless—agnostics, atheists, the cults, the occult, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and the New Age. Believers should pray for those caught up in sexual sins like prostitution, homosexuality, and pedophilia. There are the homeless, the addicts, and the unemployed. These are all groups whose life situation might render them more receptive.<sup>30</sup>

It is not a reach, then, to say that when Paul endorses prayer for the salvation of people groups, implicit within it is an endorsement of prayers for the salvation of the individual or individuals within that group. This observation is illustrated in Paul's experience at Corinth. Corinth comprised a people group Paul sought to reach. He had encountered heated opposition in doing so. Consequently, the Lord appeared to him in a vision to strengthen him for continued service. "Do not be afraid," he said, "keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one is going to attack you and harm you, because I have many people in this city" (Acts 19:9-10). The "many people in this city" were named individuals known by God.

### **Evangelistic Praying Is Consistent with the Warnings of Scripture**

Scripture consistently reveals the hidden reality of a spiritual warfare being waged in the invisible realm. At the heart of such warfare is the battle for the souls of men and women. Two great powers allied together in opposition to humanity are the powers of darkness and the proclivities of humanity's own sin nature. Spiritual battles are fought with spiritual weapons (2 Cor 10:4), and, prayer can strike the winning blow. Andrew Murray writes, "When the Church shuts herself up to the power of the inner chamber, and

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<sup>30</sup>Scott Dawson, ed., *The Complete Evangelism Guidebook: Expert Advice on Reaching Others for Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006). *The Complete Evangelism Guidebook* contains 252 pages where "ordinary people" are broken down into 53 groups. Each group is addressed by a separate author who offers his or her expertise on how to reach that particular demographic with the gospel.

the soldiers of the Lord have received on their knees ‘power from on high,’ then the powers of darkness shall be shaken and souls will be delivered.”<sup>31</sup>

### **Evangelism Is a War Against the Powers of Spiritual Darkness**

Evangelistic praying is critical to victory in the battle to win the lost for Christ. This battle is dramatically illustrated in an account in the life of Jesus (Mark 9:14-29). Coming down from the Mount of Transfiguration with Peter, James, and John, Jesus arrived at a scene of confusion. A man having brought his demon-possessed son to the disciples for exorcism found the disciples powerless to do so. An intense argument with the teachers of the law ensued, with a curious crowd quickly gathering. After brief interaction with his father, Jesus cast out the spirit, curing the son. Later, going indoors with his disciples, they asked him privately, “‘Why couldn't we drive it out?’ He replied, ‘This kind can come out only by prayer’” (Mark 9:29).

The application of this story to evangelism is readily apparent. Satan sought to keep the boy in the throes of demonic possession. He had him in his grip, not easily relinquishing his prize. The disciples’ role in this story illustrates the challenge presented to the believer every time he seeks to convert an unbeliever. Satan will resist the effort fiercely. The disciples quickly learned this fact. Finding themselves completely powerless against such an overwhelming force, they suffered a humiliating defeat. When inquiry was made as to the reason for their failure, Jesus identified it as neglect of prayer.

Demonic possession, of course, is an extreme example; nonetheless, with evangelism the same rule applies: Pray! One might wonder how many more could be won to Christ if only fervent prayer were employed. With every attempt to share the gospel, the warning of the apostle Paul is needful: “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark

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<sup>31</sup>Andrew Murray, *The Prayer Life* (Chicago: Moody, 2011), 14.

world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Eph 6:12).

A first rule of warfare is to know one’s enemy. Taking inventory of the enemy shows that Satan’s effort to keep unbelievers in darkness is sobering. After instruction on false gospels and false apostles, Paul warns of Satan’s deception, identifying him as one who “masquerades as an angel of light” (2 Cor 11:14). He is also described as “the god of this age” who “has blinded the minds of unbelievers so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ” (2 Cor 4:4). He “prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Pet 5:8). Jesus warned, “When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart” (Matt 13:19). Paul had repeatedly attempted a trip to the church in Thessalonica to help them in their ministry and mission, but he laments that again and again “Satan stopped us” (1 Thess 2:18).

Additionally, Satan’s titles are fearsome. He is a “murderer from the beginning” and the “father of lies” (John 8:44). He is “the prince of this world” (John 16:11). He is “the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient” (Eph 2:2). Jesus stated that Satan had targeted Peter to “sift you like wheat” (Luke 22:31). James’ command that believers “resist the devil” assumes that he will attack (Jas 4:7). The title of “a roaring lion” (1 Pet 5:8) is well deserved.

With Satan so defined, evangelism is indeed a war against the powers of spiritual darkness. The presence of such an adversary calls for spiritual weapons (2 Cor 10:4). Paul’s call is for the Christian to “put on the full armor of God” (Eph 6:10-18). After delineating the pieces of armor, Paul concludes with four injunctions to prayer (Eph 6:18-20), ending with a request for believers to pray for a bold proclamation of the gospel. Prayer, then, is seen as an indispensable part of the armor of God and is linked to success in evangelism. Furthermore, Paul links this warfare to his own experience of chains and his battle to “fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel” (Eph 6:19). Paul felt himself under attack for the gospel and requested prayer. It was a battle to proclaim the

saving message of Christ, which ultimately led to his execution.

Instructive in this regard is Jesus' description of Satan as "the strong man." His "house" is his realm of control, and his "possessions" are people who are enslaved within that dark realm. "No one can enter" his kingdom to "carry off" his possessions "unless he first binds the strong man." "Then he can rob" the realm, releasing the enslaved victims (Mark 3:23-27).<sup>32</sup>

Also instructive is Jude 9 where the archangel Michael was sent to bury Moses' body and, in carrying out his mission, encountered resistance from Satan. Michael, though himself powerful and authoritative, did not presume upon his own strength. He "did not dare" dispute with Satan. Instead he conceded the battle to God and said, "The Lord rebuke you!"

The application for every believer in fighting spiritual battles, foremost of which is the struggle to win the lost, is not to trust in one's own strength, but first to "bind the strong man" with prayer. Do not presume upon one's own strength but prayerfully concede the battle to God, interceding fervently on the sinner's behalf. In the words of Martin Luther, "Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing."<sup>33</sup>

### **Evangelistic Praying Is War Against the Powers of the Sin Nature**

The power of the sin nature is such that man is enslaved by it and cannot break free of his own accord; nor does he have the will to do so (Rom 3:9-20). Robert Peterson explains, ". . . because of original sin, the will itself is now bent toward sin, so that we inevitably will to sin and act sinfully."<sup>34</sup> In tandem, C. Samuel Storms writes,

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<sup>32</sup>John D. Grassmick, *Mark*, The Bible Knowledge Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1983), 117.

<sup>33</sup>Cited from the lyrics of the hymn "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," written by Martin Luther and translated by Frederick H. Hedge.

<sup>34</sup>Robert A. Peterson, *Election and Free Will: God's Gracious Choice and Our Responsibility* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2007), 19.

No, there is ‘no one righteous,’ says Paul, there is ‘no one who seeks God’ (Rom 3:10-11). They can neither understand it nor accept it. If anyone repents, he will be saved. But none will repent, because none want to repent, unless God graciously brings life to their otherwise spiritually dead hearts.<sup>35</sup>

Paul said, “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing” (1 Cor 1:18). If the lost are to break free from the hold of the sin nature, God must, as stated by Paul, “grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth . . . that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will” (2 Tim 2:25-26).

Does this bondage mean that, in prayer, the concerned believer must so feverishly prevail upon the will of God as to tip the scales, disposing him toward a given individual with saving intent? Is it “a battle in which victory depends upon firing off a heavy enough barrage” of prayers?<sup>36</sup> No, such a scenario would diminish divine sovereignty, taking the initiative for bringing salvation out of God's hands. God alone can and does initiate salvation (Eph 1:4-5).

In spite of that fact, however, God's sovereignty in salvation in no way minimizes the importance of prayer. God grants repentance, but in his sovereignty he chooses to do so through human agency. In this regard, Paul writes,

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘how beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’ (Rom 10:14-15)

God foreordains sinners to salvation (Eph 1:4-6), and yet this reality does not negate the critical necessity for believers to bring them the gospel and to pray for their conversion. Storm writes, “The God who is pleased to ordain the salvation of sinners, based solely on his good pleasure, is no less pleased to ordain that he will save them in

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<sup>35</sup>C. Samuel Storms, “Prayer and Evangelism under God’s Sovereignty,” in *Still Sovereign*, ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Bruce A. Ware (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 316.

<sup>36</sup>J. I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1961), 28.

response to the prayers of others whom he has previously saved via the same means.”<sup>37</sup>

Herein rests a divine mystery: the God who ordains the end also ordains the means.

More will be said on this matter in the next section of this chapter, but for now, an analogy from Packer is helpful:

There is cogent evidence to show that light consists of waves, and equally cogent evidence to show that it consists of particles. It is not apparent how light can be both waves and particles, but the evidence is there, and so neither view can be ruled out in favor of the other; the seemingly two incompatible positions must be held together, and both must be treated as true. Such a necessity scandalizes our tidy minds, no doubt, but there is no help for it if we are to be loyal to the facts.<sup>38</sup>

Prayer and the proclamation of the gospel by believers are indispensable to the salvation of those whom God has previously ordained in eternity past to be saved.

Sovereign election and the essential place of prayer are illustrated side-by-side in a single passage of Scripture:

But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you. (2 Thess 2:13-14; 3:1)

Commenting upon this passage, Storms observes, “In virtually the same breath that he asserts divine election Paul requests prayer for the success of the gospel. The philosophical certainty inherent in the former truth did not, in Paul’s mind, reduce the moral urgency or the practical necessity of the latter.”<sup>39</sup> That there is a tension here seems apparent, however it is a tension Scripture sees no need to resolve. One must remain true to Scripture. In order to do so one must acknowledge that God is sovereign in salvation and human beings are equally responsible both to proclaim the gospel and to pray.

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<sup>37</sup>Storms, “Prayer and Evangelism under God’s Sovereignty,” 316.

<sup>38</sup>Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 19.

<sup>39</sup>Storms, “Prayer and Evangelism under God’s Sovereignty,” 314.

## **Evangelistic Praying Is Consistent with the Theology of Scripture**

### **The Duality of Sovereignty and Freewill**

If the Bible is one's guide, that God is in control of history and directs it to his own ends is clear. His sovereignty is widely displayed in the matter of election. God, for example, chose the nation of Israel (Deut 7:6-8). He chose the Messiah (Isa 42:1), and he chose the church (Rom 8:29-30). Given the defining roles played by these three entities in the history of humanity, they alone constitute irrefutable proof that God sovereignly rules over the affairs of humans. As stated so well in the Book of Daniel, "He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: 'What have you done?'" (Dan 4:35).

More specifically, as to the matter of God's sovereignty in salvation, Jesus said, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:44). He went on to say, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him" (John 6:65). These and numerous other passages may be cited.

Though God exercises complete control, humanity nonetheless is able to live and act freely. God acknowledges humanity's freedom by responding to their actions and prayers. Joshua prayed, and God responded by fixing the earth's rotation so the sun stood still. (Josh 10:12-14). Hezekiah prayed for healing from a terminal illness, and God responded by preserving his life, confirming it with a sign: "The shadow of the sun went back ten steps on the stairway" (2 Kgs 20:11). Calling his people to repentance, God made this promise: "If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land" (2 Chr 7:14).

More specifically, as to the matter of humanity's responsibility in salvation, Jesus said,

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the



world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. (John 3:16-18).

Likewise, Paul said to the Philippian jailer, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31).

God's sovereignty and humanity's freewill are taught side by side in the same Bible. Sometimes they are taught in the same text (Luke 22:22). Both must be held together as compatible truths without compromising one for the benefit of the other. Of this duality, Packer writes,

Man is a responsible moral agent, though he is *also* divinely controlled; man is controlled, though he is *also* a responsible moral agent. God's sovereignty is a reality, and man's responsibility is a reality too. This is a revealed antinomy in terms of which we have to do our thinking in evangelism.<sup>40</sup>

### **The Debate over Sovereignty and Freewill**

Historically, believers have been divided on the role played by human responsibility. On the one far extreme humanity remains passive while God irresistibly acts exclusively upon the elect, regenerating them and overriding their fallen human wills. People have no say in their own salvation, and, consequently prayers for another's salvation are misguided. God has already predetermined those who will be saved and will do as he has ordained with or without human involvement, including prayers. The danger inherent in this position has been reduced to this satirical jingle that leaves no room for impassioned prayers on behalf of the lost: "We are the Lord's elected few, Let the rest be damned; There's room enough in hell for you, We won't have heaven crammed!"<sup>41</sup>

At the other extreme humanity has no fallen nature to overcome and is at liberty to accept or reject Christ at will. While prayer may be exercised, with little resistance to

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<sup>40</sup>Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 23. Emphasis in original.

<sup>41</sup>Thomas K. Ascol, "The Great Commission Tension: God's Work and Ours," in *The Great Commission Resurgence*, ed. Chuck Lawless and Adam Greenway (Nashville: B & H, 2010), 150.

overcome, prayer for a sovereign God to act upon an unbeliever's fallen disposition may seem dispensable and not so urgent. Salvation is reduced to a choice that can be made at will. A popular tract written and widely distributed in the nineteenth century expresses this mentality. It was drawn up to look like a ballot. Printed at the top were the words, "Make your calling and election sure" (2 Pet 2:10). Then followed the question: "Will you be saved?" The ballot stated that God had voted yes while Satan had voted no. Then followed the words, "A TIE! Your vote must decide the issue." With that said, a third and final box was left blank—left blank so the reader could cast the deciding vote. Conversion was reduced to a personal decision exercised by the human will and nothing more.<sup>42</sup>

Given this scenario, the priority of prayer for a sovereign God to override humanity's natural wayward bent is not so urgent, and the appeal for his intervention is not so needful. People are ultimately the masters of their own fates. It is a decision for each one and each one alone to make. An individual can decide or not decide. Consequently, rather than reliance upon prayer, the emphasis falls upon the evangelist to coerce a decision through persuasive and manipulative techniques.

### **The Resolution of the Tension between Sovereignty and Freewill**

The dispute over sovereignty and freewill as articulated by Calvinism and Arminianism respectively dates back to the Synods of Dort (1618-1619) and the Arminian Remonstrance of 1610.<sup>43</sup> That these differences have long divided the church is a matter of historical record. With each successive generation, the debate resurfaces, and, though engaging the questions anew may result in sharper students of the Word, little is added to significantly advance the discussion. Sides are chosen with the historic differences remaining long-standing and sharply drawn.

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>David L. Allen and Steve W. Lemke, *Introduction in Whosoever Will* (Nashville: B & H, 2010), 3-7.

The opposing views as articulated above have been so described in order to accentuate the unbiblical extremes to which both groups can push their arguments. Fortunately, between these two extremes lies significant common ground, where reasoned minds can prevail. Packer, for example, writes,

It is instructive in this connection to ponder Charles Simeon's account of his conversation with John Wesley on Dec. 20th, 1784 (the date is given in Wesley's Journal): 'Sir, I understand that you are called an Arminian; and I have been sometimes called a Calvinist; and therefore I suppose we are to draw daggers. But before I consent to begin the combat, with your permission I will ask you a few questions. . . . Pray, Sir, do you feel yourself a depraved creature, so depraved that you would never have thought of turning to God, if God had not first put it into your heart?' 'And do you utterly despair of recommending yourself to God by anything you can do; and look for salvation solely through the blood and righteousness of Christ?' 'Yes, solely through Christ.' 'But, Sir, supposing you were at first saved by Christ, are you not somehow or other to save yourself afterwards by your own works?' 'No, I must be saved by Christ from first to last.' 'Allowing, then, that you were first turned by the grace of God, are you not in some way or other to keep yourself by your own power?' 'No.' 'What, then, are you to be upheld every hour and every moment by God, as much as an infant in its mother's arms?' 'Yes, altogether.' 'And is all your hope in the grace and mercy of God to preserve you unto His heavenly kingdom?' 'Yes, I have no hope but in Him.' 'Then, Sir, with your leave I will put up my dagger again; for this is all my Calvinism; this is my election, my justification by faith, my final perseverance: it is in substance all that I hold, and as I hold it; and therefore, if you please, instead of searching out terms and phrases to be a ground of contention between us, we will cordially unite in those things wherein we agree.'<sup>44</sup>

One of "those things wherein we agree" is in the need for evangelistic praying. It is a lowest-common-denominator issue that can bring both camps together. In addressing both sides, Packer asks,

How, then, do you pray? Do you ask God for your daily bread? Do you thank God for your conversion? Do you pray for the conversion of others? If the answer is 'no,' I can only say that I do not think you are yet born again. But if the answer is 'yes'—well, that proves that, whatever side you may have taken in debates on this question in the past, in your heart you believe in the sovereignty of God no less firmly than anyone else. On our feet we may have arguments about it, but on our knees we are all agreed. And it is this common agreement, of which our prayers give proof.<sup>45</sup>

Surprisingly, common ground might also be found in a strongly Calvinistic statement of faith. In a formal definition, the Westminster Shorter Catechism states, "Prayer is an

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<sup>44</sup>Packer, *Evangelism & the Sovereignty of God*, 13-14.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, 17.

offering up of our desires unto God, for things agreeable to His will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgement of His mercies.”<sup>46</sup> With this definition in mind, it is noteworthy that Scripture plainly teaches that the salvation of lost people is indeed something “agreeable to God’s will.” The apostle Paul writes, “This is good and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim 2:3-4). The apostle Peter is in agreement: “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Pet 3:9). However broadly or narrowly these verses may be interpreted as to their application, at the very least both camps do agree that God does desire lost people (whether all the elect particularly or all people generally) to be saved. Prayer for lost people, therefore, is an area of common ground upon which both camps can join together.

As to the necessity of evangelistic praying, no less of a Calvinist than A. A. Hodge, entertains the often asked question: “If from eternity past God has already decreed who will be saved and who will not, why bother to pray for the lost to be saved? What real difference can prayer make?” Hodge responds,

If God has eternally decreed that you should live, what is the use of your breathing? If God has eternally decreed that you should talk, what is the use of your opening your mouth? If God has eternally decreed that you should reap a crop, what is the use of sowing the seed? If God has eternally decreed that your stomach should contain food, what is the use of your eating?<sup>47</sup>

Hodge’s questions are clearly rhetorical and leave the answer self-evident.

Still, he insures that his point is made with this additional elaboration:

In order to educate us, God demands that we should use the means, or go without the ends which depend upon them. There are plenty of fools who make the transcendental nature of eternity and of the relation of the eternal life of God to the time-life of man an excuse for neglecting prayer. But of all the many fools in the

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<sup>46</sup>Cited in John D. Hannah, “Prayer and the Sovereignty of God,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 136, no. 544 (1979): 345.

<sup>47</sup>A. A. Hodge, *Evangelical Theology: A Course of Popular Lectures* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1890), 318.

United States, there is not one absurd enough to make the same eternal decree an excuse for not chewing his food or for not voluntarily inflating his lungs.<sup>48</sup>

Far from discouraging evangelistic praying, Packer celebrates the sovereignty of God as a powerful motivation to pray, preach, and reach out evangelistically:

So far from making evangelism pointless, the sovereignty of God in grace is the one thing that prevents evangelism from being pointless. For it creates the possibility—indeed, the certainty—that evangelism will be fruitful. Apart from it, there is not even the possibility of evangelism being fruitful. Were it not for the sovereign grace of God, evangelism would be the most futile and useless enterprise that the world has ever seen, and there would be no more complete waste of time under the sun than to preach the Christian gospel.<sup>49</sup>

The Arminian views prayer more loosely as tilting the scales more favorably toward a desired outcome, thereby, with assistance from divine agency, hopefully prevailing upon the will of the individual. Ben Henshaw explains,

Arminians believe that God works persuasively on the human heart through the gospel to bring about a faith response. Prayer can have a profound effect on that process. The Arminian can pray for more opportunities to witness. He or she can pray that God will use circumstances to bring the sinner to a point of desperation. We can pray that God will continue to reveal Himself to the individual. We can pray that God will remove obstacles and barriers to unbelief. All of these things will increase the chance of conversion.<sup>50</sup>

Meanwhile, the Calvinist more rigidly views prayer as the divinely decreed means toward a predetermined end. The two camps come at it from different directions, but they arrive at the same destination. Both agree to the necessity of evangelistic praying.

In the end, proponents of both views must admit to an element of divine mystery, allowing God to be God. The Bible states, “The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law” (Deut 29:29). What has been revealed to humanity is the responsibility of every believer to pray fervently, urgently, and universally. This

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

<sup>49</sup>Packer, *Evangelism & the Sovereignty of God*, 106.

<sup>50</sup>Ben Henshaw, “Examining Inconsistencies in Calvinistic Monergism Part 1: Intercessory Prayer” [on line]; accessed 8 September 2011; available from <http://evangelicalarminians.org/Determinism-Free-Will-Henshaw-Examining-Inconsistencies-in-Calvinistic-Monergism-Part-1%3AIntercessory-Prayer>; Internet.

responsibility is not dependent upon any speculation as to who may or may not be among the elect. Nor is it dependent upon one's ability to comprehend the relationship between evangelistic praying and predestination. Storms concludes, "God's command, not our curiosity, is the measure of duty."<sup>51</sup>

Though not perfect, the following illustration brings some clarification to the topic of evangelistic praying as it relates to the sovereignty of God and the freewill of man:

A riveter is placing rivets in the side of a steel ship. With one hand he holds up a rivet to the side of the ship; with the other he places a pneumatic gun to the rivet and drives it into the ship.

There are four elements involved in this illustration. First, the steel ship; second, the rivet; third, the riveter; and fourth, the pneumatic gun. Each plays a part. If the man could simply place the rivet to the steel ship and then push it in with his thumb, he could say, 'What a strong fellow I am!' But, of course, he cannot do this. He must rely upon the pneumatic gun.

This is analogous to the situation in witnessing. The steel ship represents the stony hearts and adamantine minds of unbelievers; the rivet represents the gospel; the riveter represents the witness; and the pneumatic gun represents the Holy Spirit—an appropriate illustration since 'pneumatic' comes from the Greek word for Spirit, '*neumatikos*.'

If we could by our own persuasiveness, argumentation, salesmanship, or logic press the gospel into someone's heart and mind, then we could say, 'What a wonderful evangelist I am!' but this we cannot do. Therefore, we must depend entirely upon the power of the Holy Spirit to drive the gospel home to the hearts of men.

If, however, we did not at least hold up the rivet, then the pneumatic gun would only make holes in the side of the ship. Thus God allows us the marvelous privilege of being involved in the greatest work in the world. Dr. John Gerstner put it this way: 'We can save no one, but unless we proclaim to them the gospel, God *will* save no one.'<sup>52</sup>

### Conclusion

The practice of evangelistic praying is not without biblical precedent. Examples are abundant. Jesus, the apostles, Stephen, the early church in Jerusalem, Paul, and others all modeled evangelistic praying. Sometimes they prayed that God would work directly

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<sup>51</sup>Storms, "Prayer and Evangelism under God's Sovereignty," 318.

<sup>52</sup>D. James Kennedy, *Evangelism Explosion*, rev. ed. (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1970), 45-6.

upon the sinner's inner heart and mind. At other times, they prayed for God to work indirectly by ordering external circumstances, making conditions conducive to a faith response. They prayed for each other, for deliverance, for guidance, for boldness, and for open doors. Such examples make evangelistic praying incumbent upon all believers.

Scripture also addresses the issue of spiritual warfare. Evangelism is at the heart of such warfare. Satan plants lies in the unbeliever's mind. He blinds their spiritual eyes so that they cannot discern the truth. Evangelism is to engage the enemy in battle. Satan's strategies necessitate prayer, making it not just reasonable but vital. Spiritual battles are fought with spiritual weapons. Prayer is foremost in the believer's arsenal. It is a dynamic that engages the power of God in the struggle.

Evangelistic praying comes with strong theological precedent, regardless of one's position as to God's sovereignty and man's freewill. Though theological questions may exist, it remains apparent that such praying is expected of all believers. In His sovereignty God chooses to bring people to faith through his use of human agency, but not through human agency alone. Prayer is the pipeline for divine power.

CHAPTER 3  
THE HISTORICAL PRECEDENT FOR  
EVANGELISTIC PRAYING

**Introduction**

The history of revival attests to the value of evangelistic praying. Historically, revival and evangelism go hand-in-hand. Genuine revival has always given rise to evangelism, but apart from prayer there is no revival. Revival and evangelism issue from the same source and flow together. Prayer is the spring from which divine power flows. Historically, there is little question that every great revival has been preceded by united prayer.<sup>1</sup> In turn, every great infusion of souls into the kingdom has followed upon the heels of revival. R. A. Torrey writes, “There have been revivals without much preaching; there have been revivals with absolutely no organization; but there has never been a mighty revival without mighty praying.”<sup>2</sup> This observation is a fact repeatedly attested to in the Bible and, as will now be shown, is abundantly evidenced in church history as well.

**The First Great Ingathering of Souls  
Can Be Traced to Prayer**

The previous chapter traced the effects of prayer in the early church. In spite of that, it bears repeating that the Holy Spirit birthed the church at Pentecost within the context and exercise of prayer (Acts 2). The resurrected Jesus told his disciples to go to

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<sup>1</sup>J. Edwin Orr, “Prayer and Revival” [on-line]; accessed 29 August 2011; available from [http://www.peacekey.com/1-1-a/OSAS/Revival\\_Prayer\\_1.HTM](http://www.peacekey.com/1-1-a/OSAS/Revival_Prayer_1.HTM); Internet.

<sup>2</sup>R. A. Torrey, “Revival: Never a Revival without Mighty Praying” [on-line]; accessed 29 August 2011; available from <http://bible.org/print/book/export/html/59>; Internet.



Jerusalem and wait for the promise from the Father of the Holy Spirit. He assured them that when the Holy Spirit came upon them they would receive power (Acts 1:4-5). For ten days the disciples waited in Jerusalem to be so equipped with power for ministry. All the while, their primary focus was upon prayer. After Jesus was taken up into heaven (Acts 1:9) the text tells that the apostles

. . . returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk from the city. When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers (Acts 1:12-14).

The very next verse indicates that the total number of praying disciples meeting in the upper room swelled to a 120 believers (1:15). The text describes them as constantly (*proskartereo*) engaged in prayer (Acts 1:14). W. E. Vine defines this word as follows: “. . . lit., to be strong toward (*pros*, towards, used intensively, and *kartereo*, to be strong), to endure in, or persevere in, to be continually steadfast with a person or thing.”<sup>3</sup> Such prayer, multiplied by 120, and sustained over ten days proved overwhelming.

The effects of such prayer were not long in coming. Revival followed prayer, and evangelism followed revival. Acts 2:1-4 tells the story:

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

On that same day, newly empowered by the Holy Spirit, Peter stood to preach. The text carefully notes, “Those who accepted his message and were baptized” numbered “about three-thousand” (Acts 2:40-41).

One could assume that such an outpouring of God's Spirit would assure freedom from trouble. That assumption yields little support from the Book of Acts. The evidence

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<sup>3</sup>W. E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (McLean, VA: MacDonald, n.d.), s.v. “*proskartereo*.”

speaks to the contrary, showing instead that what God works to build up, Satan works to tear down. Opposition, external and internal, was immediate, but the church, having been birthed in prayer, conquered through prayer. George W. Peters writes,

Prayer not only emboldened the witnesses; it also gave them the stamina to suffer. It wrought miracles, and it also brought forth the first missionaries, as recorded in Acts 13:1-4. Prayer becomes the subterranean channel for the flow of spiritual dynamic throughout the pages of the book of Acts. The very fact that it is mentioned more than thirty times in this book is evidence of its theological and practical dominance in the mind and life of the early church.<sup>4</sup>

Though on the divine side, one might argue that the birth of the church at Pentecost was eternally ordained, nonetheless, on the human side there is no minimizing the role of prayer.<sup>5</sup> Prayer played a critical role, continuing to do so with each successive wave of revival. God responded to prayer by providing the necessary power to fulfill the Lord's command and to carry the gospel beyond Jerusalem in ever-widening circles of conquest. J. Edwin Orr writes, "The reader of the Acts of the Apostles must surely notice that the church began to spread by extraordinary praying and preaching."<sup>6</sup>

### **Repeated Historic Ingatherings of Souls Can Be Traced to Prayer**

The united concert of prayer modeled in Act 2 finds its place in every great awakening. As Orr observes, "The events recorded in Acts have been repeated in full or lesser degree in the Awakenings of past centuries."<sup>7</sup> The following historical survey, though brief, bears out the truth of Orr's observation. May it also be a timely reminder of the church's need of biblical prayer for evangelistic purposes.

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<sup>4</sup>George W. Peter, *A Theology of Missions* (Chicago: Moody, 1972), 342.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>J. Edwin Orr, *The Fervent Prayer* (Chicago: Moody, 1974), ix.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., viii.

## **The Great Awakening of the Eighteenth Century Began with Prayer**

A remarkable revival movement swept through the British colonies of North America between 1720 and 1744. Historians call it the Great Awakening. The Great Awakening was of national, international, and eternal significance. In slightly more than 20 years (1720-1744), this revival “transformed the religious and moral character of North America and shaped the nature of American Christianity.” To call this revival remarkable is an understatement. Its social and religious impact is enduring, continuing to this day.<sup>8</sup>

While the Great Awakening is often traced to Jonathan Edwards, it can actually be traced much earlier. This event would not have happened were it not for the influence of Pietism.<sup>9</sup> William Sweet gives this definition:

By pietism, we mean a type of religion which places the principal emphasis upon what is often termed a religion of the heart, rather than a religion of the head. It is a religion which appeals primarily to the emotions. Its principle theme is redemption for individuals. Its object is to awaken men and women to a personal repentance.<sup>10</sup>

Pietism, with its emphasis on Christianity as a personal relationship, looked upon communion and dialog with God as vital to that relationship. It will become evident that the influence of pietism and its praying was in large measure preparatory to the Great Awakening.

Pietism as a movement developed through several stages, beginning with Puritan William Perkins (1558-1602). Under his influence, William Amesius and William Tellick became early leaders. Johann Arndt (1555-1621), yet another founder of Pietism, authored *True Christianity* (1605). This work, with its emphasis on experiential religion, greatly impacted Philip Spener and others. Spener, so inspired, went on to author *Pia Desideria*,

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<sup>8</sup>John Mark Terry, *Evangelism: A Concise History* (Nashville: B & H, 1994), 113.

<sup>9</sup>Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975), 1: 347-48.

<sup>10</sup>William Warren Sweet, *Revivalism in America* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1944), 24-25.

or “Pious Desires.” With this publication Pietism burst onto the European religious stage. *Pia Desideria* quickly became a classic on Christian spirituality. It was eventually adopted as a manual of reform for Lutheran churches. August Hermann Franke (1663-1727), a professor at Halle University and a close disciple of Spener, turned Pietism into a force for renewal, evangelism, and discipleship.<sup>11</sup> Malcolm McDow and Alvin L. Reid write,

Francke was an aggressive evangelist. His leadership led Pietism to become an activist movement strongly committed to world evangelization. Francke launched a seven-month evangelistic tour in a time when itinerant evangelism was unknown. Under his influence Halle became a center of awakening whose influence spread to England, Russia, and the Baltic. If Spener was the preacher of Pietism, Francke was the teacher. In 1712, awakening came among exiled Swedish troops in Siberia. Officers began corresponding with Francke, and Halle responded by sending booklets and medicine. Francke also corresponded with Cotton Mather of Boston concerning missionary efforts in America.<sup>12</sup>

The roots of Pietism lead to prayers much like those that birthed the church at Pentecost (Acts 2). The inspiration for such praying came largely through the leadership of Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700-60). Zinzendorf was born into an aristocratic family in Saxony, Germany. He came under the influence of Francke while attending school at Halle. He and four other students founded the “Order of the Mustard Seed.” Through prayer and accountability, this organization consecrated itself to God by avoiding all worldly influences and aggressively promoting missions. Sending the gospel to the whole world was a core value.<sup>13</sup>

Later in life Zinzendorf inherited an estate at Berthelsdorf, Germany. Fierce religious opposition had forced Protestant Christians of various denominational backgrounds to flee persecution. Zinzendorf offered his estate as a place of sanctuary for Protestant refugees from Germany, Moravia, and Bohemia. Its residents adopted

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<sup>11</sup>Malcolm McDow and Alvin L. Reid, *Firefall: How God Has Shaped History through Revivals* (Enumclaw, WA: Pleasant Word, 2002), 175-77.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 178.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 180.

Herrnhut, “the Lord’s watch” as the name for their new community. Herrnhut was a pioneer of prayer, mission, and church unity.<sup>14</sup>

Due to their diverse denominational backgrounds, all was not good. Disagreement was common, often issuing in bitter disagreements. Judgmental in matters of practice and argumentative in matters of doctrine, constant friction threatened their existence. Seeing the danger, some among them began to pray fervently to God for help. On May 11, 1727, at a worship service Zinzendorf spoke on the topic of Christian unity. This message inspired a movement of confession, repentance, and concerted prayer. Zinzendorf led by example, agonizing before God. His burden spread, inspiring many to join him in a united movement of prayer. The whole night of August 5, 1727 was spent in prayer. One week later, while observing the Lord’s Supper, a powerful outpouring of the Holy Spirit commenced. The community experienced spiritual awakening, and with it the Moravian Church was birthed.<sup>15</sup> Oswald Smith writes, “All are agreed that it was a definite, unmistakable outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the entire congregation, so wonderful that it was absolutely indescribable.”<sup>16</sup> James Montgomery, their most notable hymn writer, gave the following account:

They walked with God in peace and love, But failed with one another; While sternly for the Faith they strove, Brother fell out with brother; But He in whom they put their trust, Who knew their frames that they were dust, Pitied and healed their weakness. He found them in His House of Prayer, With one accord assembled; And so revealed His presence there. They wept with joy and trembled: One cup they drank, one bread they brake, One baptism shared, one language spake, Forgiving and forgiven. Then forth they went with tongues aflame, In one blest theme delighting The love of Jesus and His name, God’s children all uniting; That love our theme and watchword still, Thy law of love may we fulfill, and love as we are loved.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>A. Skevington Wood, “Awakening,” in *Eerdmans’ Handbook to the History of Christianity*, ed. Tim Dowley (Berkhamsted, England: Lion, 1977), 442.

<sup>15</sup>McDow and Reid, *Firefall*, 180.

<sup>16</sup>Oswald Smith, “The Moravian Revival” [on-line]; accessed 29 August 2011; available from [http://www.christlifemin.org/feature\\_articles/The%20Moravian%20Revival-2.pdf](http://www.christlifemin.org/feature_articles/The%20Moravian%20Revival-2.pdf); Internet.

<sup>17</sup>James Montgomery, cited by Oswald Smith, “The Moravian Revival.”

Forty-eight adult members committed themselves to an ongoing, unbroken chain of prayer. They rotated, taking turns in a tag-team effort, to insure that they covered all twenty-four hours of each day in prayer. Even the children held meetings. This practice grew, continuing for a century. Historians often refer to it as the One Hundred Year Prayer Movement of the Moravians.<sup>18</sup>

The power of those prayers is evident in what followed. Over the next 65 years the Moravian church sent out 300 zealous missionaries. Their revived German Pietism ultimately influenced a great revival that was on God's calendar for both Great Britain and America. Pietism, unequalled in its prayers, was a catalyst for the Great Awakening and the soul harvest that would follow in its wake.<sup>19</sup>

In the colonies of early eighteenth-century America, there was a growing hunger for the kind of influence Pietism could bring. Many churches across the colonies characterized themselves more by dead orthodoxy and dry formalism than by vibrant faith. Though adhering to the doctrines of the Reformation, the churches were not characteristically warm in their religious affections.<sup>20</sup> The Half-Way Covenant bears much of the blame for this condition. The Half-Way Covenant, as the name implies, was a compromise within the Puritan churches between those of Baptist and those of Presbyterian persuasion. It allowed baptized parents to bring their infants forward for baptism in the church. Many tied baptism and church membership together so closely that this practice allowed those who might never exercise personal faith in Christ to be counted among the membership of the church. The result was often consent to orthodox doctrine without a

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<sup>18</sup>McDow and Reid, *Firefall*, 180.

<sup>19</sup>Tony Cauchi, "The First Worldwide Awakening of 1725" [on-line]; accessed 29 August 2011; available from <http://www.revival-library.org/catalogues/1725ff/index1725.html>; Internet.

<sup>20</sup>Earle E. Cairns, *An Endless Line of Splendor* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1986), 31.

personal relationship. Nor was much of the preaching particularly personable. A formalistic style of delivery frequently left the messages deficient in passion and emotion.<sup>21</sup> Earle E. Cairns writes, “The most important factor in bringing about the Great Awakening was the decline of genuine religious experience.”<sup>22</sup> He explains that hearts turned away from God had left people increasingly hungry for a return of the soul to the authority of the Bible, to prayer, and to piety.<sup>23</sup>

In 1726, Pietism began its migration across the Atlantic. With its arrival, the first signs of revival emerged on American shores. The introduction of Pietism came largely through the ministry of Theodore J. Frelinghuysen (1691-1747), a Dutch reformed Pietist. Frelinghuysen was born in Westphalia, Germany. In the course of his ministry many remarkable conversions occurred. Revival followed his preaching in New Jersey. Frelinghuysen quickly captured the attention of Gilbert Tennant whose father, William, founded the famous “Log College,” which later became Princeton University. Tennant’s own preaching took on a new vitality. Through Tennant, the revival spread to the Scottish-Irish Presbyterians. Revival next spread to the Baptists of Pennsylvania and Virginia. The Pietism introduced by Frelinghuysen was clearly precursory to the extraordinary movement of God’s Spirit that occurred in Northampton, Massachusetts, under the ministry of Jonathan Edwards in 1734.<sup>24</sup>

While Pietism was a significant factor in events leading up to the Great Awakening, other factors contributed as well. Spiritual, moral, and social conditions in colonial America were in a state of decay. Vexed by these trends and fully aware of the

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<sup>21</sup>Terry, *Evangelism*, 114.

<sup>22</sup>Cairns, *An Endless Line of Splendor*, 31.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>24</sup>Cauchi, “The First Worldwide Awakening of 1725.”

danger of continued progression down these paths, there were those of godly persuasion who sounded the alarm, calling the remnant of God's people to repentance and prayer.

Thom Rainer in *Breakout Churches*, refers to such moments of awareness as an "ABC (awareness/belief/crisis) moment." Such moments are a wake-up call. In the context of an individual church, it is a moment in which the people, and particularly the leaders, of a dying church realize and come to grips with the tragic reality. They admit that their church is on a deadly path of erosion. Facing this reality is critical, for without it no remedial action will ever be taken.<sup>25</sup>

Nehemiah faced this ABC moment in the Old Testament book that bears his name. While serving as a cupbearer in the court of Artaxerxes king of Persia, one of his brothers came with some other men from Judah. His questions regarding the status of the Jewish remnant who survived the exile and also of Jerusalem met with this tragic reply: "They said to me, 'Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire'" (Neh 1:3).

Nehemiah's response was immediate. He says, "When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven" (Neh 1:4). This sequence has repeated itself in many revivals throughout history. There is the awareness of need followed by repentance and prayer. This model found itself repeated again and again in the eighteenth-century New England colonies and beyond.

In 1702, Increase Mather, seeing the need in his day, made this heart-cry to God: "Oh New England, New England! Tremble, for the glory is going; it is gradually departing."<sup>26</sup> Likewise, Jonathan Edwards sounded the alarm, later describing the continuing decline of the colonial church:

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<sup>25</sup>Thom S. Rainer, *Breakout Churches* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 69-90.

<sup>26</sup>Terry, *Evangelism*, 114.



But now what a dead and barren time has it now been, for a great while, with all the churches of the Reformation? The golden showers have been restrained; the influences of the Spirit suspended; and the consequence has been that the gospel has not had any eminent success. Conversions have been rare and dubious; few sons and daughters have been born to God; and the hearts of Christians not so quickened, warmed, and refreshed under the ordinances, as they have been. That this has been the sad state of religion among us in this land for many years . . . will be acknowledged by all who have spiritual senses exercised, as it has been lamented by faithful ministers and serious Christians.<sup>27</sup>

Edwards was himself a man of prayer. Fasting and prayer characterized his life. He often spent days in prayer and fasting in the course of a year. It is no surprise then that in the fall of 1734 he called upon his people to pray, holding prayer meetings, and beginning a series of sermons on justification by faith alone. Through his sermons, the Holy Spirit convicted a notorious young woman of sin. In December of the same year she accepted Christ. Revival ensued and continued. More than 300 new converts joined the church within six months. The revival spread across the Connecticut River valley touching over 100 towns and villages. Christians were renewed and sinners were converted.<sup>28</sup>

In a domino-like effect, church after church throughout the colonies faced their own moments of harsh reality. Always there followed urgent prayer, with revival not far behind. Nathaniel Leonard of Plymouth was alarmed at how widespread Sabbath-breaking had become and at the brisk business the local taverns were receiving. It was a crisis. He called for his church to meet it head-on with annual days of prayer and fasting for revival. Many Boston churches followed their lead, agreeing to fast and pray for an outpouring of the Spirit. In Gloucester, Massachusetts, John White led his church to set aside a day for prayer and fasting. He did so after reading the *Narrative*, Jonathan Edward's own account of the revival in Northampton. His church was soon experiencing an awakening of its own.<sup>29</sup> McDow and Reid write,

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<sup>27</sup>Jonathan Edwards, *Jonathan Edwards on Revival* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1965), 76-77.

<sup>28</sup>Cairns, *An Endless Line of Splendor*, 45.

<sup>29</sup>McDow and Reid, *Firefall*, 216-17.

Seasons of revival also came following seasons of prayer and fasting in Halifax, Wrentham, and Middleborough, Massachusetts, and Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Over twenty-five individual narratives of revival following the pattern of Edwards' *Narrative* were composed.<sup>30</sup>

The results of the Great Awakening were manifold socially, morally, historically, and religiously. The focus of this present account, however, is to address only the religious and spiritual aspects, especially as they relate to personal conversions and church growth. In this regard, both churches and converts grew significantly. Churches multiplied, with much of that growth due to conversions. The Methodist and Baptists experienced the majority of this growth. To their credit, both denominations endorsed the revival; so the benefit was naturally theirs. Their informal style of worship and aggressive approach to evangelism lined up with the general tenor and spirit of the Awakening. The revival's emphasis upon a personal experience of conversion and the need for an individual decision was critical. Calculating the number of converts during the Awakening is difficult. Many early church records no longer exist. By one estimate, a minimum of forty thousand new members were added to New England's churches in the Awakening. Growth in churches and converts led to a growing momentum within evangelical Christianity. America's protestant churches were being galvanized into a spiritual force that would Christianize a continent, and, in tandem with their British counterparts across the Atlantic, undertake a vast mission to reach the entire non-Christian world.<sup>31</sup>

Looking back upon the Great Awakening, there is little doubt that early eighteenth century America was in need of a fresh and mighty movement of God. The Puritan vision of a nation built upon an Old Testament relationship of divine covenant had become a discarded relic from the past. The Half-Way Covenant had resulted in numbers of the unregenerate now holding church membership. The Enlightenment was challenging orthodoxy. Judeo-Christian thought was giving way to moralistic individualism.

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 217, emphasis original.

<sup>31</sup>Terry, *Evangelism*, 123-24.

The powerful wind of the Holy Spirit, nevertheless, was about to descend, the first gusts of which were born along through the growing influence of Pietism. Meanwhile, the moral, social, and religious decay did not go unnoticed. Spirit-filled men and women sounded the alarm, followed by calls for repentance and prayer to reverse the trend. At first, sporadic local revivals began to appear, occasioning isolated harvests of souls. Local revivals would soon merge into a growing national movement of God's Spirit. The vast general awakening that eventually burst full-blown onto the scene swept in with it an even greater soul harvest. Each of these contributors to revival found themselves directly traceable to the united and extraordinary prayers of God's people. The Great Awakening provides convincing evidence of evangelistic praying as the divinely constituted means of affecting genuine revival and the conversion of the lost.

### **The Evangelistic Success of David Brainerd Had Its Origin in Prayer**

David Brainerd was an early pioneer missionary to the Native American peoples of present-day New Jersey, Delaware, and Pennsylvania. Born on April 20, 1718, he was a contemporary of such great revivalists as Jonathan Edwards, John Wesley, and George Whitefield. Brainerd's life spanned both waves of the Great Awakening in the mid-1720s and early 1740s.<sup>32</sup> His life was very much a product of that revival, giving clear evidence of its influence. Indeed, the religious stirrings among the Native Americans under his charge came as an extension of that awakening.

Brainerd's life is a remarkable testimony to the value of evangelistic praying. His missionary successes came against all odds, defying prediction. By any human standard he was thoroughly unqualified for tribal missions, especially within the demanding conditions of the harsh eighteenth century wilderness. From boyhood he was

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<sup>32</sup>John Piper, "Oh, That I May Never Loiter on My Heavenly Journey" [on-line]; accessed on 29 August 2011; available from <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/biographies/oh-that-i-may-never-loiter-on-my-heavenly-journey>; Internet.

frail and prone to illness, thoroughly unsuited for such an environment. For much of his adult life he was consumptive, dying of tuberculosis at twenty-nine. After three years at Yale College, his studies ended prematurely. The administration expelled him for criticizing a professor. Upon commencing his ministry among the Indians, he would have only four short years to make his impact.<sup>33</sup> By every modern standard, as a prospect for missions, this young man posed an unnecessary risk.

Yet, against all such odds, David Brainerd's remarkable successes stand out as extraordinary. In the summer of 1742, Brainerd received his license to preach. Quickly thereafter Brainerd became a missionary to the Native Americans under the sponsorship of the Commissioners of the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge. His first assignment was to the Housatonic Indians at Kaunaumeeck, about twenty miles northwest of Stockbridge, Massachusetts.<sup>34</sup> He arrived April 1, 1743, and, aided by an interpreter, preached for one year. Don O. Shelton gives a summary of Brainerd's ministry at Kaunaumeeck:

During his ministry at Kaunaumeeck several Indians were spiritually awakened, and came to talk with him respecting their salvation. Some came with tears. They asked 'whether the God Christians served, would be merciful to those who had frequently been drunk?' Some of the Indians reformed. They gave up their idolatrous practices. They stopped some of their heathen dancing and hallooing. They showed deeper respect for the Sabbath. They gave more attention to their children. When they knew Brainerd was to leave they looked sad and urged him to remain. They said that 'they had now heard so much about their souls' concerns, that they could never more be willing to live as they had done, without a minister, and further instructions in the way to heaven.'<sup>35</sup>

His sponsoring mission society eventually granted Brainerd a new assignment. On May 1, 1744, leaving Kaunaumeeck behind, he set out for the Forks of the Delaware,

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<sup>33</sup>Fred Barlow, "David Brainerd: Missionary" [on-line]; accessed 29 August 2011; available from <http://www.wholesomewords.org/missions/biobrain.html>; Internet.

<sup>34</sup>John A. Gigg, *The Lives of David Brainerd* (Oxford: University, 2009), 41-50.

<sup>35</sup>Don O. Shelton, *Heroes of the Cross in America* (New York: The Young People's Missionary Movement, 1904), 25.

northeast of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. After preaching to the Indians at the Forks of the Delaware for one year, Brainerd reached out to the Indians of Crossweeksung, New Jersey, beginning his work there on June 19, 1745. Here at Crossweeksung, he witnessed the greatest display of God's power he had yet seen in his ministry. In response to his prayers and preaching, God brought a remarkable awakening and period of blessing to the Indians.<sup>36</sup>

According to John A. Gigg, God “unleashed a religious movement at Crossweeksung that carried all the hallmarks of the New England revivals of which Brainerd had been a part.”<sup>37</sup> Brainerd himself gives a description:

The power of God seemed to descend upon the assembly ‘like a rushing mighty wind,’ and with an astonishing energy bore down all before it. I stood amazed at the influence that seized the audience almost universally, and could compare it to nothing more aptly than the irresistible force of a mighty torrent or swelling deluge, that with its insupportable weight and pressure bears down and sweeps before it whatever is in its way. Almost all persons of all ages were bowed down with concern together, and scarce one was able to withstand the shock of this surprising operation. Old men and women who had been drunken wretches for many years, and some little children not more than six or seven years of age, appeared in distress for their souls, as well as persons of middle age. And it was apparent these children (some of them at least) were not merely frightened with seeing the general concern; but were made sensible of their danger, the badness of their hearts, and their misery without Christ, as some of them expressed it. The most stubborn hearts were now obliged to bow. A principal man among the Indians, who before was most secure and self-righteous, and thought his state good because he knew more than the generality of the Indians had formerly done, and who with a great degree of confidence the day before, told me ‘he had been a Christian more than ten years,’ was now brought under solemn concern for his soul, and wept bitterly. Another man advanced in years, who had been a murderer, a powow, (or conjurer), and a notorious drunkard, was likewise brought now to cry for mercy with many tears, and to complain much that he could be no more concerned when he saw his danger so very great. They were almost universally praying and crying for mercy in every part of the house, and many out of doors, and numbers could neither go nor stand. Their concern was so great, each one for himself, that none seemed to take any notice of their own apprehension as much retired as if they had been individually by themselves in the thickest desert; or, I believe rather, that they thought nothing about any but themselves and their own states, and so were every one praying apart, although all together. It seemed to me there was now an exact fulfillment of that prophecy, Zech. xii. 10, 11, 12. for there was now ‘a great mourning, like the mourning of Hadadrimmon;’ and each seemed to ‘mourn apart.’

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<sup>36</sup>Piper, “Oh That I May Never Loiter on My Heavenly Journey.”

<sup>37</sup>Gigg, *The Lives of David Brainerd*, 91.

Methought this had a near resemblance to the day of God's power mentioned Josh. x. 14. for I must say, I never saw any day like it in all respects: it was a day wherein I am persuaded the Lord did much to destroy the kingdom of darkness among this people.<sup>38</sup>

Brainerd stayed with these Indians until he was too sick to minister. In November 1746, he left to spend four months trying to recuperate in Elizabethtown at the house of Jonathan Dickinson. On March 20, 1747, David Brainerd made one last visit to his Indian friends and then rode to the house of Jonathan Edwards in Northampton, Massachusetts. He arrived on May 28, 1747 and died there of tuberculosis on October 9, 1747. It was a short life of only 29 years, 5 months and 19 days. Just eight of those years were lived as a believer and only four of those as a missionary.<sup>39</sup>

In spite of the brevity of his life, Brainerd left an enduring impact on world missions. E. Myer Harrison writes,

In answer to the question, 'What can be done to revive the work of God where it has decayed?' John Wesley said, 'Let every preacher read carefully *The Life of David Brainerd*.' One of the many who heeded Wesley's counsel was William Carey, and God used Brainerd's life story to open Carey's eyes to the need of all races everywhere and to fire his heart with passion to speed the gospel to 'the uttermost part.' It was chiefly the reading of the story of Brainerd's heroic missionary labors that thrust Henry Martyn out as *a bundle of fire* into the darkness of India and Persia, and caused Robert McCheyne to become the Apostle to the Jews. May some earnest-hearted young people reading this account be similarly inspired to 'burn out for God' in some needy foreign land. May many others be shaken out of living, as Brainerd says, 'at the rate of common Christians,' and be inspired to live lives of fervent prayer, genuine piety and holy passion for souls.<sup>40</sup>

The two keys of Brainerd's evangelistic success and lasting missionary legacy were his burden for souls and his power in prayer. Entry after entry in his personal diary conveys a seemingly unbearable burden for the lost among the Indian people. He describes himself as being "drawn out very much from the world, for multitudes of souls." In this

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<sup>38</sup>David Brainerd, "Mr. Brainerd's Journal" [on-line]; accessed 30 August 2011; available from <http://www.revival-library.org/catalogues/1725ff/brainerdjournal.html>; Internet.

<sup>39</sup>Piper, "Oh That I May Never Loiter on My Heavenly Journey."

<sup>40</sup>E. Myers Harrison, *Heroes of the Faith on Pioneer Trails* (Chicago: Moody, 1945), 17. Emphasis in original.

same entry he expresses his concern for both believers and unbelievers, but especially for the lost. He writes, “I think I had more enlargement for sinners, than for the children of God, though I felt as if I could spend my life in cries for both.”<sup>41</sup> His diary bears repeated references to his prayer that God “would bring in the heathen,”<sup>42</sup> and of his “hopes of the ingathering” of the lost.<sup>43</sup> He speaks of his “fervent prayer for my Indians, that God would set up His kingdom among them, and bring them into His church,”<sup>44</sup> and says, “I cared not where or how I lived, or what hardships I went through, so that I could but gain souls to Christ.”<sup>45</sup>

An August entry, while ministering at Crossweeksung, articulates his resolute purpose to win souls:

It seemed to me that I had no care, or hardly any desire, to be the instrument of so glorious a work as I wished and prayed for among the Indians. If the blessed work might be accomplished to the honor of God, and the enlargement of the dear Redeemer’s kingdom—this was all my desire and care; and for this mercy I hoped, but with trembling; for I felt what Job expresses, in 9:16, ‘If I had called, and He had answered me, yet would I not believe that He had hearkened unto my voice.’<sup>46</sup>

A second key to Brainerd’s evangelistic success was his power in prayer. His inadequacies, inabilities, and infirmities were constant reminders of his need for divine power, throwing him more and more upon God in prayer. He speaks of his heart “continually going out to God for His presence and assistance,”<sup>47</sup> and of how in answer to prayer God “‘ordained strength out of weakness,’ by making bare His almighty arm, at

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<sup>41</sup>David Brainerd, *David Brainerd’s Personal Testimony* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 20.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid, 24.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 27.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 49.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 52.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 66-67.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 53.

a time when all hopes and human probabilities most evidently appeared to fail.”<sup>48</sup>

It was through the power of evangelistic praying that Brainerd witnessed miracles of conversion in spite of insurmountable odds. Brainerd writes,

To see those who were very lately savage pagans and idolaters, having no hope, and without God in the world, now filled with a sense of divine love and grace, and worshipping the Father in spirit and in truth, as numbers have appeared to do, was not a little affecting; and especially to see them appear so tender and humble, as well as lively, fervent, and devout in the divine service.<sup>49</sup>

The life of David Brainerd gives clear evidence to the effectiveness of evangelistic praying. He peppered his personal diary with page after page, each filled with repeated entries referencing his daily labors in prayer. Along with prayer, he frequently fasted. Piper writes,

Again and again in his diary he tells of days spent in fasting. He fasted for guidance when he was perplexed about the next steps of ministry. And he fasted simply with the deep hope of making greater advances in his own spiritual depth and usefulness in bringing life to the Indians.<sup>50</sup>

Through prayer Brainerd experienced miraculous interventions of God and remarkable conversions numbering in the hundreds. The record of his life has had a transforming affect upon many, motivating them to become missionaries, evangelists, preachers, and people of prayer themselves.

### **The Businessmen’s Revival of 1857-1858— An Awakening Traceable to a Laymen’s Prayer Movement**

The Businessmen’s Revival was truly an hour of prayer in American history. Its origins, however, actually take the historian outside the borders of the United States and into Canada. Revivalists Walter and Phoebe Palmer held camp meetings among the Canadian Methodists in Ontario. The date was October of 1857. Revival took hold, and

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 104.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 97.

<sup>50</sup>Piper, “Oh, That I May Never Loiter On My Heavenly Journey.”



within this relatively short period of time, more than 300 persons were converted.<sup>51</sup>

As is often the case, this awakening swept throughout the entire community, spilling over the borders into the United States. Such contagion is an observable pattern of revival throughout church history. Orr writes, “True spiritual awakenings are exceedingly infectious, and proximity in time and place adds to desire for similar blessing.”<sup>52</sup> This revival was no exception. Reports of the Canadian revival began popping up in newspaper stands across the northeastern states, naturally gaining the attention and interest of pastors across the denominational spectrum. An air of expectancy began to build as pastors and laypeople alike began to consider what God might have in store.

A large meeting of Presbyterian ministers and many laymen from the Synods of Pittsburgh, Allegheny, Wheeling, and Ohio convened in Pittsburg to discuss the need for a more general revival of Christianity. Prayer was an intentional focus over the course of all three days. Note its continuing emphasis in Orr’s account of the convention’s closing resolution and results:

A committee was appointed to draw up an address to the churches, to be read from the pulpits by the pastors. It was also recommended that the official members of the respective churches be called together to discuss the convention agenda, and above all, that the people be called together to prayer. As a result of this programme, many ministers of the Presbyterian denomination and others delivered messages on the first Sunday of the New Year (1858) on the subject of revival, and the first Thursday was observed as a day of humiliation, fasting and prayer. An intelligent and mighty impulse was felt. Shortly afterwards, a similar convention was called at Cincinnati. There the convention became a great meeting of prayer, and churches participating were stirred.<sup>53</sup>

Such calls to prayer became cross-denominational. One noteworthy contributor was the Methodist Episcopal Church, “the largest and most evangelistic body of Americans at that time.”<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>Cairns, *An Endless Line of Splendor*, 148.

<sup>52</sup>J. Edwin Orr, *The Light of the Nations* (London: Paternoster, 1965), 102.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*, 101.

It was within this context that the Holy Spirit birthed the Businessmen's Prayer Revival. New York City had not been faring well. A shift in population had left it in decline. Decline was not just a matter of demographics but was deeply spiritual as well. Downtown churches, once thriving, were now languishing. One such church, the North Dutch Reformed Church, seeing the need, hired Jeremiah Lanphier as a kind of minister for outreach in the immediate inner city geographic. Lanphier was a forty year old single businessman. Though a layman, he was no less qualified than any seminary graduate for his assigned task. He had a heart for God, a burden for the lost, and was most of all a man of prayer.<sup>55</sup>

His assignment began on July 1, 1857. He pursued the usual methods, passing out brochures, tracts, and Bibles. His efforts, though spirited and intense, were met with limited success. Desperate for a more effective influence, he prayed, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" So burdened, he decided to invite anyone and everyone to join him in a noonday prayer meeting. Having noticed how businessmen were "hurrying along their way, often with care worn faces, and anxious, restless gaze," he focused his recruitment on the business community.<sup>56</sup>

Lanphier distributed an invitational handbill throughout the city, inviting others to join him in the noonday prayer meeting. Under the heading, "How Often Shall I Pray?" it said,

As often as the language of prayer is on my heart; as often as I see my need of help; as often as I feel the power of temptation; as often as I am made sensible of my spiritual declension or feel the aggression of a worldly spirit. In prayer we leave the business of time for that of eternity and intercourse with men for intercourse with God. A day of prayer meeting is held every Wednesday from 12 to 1 o'clock in the Consistory Building in the rear of the North Dutch Church, corner of Fulton and Williams streets. This meeting is intended to give merchants, mechanics, clerks, strangers and businessmen generally an opportunity to stop and call on God amid the perplexities incident to their respective avocations. It will continue for one hour; but

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<sup>55</sup>Cairns, *An Endless Line of Splendor*, 148.

<sup>56</sup>McDow and Reid, *Firefall*, 257.

it is also designed for those who find it inconvenient to remain more than 5 or 10 minutes, as well as for those who can spare a whole hour.<sup>57</sup>

At the first meeting on September 23rd of 1857, only six people attended. The first person, other than Lanphier himself, did not even arrive until 12:30. Despite the disappointing start, attendance grew quickly thereafter. The following week there were twenty, and on the third, thirty to forty. By October 14 over 100 came, and by the end of the month three large rooms were filled.<sup>58</sup>

Remarkably, simultaneous church-sponsored prayer meetings began to spring up throughout the city. These meetings often occurred without one church even being aware that there were others doing the same thing. This lack of awareness gives credibility to the prayer meetings being a sovereign movement of God. So rapid was this movement of God's Spirit that within 6 months 50,000 were meeting daily in New York. Not far from the North Dutch Reformed Church, meetings began in Burton's Theater. By 11:30 AM on the first day (March 17, 1858), hundreds filled the church, with hundreds more standing outside.<sup>59</sup>

Thousands more began praying in other cities and states. Churches in Philadelphia had already been praying for revival. With word of the happenings in New York, meetings began in Jayne's Hall, where 6,000 men began gathering for prayer. A businessmen's meeting for prayer was set up in Boston's South Church. From the first day, the church was so full that many were unable to attend. Across Massachusetts some 150 churches reported revival. Rhode Island, Connecticut, Maine, and cities in the Midwest such as Cincinnati, Cleveland, Louisville, Indianapolis, Detroit, Chicago, and St. Louis all

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<sup>57</sup>Dan Augsburger, "Jeremiah Lanphier: Revival Starting in the Marketplace by Bible Prayer Fellowship" [on-line]; accessed 30 August 2011; available from <http://www.path2prayer.com/article.php?id=1081>.

<sup>58</sup>J. Edwin Orr, *The Event of the Century* (Wheaton, IL: International Awakening, 1989), 54.

<sup>59</sup>McDow and Reid, *Firefall*, 258-59.

had the same experience. Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota were also included. This brief survey of cities and states qualifies the Businessmen's Revival as a national movement of God.<sup>60</sup>

This awakening left very few untouched. As an example, even military ships entering into and stationed at US ports across the eastern seaboard began to experience revival. College campuses experienced revival. These colleges included Oberlin, Amherst, Dartmouth, Middlebury, Williams, Yale, Princeton, and the University of Virginia. While not as prevalent, the South also experienced awakening. Churches, noticeably those that integrated both black slaves and whites, experienced greater revival blessings than others. In the Southwest news of the Fulton Street prayer meeting inspired a missionary to the Choctaw Indians to join in the same observance of prayer. Many participated and many came to Christ there as well.<sup>61</sup>

Once again, this revival, birthed in prayer, issued in evangelism. Its evangelistic impact is impressive. McDow and Reid write,

Almost every denomination recorded significant increases in the late 1850s. The percentage of church members to population jumped by 50 percent from 1850 to 1860. Roy Fish found that Baptists saw 650 new churches birthed during the period. Estimates of conversions ranged from 300,000 to 1 million. (Beardsley believed half a million were converted, while Orr and Candler said the number had to be nearly one million.) Specific approaches were emphasized, including prayer and evangelism; lay preachers, such as Lanphier; house-to-house visitation; evangelistic literature; open-air preaching; youth and children's evangelism; and music in evangelism.<sup>62</sup>

Prayer was the precursor and the sustainer of the Businessmen's Revival. Out of prayer, the source of divine power, flowed revival and effective evangelism.

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 261.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 262-63.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., 271.

## **The Great Welsh Revival in 1904 and 1905 Was Birthed in Prayer**

The Welsh Revival of 1904-1905 was also a movement traceable to prayer. There were many calls to prayer that led to this spiritual awakening. The earliest of these calls began with W. S. Jones. Jones had been the pastor of the First Welsh Baptist Church in Scranton, Pennsylvania. There in Scranton he experienced a personal revival and spiritual renewal in his own life. Under the influence of the Holy Spirit, he felt a strong persuasion to return to Wales. He did so in 1897. Upon his return, he invested himself in many younger ministers. These preachers began meeting together for prayer in 1903. In response to an invitation from F. B. Meyer, many of these men attended their first Keswick conference, where God greatly touched their lives.<sup>63</sup>

In July of 1902, the sponsors and participants of yet another Keswick Convention felt a heavy burden for prayer. Their central theme came from Joel 2:28 where God said, “I will pour out my spirit on all flesh.” Taking God at His word, they began to pray for revival around the world. Prayer seemed to fuel prayer, and with each passing day the Holy Spirit burdened more and more individuals and groups to pray. Revival leaders included David Thomas, Rhys Thomas, Read Harris, Mrs. Jesse Penn-Lewis, and R. B. Jones.<sup>64</sup>

The first sprinkles of revival came under the ministry of Pastor Joseph Jenkins at New Quay, a seaside village in West Wales, on February of 1904. An earlier reading of Andrew Murray’s book, *With Christ in the School of Prayer*, left a deep impression on him. His own prayers led him to invest himself in discipling young people. Jenkins held youth meetings to serve that purpose better. A young teenager from New Quay named Florrie Evans became an active participant. In one of those meetings Jenkins asked the question, “What does Jesus mean to you?” In a trembling voice she said, “If no one else will, then

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<sup>63</sup>McDow and Reid, *Firefall*, 276.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid.

I must say that I do love the Lord Jesus Christ with all my heart.” Somehow, with those simple words alone, the Holy Spirit seemed to fall upon that meeting. Revival came and spread as swiftly as the news of it extended throughout the Cardiganshire area.<sup>65</sup>

Evangelist Seth Joshua had been praying for years that God would raise up a young man from the coal mines to revive churches in Wales. His prayers found their answer in twenty-six year old Evan Roberts. Roberts himself had been praying his own prayers. Though converted as a teenager, his commitment was immediate and wholehearted, advancing beyond his peers. He became a faithful member of the Moriah Calvinistic Methodist Church at Loughor. He was a Sunday School superintendent and an avid reader of the theological works of the day. All of these spiritual interests and pursuits were exceptional for a young man of his age. Most remarkable was his prayer life. In his teen years he began praying for revival. He prayed regularly for eleven years that God would visit the nation again with revival power. During the spring of 1904, a sense of God’s presence repeatedly awakened him from 1:00 to 5:00 AM. He would spend those hours in lengthy periods of prayer.<sup>66</sup>

Evans felt a call to preach. Knowing the need for preparation, he enrolled at Trevecca College in Newcastle, Emlyn. In September 1904, classes commenced with an eager young Evans in attendance. The first month of classes were not yet complete before Evans found himself attending a revival meeting conducted by Seth Joshua. Joshua prayed, “Lord bend us!” Evans, in turn prayed, “Lord, bend me!” Thereupon, he immediately experienced an overwhelming sense of the Spirit of God. This experience would forever alter his life.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>Ibid., 277.

<sup>66</sup>Cairns, *An Endless Line of Splendor*, 193.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 195.

Within a month he felt compelled to share his experience of the reality of God with his hometown congregation. On October 31, he took a train home to Loughor. Upon arrival, the pastor permitted him to speak only after the regularly scheduled Monday night prayer meeting was dismissed. Seventeen people remained to hear what he had to say. Evan's message contained four simple points: (1) Confess all known sin, (2) Deal with and get rid of anything sinful in your life, (3) Be ready to obey the Holy Spirit instantly, and (4) Confess Christ publicly.<sup>68</sup>

All seventeen responded. The pastor was so pleased he asked Evans to speak the next night. He ended up preaching all of that week and the next. Before long, reports of revival at Loughor had reached the Welsh newspapers. As news spread, so did the interest. Crowds came out. The church's seating capacity was unable to accommodate all who came. Shopkeepers closed early to find a seat. People on their way to attend packed the main road on which the church was located. The revival became a movement that broke out like a tidal wave across Wales. The social and spiritual impact was astounding. In five months 100,000 people throughout the country received Christ. The revival swept through Britain, Scandinavia, Germany, North America, Australasia, Africa, Brazil, Mexico, and Chile.<sup>69</sup>

As before, here was a revival movement that began with united, concerted, and extraordinary prayers. The evangelistic impact of this movement of God was phenomenal. Remarkably, it began with ordinary people. That it largely began as a youth generated movement affirms the truth that God is pleased to work through the weak in order to demonstrate his strength. The Welsh Revival of 1904 is yet another testimony to the fact that God appoints the means (praying saints) as well as the results.

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<sup>68</sup>Orr, "Prayer and Revival."

<sup>69</sup>Ibid.

## **The Birth of Modern Missions Can Be Traced to Prayer**

On a Saturday afternoon in August 1806, five Williams College students gathered in a field near the Hoosack River, then known as Sloan's Meadow, to talk and pray about the spiritual needs of those living in Asian countries. Their habit was to meet twice weekly for prayer. This occasion proved to be anything but a routine experience. It was to become a life altering, history shaping moment. A sudden thunderstorm set in, driving them to find protection in the sheltered side of a haystack. There they continued in prayer until the sky cleared. The students were Samuel J. Mills, James Richards, Francis L. Robbins, Harvey Loomis, and Byram Green.<sup>70</sup>

As to the historic significance of this meeting for modern missions in America, Peters writes,

The story of Samuel J. Mills and his four loyal comrades and Williams College and the Haystack Prayer Meeting are foundational to American foreign missions. As the five students waited before the Lord in the shelter of the haystack, they discussed the spiritual darkness of the vast multitudes without Christ. They debated the possibility of realizing the Lord's command and its bearing in their own lives. Mills proposed that they devote themselves to sending the gospel to the non-Christian world. His immortal words, 'We can do it if we will,' have characterized much of American missions. Upon these words they knelt in prayer and quietly went home. The hour was late and no one was aware that a crisis hour in the history of missions had come, an hour that would draw thousands of able-bodied American men and women into the service of world evangelization.<sup>71</sup>

In 1810, while a student at Andover Seminary, Mills and other students formed "the Brethren," a society structured to pray for and to study foreign missions. Thus organized, they later convinced the Congregational Church to send them out as missionaries. Their request inspired the foundation of The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions on June 28, 1810. This association became the first formally organized foreign missions agency in the US. In February 1812, Adonirom

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<sup>70</sup>John C. Lombard, "The Field Is the World" [on-line]; accessed 30 August 2011; available from <http://globalministries.org/resources/mission-study/what-is-haystack/the-field-is-the-world.html>; Internet.

<sup>71</sup>George W. Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions* (Chicago: Moody, 1972), 344-45.



Judson, Samuel Newall, Samuel Mott, Gordon Hall, and Luther Rice received their commissions as the Board's first missionaries.<sup>72</sup> Rice was later to provide the inspiration for the formation of yet another foreign missions agency—the General Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States of America for Foreign Missions.<sup>73</sup> An account is given on the careers of the original Haystack five:

Though only two of the five Williams students at the Haystack Prayer meeting ever left the United States, the impact of their passion for missions is widespread. Loomis, true to his early convictions, dedicated his life to domestic missions in the state of Maine. Robbins engaged in missionary work in New Hampshire before returning to pastor a church in his native state of Connecticut. Green preached for a short time before serving in New York State government and later in the U.S. Congress. Richards left America in 1815, serving as a missionary in India until his death in 1822. Mills engaged in missions in the Ohio and Mississippi valleys, in the Southwest United States, and in New Orleans. He influenced the founding of the American Bible Society and the United Foreign Missionary Society before he died in 1818 while returning from a short-term mission trip to Africa with the American Colonization Society.<sup>74</sup>

In its first 50 years, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions alone sent out over 1250 missionaries. The majority were from small New England towns and villages. Few were well situated financially, but many were college educated, receiving a classical education, which included Hebrew, Latin, and Greek. So equipped, upon reaching their fields of ministry, they were able to translate the Scriptures from the Greek and Hebrew into foreign languages, some of which were previously completely unwritten. They founded educational institutions and served their own countries as advisors to foreign governments. It is a significant record of achievement. Not to be lost

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<sup>72</sup>Cairns, *An Endless Line of Splendor*, 262.

<sup>73</sup>Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 514.

<sup>74</sup>Clark Cowden, "The Haystack Prayer Meeting and the American Missions Movement" [on-line]; accessed 30 August 2011; available from <http://clarkcowden.wordpress.com/2011/01/02/the-haystack-prayer-meeting-and-the-american-missions-movement/>; Internet.

in this impressive account is its source of origin with five young men praying in a haystack.<sup>75</sup>

The birth of modern missions can be traced backward well beyond the Haystack Revival. The Reformation, with its call back to a pure doctrine of justification by faith alone, marks the beginning of the movement toward modern missions. This emphasis on sound doctrine alone was not sufficient. A renewed passion for missions did not emerge until the birth of Pietism.<sup>76</sup> It was only natural that Pietism, with its strong emphasis on a genuine conversion experience and a disciplined pursuit of a deeper relationship with Christ, would quickly evolve into a missions movement. As previously noted, this movement was thoroughly evangelical and deeply rooted in prayer.<sup>77</sup>

It was just a matter of time until this combined emphasis on doctrine and devotion would lead them to identify with the Savior's heart for missions. The publication of Philip Spener's *Pia Desideria*, in 1675, was groundbreaking in this regard. Missionary evangelism was one of eight emphases brought forward by this book, which, upon publication, exploded onto the scene.<sup>78</sup> From the emergence of Pietism, itself a movement driven by prayer, every step along the road to modern missions thereafter was similarly a step taken with prayer.

The Moravian revival at Herrnhut, Germany (1727) was a significant pietistic phenomenon that prompted a burden for missions. Those impacted by it powerfully influenced the evangelical world of their day, sparking a historic movement of prayer for

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<sup>75</sup>James Moos, "The History of the Haystack Prayer Meeting" [on-line]; accessed 30 August 2011; available from <http://www.globalministries.org/resources/mission-study/what-is-haystack/the-history-of-the-haystack-pray.html>; Internet.

<sup>76</sup>Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions*, 343-44.

<sup>77</sup>William Warren Sweet, *The Story of Religion in America* (New York: Harpers & Brothers, 1950), 138-39.

<sup>78</sup>McDow and Reid, *Firefall*, 175.

the non-Christian world.<sup>79</sup> In obedience to the Lord's own commission (Matt 28:19-20), they put legs on their prayers, taking the gospel throughout Europe, the Americas, Asia, Africa, and the West Indies.<sup>80</sup> John Greenfield writes,

Fifty years before the beginning of modern foreign missions by William Carey, the Moravian church had led the way into pagan countries both by precept and example. The English Missionary magazine, *Periodical Accounts* inspired Dr. Carey, and in a meeting of his Baptist brethren he threw a copy of the paper on the table with these memorable and historic words: 'See what the Moravians have done! Cannot we follow their example and in obedience to our heavenly Master go out into the world, and preach the Gospel to the heathen?'<sup>81</sup>

The Moravian missionary zeal was most striking. Zinzendorf himself described their passion in these words:

Urged by love to every nation  
Of the fallen human race,  
We publish Christ's salvation,  
And declare His blood-bought grace;  
To display Him, and portray Him,  
In His dying form and beauty,<sup>82</sup>  
Be it our aim and joyful duty.<sup>82</sup>

McDow and Reid similarly describe the influence of Pietism:

Pietism pioneered world missions. Their commitment to missions was unparalleled. One group of Pietists from Halle and the Netherlands sailed to India as missionaries in the early 1700s, preceding Carey by almost a century. Zinzendorf taught the Moravian missionaries not to impose their culture on those they reached, which has been a subject of concern throughout the modern history of missions. Missions extended to the Virgin Islands in 1732, Greenland in 1733, North America in 1734, Lapland and South Africa in 1736, and Labrador in 1771. Their influence extended to the missionary work of David Brainerd (1718-47) among the American Indians. Whereas the ratio of Protestant laity to missionaries as a whole was 1:5000, the Moravian ratio was 1:60. By Zinzendorf's death in 1760 some 226 missionaries had been sent out by the Moravians.<sup>83</sup>

Robert Millar, an eighteenth century Presbyterian minister of Scotland, with

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<sup>79</sup>Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions*, 344.

<sup>80</sup>Sweet, *The Story of Religion in America*, 107.

<sup>81</sup>John Greenfield, *When the Spirit Came: The Story of the Moravian Revival of 1727* (Edinburgh: Marshall, Morgan, and Scott, 1928), 112.

<sup>82</sup>Cited by Oswald Smith, "The Moravian Revival."

<sup>83</sup>McDow and Reid, *Firefall*, 181.

others in his generation, might also be viewed as a predecessor to the modern mission movement. In 1723 Millar published a pamphlet entitled, “The History of the Propagation of Christianity and Overthrow of Paganism.” Within its pages he urged prayer as the primary means for taking the gospel to the unreached peoples of the world. This influential work was widely read throughout the British Isles and America, continuing to lay the groundwork for existing and future mission endeavor.<sup>84</sup>

In 1744 some of the leading revivalists in Scotland issued yet another call to prayer for the world’s unreached people groups. Known as the “Concert of Prayer for the Conversion of the World,” this document also received broad distribution on both sides of the Atlantic. It was a call to “united extraordinary supplications to the God of all grace . . . earnestly praying to Him that He would appear in His glory . . . by an abundant effusion of His Holy Spirit . . . to revive true religion in all parts of Christendom . . . and fill the whole earth with His glory.”<sup>85</sup> The document challenged respondents to an informal twenty-four month commitment. For two years they were to pray every Saturday evening and Sunday morning for the lost around the world. In addition, on the annual calendar, every first Tuesday of each quarter participants were also to pray. They could pray for the whole day or part of the day. They could pray in private prayer groups or in public meetings. All that mattered was that they pray.<sup>86</sup>

Pray they did, resulting in a concert of prayer that spanned all of Great Britain. Though those few years saw no significant revival, churches did grow stronger. Organizers celebrated the completion of this two-year commitment with the printing of a small book of commemoration. Rather than viewing it as a job now done, John Erksine, the author, a

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<sup>84</sup>Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions*, 344.

<sup>85</sup>Tony Cauchi, “Concerts of Prayer” [on-line]; accessed 31 August 2011; available from [http://www.revival-library.org/leadership/na\\_cop1.php](http://www.revival-library.org/leadership/na_cop1.php); Internet.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid.

well-known and respected Presbyterian pastor and theologian from Edinburgh, Scotland, celebrated those years with a renewed challenge to expand upon that experience. He issued a call for evangelicals on both sides of the Atlantic to formally unite in a cross-Atlantic union of prayer. In 1746, Erksine and others sent this memorial book to Boston, inviting all their Christian brothers and sisters in North America to agree to this concert of prayer for a period of seven more years.<sup>87</sup>

Erskine specifically designated one copy of this book be delivered to Jonathan Edwards in Massachusetts. Edwards, himself no stranger to revival, responded enthusiastically, expressing compliance through the publication of his own call to prayer. Published in 1747, the book was entitled: *A Humble Attempt to Promote Explicit Agreement and Visible Union of All God's People in Extraordinary Prayer for the Revival of Religion and the Advancement of Christ's Kingdom on Earth.*<sup>88</sup>

In 1784, thirty-seven years later, this same burden for prayer was once again renewed by the same, but now much older, John Erksine. He took Edward's earlier call for "extraordinary prayer" back for republication and introduced it to a new generation. Erksine sent it to Baptist leaders John Ryland and Andrew Fuller. Ryland, Fuller, and John Sutcliffe moved that all Baptist churches and ministers set aside the first Monday of each month to pray for the non-Christian world. Denomination after denomination came on board.<sup>89</sup>

In 1791, revival broke out beginning with the industrial towns of Yorkshire. The revival crossed national and denomination boundaries. It made a significant impact upon Wales, Scotland, Ireland, and England. Churches were full. They often held their services in the open air to accommodate overflow. The Methodists alone grew from about 72,000

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<sup>87</sup>Ibid.

<sup>88</sup>Orr, "Prayer and Revival."

<sup>89</sup>McDow and Reid, *Firefall*, 231.

to nearly a quarter of a million within a generation.<sup>90</sup>

A direct result of these revivals in the United Kingdom was the founding of the British and Foreign Bible Society, the Religious Tract Society, the Baptist Missionary Society, the London Missionary Society, the Church Missionary Society and many other world mission and evangelistic agencies. It also resulted in significant social reform. Evangelicals successfully fought for the abolition of the slave trade, prisons were reformed, Sunday Schools began, and a number of benevolent institutions emerged.<sup>91</sup>

In 1794, Isaac Backus, along with other New England ministers, accepted Erksine's call to prayer. They adopted the British plan for concerts of prayer focused on "the revival of religion and extension of Christ's kingdom abroad." Churches and members throughout New England began devoting the first Monday of each month to serious intercession.<sup>92</sup> The following excerpt is a portion of a widely distributed letter that called believers to prayer:

In execution of this plan, it is proposed that the ministers and churches of every Christian denomination should be invited to maintain public prayer and praise, accompanied with such instruction from God's Word, as might be judged proper, on every Tuesday, of the four quarters of the year, beginning with the first Tuesday of January, 1795, at two o'clock in the afternoon, if the plan of concert should then be ripe for a beginning, and so continuing from quarter to quarter, and from year to year, until the good Providence of God prospering our endeavors, we shall obtain the blessing for which we pray.<sup>93</sup>

By 1798, the Second Great Awakening had broken out everywhere. The awakening affected every state and every evangelical denomination.

This awakening also heavily influenced institutions for higher learning throughout the United States. Timothy Dwight, grandson of Jonathan Edwards, took over

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<sup>90</sup>Cauchi, "Concerts of Prayer."

<sup>91</sup>Ibid.

<sup>92</sup>Orr, *The Fervent Prayer*, xiv.

<sup>93</sup>McDow and Reid, *Firefall*, 232.

Yale College in 1795 and saw over half the students converted in just one year. Other colleges enjoyed similar movements of the Spirit. Out of these college awakenings came additional blessings. Not surprisingly, many of these revived students went on to participate in home and foreign missions.<sup>94</sup> Five such students were the five from Williams College who met under the shelter of a haystack and there prayed about a plan to reach the unevangelized of Asia to Christ. Out of that meeting, now known as “the Haystack Compact,” grew the whole modern American missionary movement.<sup>95</sup>

McDow and Reid identify another important trend, which resulted from the Second Great Awakening and the events preceding it:

The most significant impact of the awakening was the rise of societies and agencies, many of which still minister. The New York Missionary Society was founded in 1796 by Presbyterians, Baptists, and Dutch Reformed to reach the Indians. The Congregationalists formed the Missionary Society of Connecticut in 1798 to establish new churches in frontier areas. The Massachusetts Society founded in 1799, supported 224 missionaries by 1824. The American Bible Society and the American Education Society came along in 1816; the American Colonization Society in 1817; the American Tract Society in 1825; and the American Home Missions Society in 1826. In 1791 the first Sunday school union was formed in Philadelphia. The New York Sunday School Union was established in 1816. The American Sunday School Union was organized in 1824 to establish a unified effort for the growing Sunday school movement.<sup>96</sup>

The preceding historical survey, which outlines the birth of modern missions, though brief, is yet one additional affirmation of the necessity of united prayer among God’s people. Modern missions, with all of the evangelistic success it might boast, is traceable to prayer. The record of modern missions shows that God, though no less sovereign, moves in the lives of believers and unbelievers alike through the prayers of His people. Peters writes,

The history of missions abounds with evidences of divine intervention and gracious manifestation in behalf of the cause of missions. The history of the vast amount of prayers invested in the venture and the divine response to them will never be

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<sup>94</sup>Orr, *The Fervent Prayer*, xv.

<sup>95</sup>Orr, *The Light of the Nations*, 22.

<sup>96</sup>McDow and Reid, *Firefall*, 247.

recounted on this side of eternity. Only in the blaze of divine light will we see the fullness of divine glory, faithfulness and manifestations. And to our great surprise, most of such manifestations will appear to be a direct response to some prayer. Someone prayed and God acted.<sup>97</sup>

### **Conclusion**

History's lesson for the church is that evangelism and missions do not happen without prayer. Prayer releases divine power, as God acts in response. History teaches that the most strategic way to fulfill God's vision for the world is through a movement of united and extraordinary prayer. Orr gives an explanation of extraordinary:

We share ordinary prayer in regular worship services, before meals, and the like. But when people are found getting up at six in the morning to pray, or having a half night of prayer until midnight, or giving up their lunch time to pray at noontime prayer meetings, that is extraordinary prayer. It must be united and concerted.<sup>98</sup>

The history of the church is the history of what such prayers have accomplished. The accounts described in this chapter stand as a clear demonstration of that truth. In the spirit of those who have gone before, conditions in the church and in the world ought to drive the saints to prayer, dropping them to their knees in confession and intercession.

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<sup>97</sup>Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions*, 345.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid.



CHAPTER 4  
THE METHODOLOGY USED TO IMPLEMENT  
EVANGELISTIC PRAYING

**Introduction**

The methodology phase of the project endeavored to engage the congregation in the practice of evangelistic praying. The intent, however, was not simply to encourage increased engagement in prayer for lost people and for the church's effectiveness in evangelism. I desired to teach principles that might improve the quality of those prayers, leading to growing confidence. I also hoped to increase awareness of the evangelistic needs in the community by providing a format for face-to-face encounter. Rather than confrontational, this interaction would be a "presence of Christ" kind of relationship where neighbors might see members of Parkway Baptist Church displaying Jesus' concern for both physical and spiritual needs. This Christ-like display would enhance the church's credibility, providing a platform for its message. Additionally, I wanted to show how prayer relationships can be used as a tool for actually doing evangelism, making it the focus of an outreach program.

**Pre-Project Preparation**

On January 1, 2012, I initiated this project. In the preceding weeks, however, I devoted a generous portion of time to preparation, setting the stage, and creating an awareness of need. I wanted to secure goal agreement from its inception, to avoid confusion and delay, and to create momentum, beginning the project in as dynamic a manner as possible. My concern was for the congregation to have sufficient time to mentally process the project, adjust to the concept, and embrace goal ownership. Given the time limitations placed upon the project and the need to schedule both a day-long

seminar and an initial canning drive within the first few weeks, the whole church needed to be prepared and at the starting gate.

### **Securing Leadership Commitment**

Pre-project preparation began with securing the conviction and commitment of church leadership. In early October of 2011, I convened a meeting of the deacons. In this meeting I introduced the project itself, delineating its components and justifying the need for just such an emphasis. I pointed out that on any given Sunday, attendance figures were generally dismal and the frequency of first-time visitors close to non-existent. Given Christ's commandment (Matt 28:19-20) and the absence of any strategic outreach, even in the church's own backyard, inaction could no longer remain an option. Healthy discussion ensued and agreement was secured.

I ended the leadership meeting with a viewing of *The Revolutionary Idea of Praying for You*.<sup>1</sup> This forty-five minute DVD message was the first segment of the "Praying for You" seminar, the seminar that I later presented to the entire congregation. This topical sermon by Howard Tryon, Jr., Executive Director of Praying for You was introductory, informative, and intentionally motivational.<sup>2</sup> The concept of relational prayer witnessing was presented. Viewers received encouragement to make prayer witnessing a practice, beginning with a commitment to attend the entire seminar. This preview helped to clarify the training process and solidify leadership commitment to the program.

### **Creating Awareness of Need**

In an attempt to create a sense of need within the congregation at large, preparation continued with a Sunday morning sermon on the book of Nehemiah. The

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<sup>1</sup>Howard A. Tryon, Jr., *The Revolutionary Idea of Praying for You* [DVD]; accessed 24 April 2012; available from [www.prayingforyou.org](http://www.prayingforyou.org); Internet.

<sup>2</sup>Praying for You is both the ministry name and the seminar title. When used in reference to the seminar, the words will be found in quotations.

recent years of surviving our own version of exile (dispossessed of our property and faced with the challenge of physical reconstruction) provided rich application. The survivors of the exile in Jerusalem were called to reconstruct a city and its walls. In biblical terms, however, Jerusalem was more than walls and a city. It was emblematic of God's testimony on earth. Neglect of Jerusalem was a barometer of their spiritual condition. It was their watch, and the fact that the holy city lay in ruins after nearly 100 years was a reproach to them. This event was their ABC moment.<sup>3</sup> By comparison, I identified now as our moment for alarm. The local church is also more than walls and buildings. It is to be a testimony to God in its neighborhood. Now is our watch and the wall of testimony is down. A wall of witness needs to be rebuilt.

A second Sunday message on Matthew 5:14-16 followed the next week. Verse 16 provided the rationale and philosophy for the project proposal articulating its goal: "In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." Through repeated mention of this verse, I warned against any false notion that the completion of a six-lane parkway would in any way satisfy God's requirement.<sup>4</sup> No matter how advantageous the exposure, location on a heavily traveled state road does not qualify as a fleshed-out presence in the community. I intended that this verse be adopted as a guide to encapsulate the aims and ideals of this outreach. Matthew 5:16 received repeated mention thereafter in the pulpit and in subsequent correspondence.

My application of this passage followed this very simple line of thought: Believers are light, and light must be visible. If light is not visible, it is not functioning like light and has no value. Sadly, those who possess the light cover it up, thereby failing

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<sup>3</sup>See chap. 3 for a description of an ABC moment.

<sup>4</sup>See chap. 1 for an explanation of the parkway and its importance to the church.

in God's purpose. Too often Christians hide the light of Jesus behind the four walls of a church building. And, while it is true that some people might wander in and hear the gospel, most do not. Driving by a building does not expose the community to the light. Seeing buildings is not seeing the church. The church is comprised of people, not a building. People need to see us, not buildings. There is a world lying in darkness, and it will only experience genuine light to the degree that the church, body, hands, and feet, gets out and makes itself visible to the world.

### **Proposing a Solution**

Matthew 5:16 became foundational to my proposal of food drives. Likewise, 1 Peter 2:11-12 says,

Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day He visits us.

In tandem with Matthew 5:16, this cross reference gave additional scriptural support for my proposal. Feeding the hungry is one means to be in the world doing good works, visibly letting Jesus' light shine. The intention should be that, by such works, we might catch the attention of neighbors in a positive way, allowing the opportunity to solicit prayer requests. These requests, in turn, present the opportunity for relational prayer witnessing to begin.

Preparation also included two explanatory and motivational newsletters. The first of these two letters, entitled "Looking Ahead," again cautioned against the danger of allowing the near completion of Metro Parkway to become a default mechanism for securing a presence in the community. Newly gained exposure from a road opening, regardless of its benefits, does not excuse the church from going. The hope that people driving by will see the church's buildings and *come to us* is just the opposite of the Lord's instructions to his church in Matthew 28:18-20, which commands us *to go to them*. I then referenced my two recent sermons, proposing the prayer-based strategy for

outreach delineated in chapter 1 of this project. I very briefly introduced this strategy as a twofold approach that combines prayer and good works, announced a January startup, and promised greater detail in future letters and meetings.

The second letter focused on Canning Hunger thru Neighborhood Connections,<sup>5</sup> placing an emphasis on its value as a vehicle for displaying good works in the community.<sup>6</sup> The letter noted that good works make a believer's faith visible before the world, elevating the church: "A city on a hill cannot be hidden" (Matt 5:14). It also noted how good works lend credibility to the church in the eyes of the world. I asked them to consider results from a recent survey:

A large religious publisher asked on a nationwide survey what churches ought to do more of in order to be credible and true to purpose. Among respondents who are active in a church, the predominant answers focused on sharing Christ (and on worship). The predominant answer from non-church attenders, however was do more for the poor and the hungry. We often validate ourselves by outreach, by the Great Commission. The people we want to reach validate us by the Great Commandment.<sup>7</sup>

Additionally, references to Isaiah 58:10, Psalm 146:6-7, James 2:14-17, and Psalm 41:1 lent strong biblical support to the project's emphasis on feeding the hungry. Such a practice, faithfully carried out before the world by God's people, provides a solid platform from which to pursue relational prayer witnessing. In other words, if people think we are real, they will be more apt to share personal needs. Since prayer is almost always appreciated, I suggested it as an effective bridge-building opportunity for evangelism. By January 1, with the compass set, "all hands on deck" echoed forth.

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<sup>5</sup>Canning Hunger, Inc., "Canning Hunger thru Neighborhood Connections" [on-line]; accessed 24 April 2012; available from <http://canninghunger.org>; Internet.

<sup>6</sup>As a ministry, Canning Hunger served as a precedent for the church's use of food collections to make connections in its surrounding community. It was an example to be followed, without becoming a rigid blueprint. The idea was liberally adapted.

<sup>7</sup>Norman W. Whan, "Canning Hunger thru Neighborhood Connections: Pastor's Guide" [on-line]; accessed 24 April 2012; available from [http://canninghunger.org/images/pastors\\_guide.pdf](http://canninghunger.org/images/pastors_guide.pdf); Internet.

## Project Implementation

### Clarification and Commitment: Weeks 1 and 2

As previously stated, in the weeks preceding, I aimed at securing conviction. With the advent of a new year and the implementation of the actual project, the immediate concern was to clarify the process and to secure commitments quickly. This appeal began with a congregational meeting held on January 1, 2012, scheduled in place of Sunday school. An informative explanation that elaborated upon the project's philosophy and logic, concluded with questions and answers. In conjunction with the congregational meeting, the morning message in the subsequent service addressed 1 Timothy 2:1-8.

First Timothy 2:1-8 advances the reasons for and benefits of evangelistic praying. This passage became the basis of an appeal for commitments. Prayers for all men are a requirement placed upon all believers, not an option. The Greek literally states that evangelistic praying is "acceptable before" (in the presence of) God.<sup>8</sup> In other words, it pleases God. It pleases God because when one prays for "all people" one is praying the heart of God. God expresses His desire for "all men" in 2 Peter 3:9 where it describes God as "not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."

In 1 Timothy 2:1-8 Paul echoes Peter's sentiment and reiterates God's desire in the context of prayer. This passage has prayer at the beginning and the end, prayer everywhere in between, and right in the middle. Paul says that "God wants all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth" (v. 3). When the disciples asked Jesus how to pray He said, pray like this: "This, then, is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven'" (Matt 6:9-10). If one wants to obey the command of God, he or she "should pray." If one wants to pray the will of God, they should pray generally for "all men," and

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<sup>8</sup>A. Duane Lipton, *1 Timothy*, The Bible Knowledge Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1983), 734.

specifically for their salvation. This reasoning led into a call for commitment to the proposed strategy.

On Thursday, January 5, with the previous Sunday's sermon still fresh on their minds, a third letter, including one survey for each adult family member and a postage paid pre-addressed return envelope, arrived in the homes of all members and regular attendees. The letter introduced the survey and identified it as part of my doctoral project. The letter instructed its recipients to return the surveys by mail or via a collection box in the church foyer. All respondents were urged to remain anonymous, with no name required. Their anonymity would encourage honesty. I cautioned each respondent to complete the survey individually without any collaboration.<sup>9</sup>

The questions in this survey addressed the spiritual condition of both the church and the individual. I described it as an assessment tool to surface areas for improvement in the New Year. Lamentations 3:40 says, "Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord."

If, after taking the survey, they felt a need to take personal responsibility for increasing their commitment to prayer and outreach, the letter advised attendance at the "Praying for You" DVD seminar as a serious option for consideration. Following a brief description of the seminar's purpose and value, the letter announced Saturday, January 14 as the seminar date, including the five hour schedule itself. It also published Sunday, January 8 as the day for registration and gave notice that the first forty-five minute portion, *The Revolutionary Idea of Praying for You*, would be shown in place of that day's morning message.

On the morning of Sunday, January 8, as previously announced, in place of the

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<sup>9</sup>The survey was taken twice by the same participants, once at the beginning and once at the end of the project. This action was taken in order to measure the project's success, via a before and after comparison. For this reason, the results of the survey are examined in the final assessment, which is the subject of chap. 5.

regular weekly message, the congregation viewed the DVD sermon. The reader may remember that this message received an earlier viewing from the deacons. The practical benefit of viewing this message on the Sunday prior to the Saturday seminar was fourfold: It served as a powerful promotional tool. It abbreviated the Saturday seminar, making the day a more manageable commitment of time. It increased attendance: people caught the vision and signed up. It freed me up from sermon preparation, allowing additional time to manage and coordinate details.

After hearing the message, those wishing to register received the opportunity. Pre-registration assured the preparation of an accurate number of seminar notebooks for the participants. It also provided an opportunity to make their commitments. Registration was the place where vacillation ended. Members were encouraged to actually sign on the dotted line.

On this same Sunday, the adult Sunday school hour once again became a forum for further clarification. This second of two consecutive congregational meetings featured an informative session for all of those interested in understanding more about the Canning Hunger thru Neighborhood Connections program. Through a 30-minute CD, Norman Whan, the founder and executive director, shared the history and value of this unique approach to ministry.<sup>10</sup> In addition to meeting critical hunger needs, its benefit as a non-threatening means of representing Christ and our church, while simultaneously engaging in relational prayer witnessing, was the emphasis.

The CD provided an opportunity for further discussion and proved to be an effective tool for recruitment. I asked for volunteers who would commit themselves to a minimum of three neighborhood collections within a 15-week period. I also suggested that they listen attentively to the DVD sermon coming moments later in the morning worship service, urging consideration of Neighborhood Connections as an opportunity to

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<sup>10</sup>Whan, "Canning Hunger."



put the message and its principles of relational prayer witnessing into immediate practice. In a single Sunday, the people found an opportunity for serious reflection upon the challenge of both Praying for You and Canning Hunger thru Neighborhood Connections.

### **“Praying for You” Seminar**

On January 14, Saturday of week 2, the doors to the “Praying for You” seminar opened at 8:30 AM. People gathered over coffee, juice, and pastries. As the majority did arrive early, this gesture was most appreciated. Volunteers greeted everyone as they entered, distributing seminar notebooks and pens if needed. I made myself available to answer questions and rehearse the schedule for anyone who still needed clarification. By the time the seminar began at 9:00 AM, everyone was ready and in their seats. Introductory instructions encouraged all 38 of the participants to treat the day as a live seminar by taking notes and participating in the role playing and applications.

The seminar schedule broke down into four segments. From 9:00 AM. to 10:00 AM the subject was “Preliminaries: Kindness and Dependency.” A break followed from 10:00 AM to 10:15 AM. The second video session entitled, “Starting Praying for You,” ended at 11:40 AM. A church-provided lunch followed. The third segment was called, “Nurturing Praying for You.” This DVD instruction began at 12:30 PM and ended with a break at 1:30 PM. The final installment, “Revival and Commitment,” continued from 1:45 PM to 2:50 PM.

Through the DVD format, Howard Tryon first showed how Jesus modeled a very relational and compassionate approach to ministry. Praying for You, in contrast to some of the more rigid approaches to evangelism, is relational. Implementing relational prayer evangelism requires kindness as one of two preliminary principles. Tryon writes,

Praying for You fits believers because it is compassionate. You do not need the gift of evangelism to pray for others. You do not need a sales personality to use Praying for You because it doesn’t ask you to buttonhole a person, sell a concept, and then run out the back door. You can simply care for an unbeliever, offering intimacy and

friendship without requiring anything in return. It focuses on active prayer, interceding with God for an individual for his or her earthly and eternal life.<sup>11</sup>

The second preliminary principle was dependency, learning to rely upon the power of God in evangelism.

Guided by these principles, Tryon encouraged participants to initiate intentional relationships with unbelieving acquaintances. His instruction included the mechanics of Praying for You. Practical principles were taught, helping Christians to identify circles of relationship and to nurture prayer relationships within those circles, always keeping the focus on sharing Christ. He placed a heavy emphasis upon the need for revival and encouraged participants to make a commitment to implement Praying for You immediately.

The seminar placed an emphasis on immediate implementation and accountability. At the conclusion of the seminar, Tryon asked participants to select one to five unbelievers from their sphere of influence and to begin the Praying for You process over a six-month period. He asked all in attendance to choose accountability partners from those attending. Each person shared with the other the names on his or her prayer list. Tryon then urged each set of prayer partners to begin praying immediately for the salvation of the one to five people on their partner's list. The seminar instruction paused, allowing the opportunity for partners to pray with each other. Each participant was then encouraged to commit to at least twelve weeks of prayer phone calls with his or her partner. Such encouragement and accountability were to continue until both had another support system in place.

In contrast to a live seminar, the DVD format provided one significant advantage. Some who wished to attend, but due to scheduling conflicts could not, were

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<sup>11</sup>Howard A. Tryon, Jr., *Praying for You* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1996), 43. Howard Tryon's words suggest that more aggressive methods of evangelism are not compassionate. In this author's view, such a suggestion, if intended, is misguided. There are many acceptable methods of evangelism, and any such method, when motivated by love, can be viewed as compassionate.

able to borrow the DVDs for later viewing at home. One couple and one entire family of six did so. This option was not something to announce publicly, lest it be a temptation for some to skip the day itself with the thought that they might more easily view it at their own leisure. For those who took the initiative to explain their conflict and make a private request, I was glad to comply.

### **Canning Hunger thru Neighborhood Connections**

**The first visit.** The focus of this project quickly moved from the seminar phase to the first of three Canning Hunger thru Neighborhood Connections food drives. This event, just two weeks after the seminar, did not come about without detailed preparation. Volunteer recruitment began with the previously described informational meeting on Sunday, January 1. Sunday, January 22 provided the opportunity for another, though much shorter, informational meeting after the morning service. On Monday, the president of the neighborhood association immediately adjacent to the church property enthusiastically granted the church permission for food collections. The community had “no soliciting” posted at the entrance. This restriction and common courtesy necessitated the request. A Tuesday letter, sent to all of the church’s members and regular attendees, detailed the Saturday collection, giving notice of what to expect and when to arrive at the church.

Door hangers, ordered and purchased from Canning Hunger, announced the visit in advance. These door hangers left certain portions blank, requiring volunteers to fill in the name of our church, the time of the coming visit, and The Salvation Army as the recipient of all food items collected. On Wednesday, four volunteers completed three hundred hangers. The hangers began with the words, “An invitation from your neighbor at Parkway Baptist Church. Our neighborhood is canning hunger, and we need you!”

Additional information and an invitation to donate came on the reverse side of the card. Volunteers also paper clipped a neatly folded personal letter from the pastor to each door hanger. This letter described the hunger concerns in their own county, along

with the church's desire to partner together with its neighbors in alleviating this need. It informed its recipients that this visit would be the first of three over the next several weeks. It also included this additional invitation:

Through our church's prayer ministry we will be praying for the people who receive the food because they have so many needs, and we know that prayer makes a difference. We also know that there are many needs right here in our own neighborhood. If your family has a need you would like us to remember in prayer, please feel free to share it with one of our volunteers. We will put it on our list, and pray for you.<sup>12</sup>

The letter closed with my signature.

Three others and I went house-to-house on Thursday morning and early afternoon, leaving the hangers on the doors. In addition to the door hangers and letters, a large professionally designed banner with the words, "Canning Hunger thru Neighborhood Connections" hung along the road just in front of the church buildings. Its presence there helped to accentuate public awareness.<sup>13</sup> I proposed the design and contracted a local company to produce it.

On January 28, Saturday of week 4, 32 volunteers met in the church Fellowship Hall at 9:30 AM. I organized them into teams of two and gave their street assignments. Everyone received an official Canning Hunger thru Neighborhood Connections nametag, along with folders containing record keeping sheets. These sheets, designed by a deacon, contained columns to record contributions, or lack thereof, home-by-home. They also included space for any noteworthy comments, observations, and prayer requests. Final instructions and any necessary reminders were given and everyone departed at 10:15 AM.

There were a few elderly people in the church who wished to participate but were not able to physically go door-to-door. One or two others also wished to be involved,

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<sup>12</sup>This invitation is adapted and loosely quoted from Canning Hunger, Inc., "Canning Hunger thru Neighborhood Connections: Participants Guide" [on-line]; accessed 24 April 2012; available from <http://canninghunger.org>; Internet.

<sup>13</sup>The banner remained on display for a few days after each collection. Post-collection, however, a large yard sign with the words, "Thank You!" was placed in front.

but not in the door-to-door encounters. These individuals organized into a prayer team that stayed behind. They continued in prayer for the greater portion of time the rest were out visiting. This action proved to be very advantageous. For example, during the visits one individual requested prayer for the owner of the home who was currently in the hospital with pancreatic cancer. The volunteer informed him that she would call his request in on her cell phone immediately, as a team was currently in prayer. This call was made and intercession began. The resident was visibly heartened, extending a genuine expression of thanks.

The visits came to completion by noon. Everyone gathered in the church pavilion for hot dogs and hamburgers. The church provided the lunch, with one of the deacons, whose health problems did not allow him to go, preparing it. This gathering proved to be an informal but very effective time to debrief and share stories. The food collection was generous. Everyone agreed that the morning was a good start at tearing down barriers through face-to-face exposure in a cordial, non-threatening context.

The follow-up to this first round of visits included the delivery of all food collections to The Salvation Army on Tuesday of the following week. Before delivery, however, one of our ladies tabulated how many pounds of food, minus the packaging, we collected. On Wednesday, February 7, I composed a one page thank-you letter, reporting how many pounds of food had been collected and congratulated the neighbors on a successful community effort. I copied the letter onto formal church stationary, solicited church volunteers to prepare the mailing, and delivered 250 letters to the post office on February 9.<sup>14</sup>

Canning Hunger suggests that, after each visit, repeated attempts be made to collect food from those households where earlier no one was home. We found this practice

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<sup>14</sup>The church purchased names and addresses from <http://www.alescodata.com>. The initial purchase included preprinted mailing labels. For all future mailings, a volunteer typed a master list that could be copied onto address labels.

impractical for such a large area, especially given the many residents who were absent. Also, since this project, in contrast to the actual Neighborhood Connections model, was not carried out in the immediate proximity of their own homes, volunteers could not simply walk across or down their own street at any time to make a repeated call.

Regardless, however, of whether residents were home or not, and regardless of whether they donated or not, all of the households received equal treatment. All received thank you letters and a future gift.<sup>15</sup> The letter was crafted to thank the neighborhood at large, congratulating them corporately as a single community, without sorting those who gave from those who did not. This approach also justified sending a subsequent gift to every household.

I later wrote a personal letter to the pancreatic cancer patient, assuring him of our prayers and offering my services, as well as those of the church, including within the envelope a small gospel of John with a tract attached. Follow-up continued with each one of our church's Neighborhood Connections volunteers also receiving notes expressing my appreciation for their sacrifice of time. Our church began immediately incorporating prayers for the outreach, the neighborhood at large, and for the one request, into long-established prayer times. These occasions included twice monthly men's prayer breakfasts, weekly Wednesday night Bible studies, adult Sunday school, and frequent ladies' Bible studies.

**The second visit.** This visit occurred on March 10, Saturday of week 10. After the first visit, it continued to be apparent that Canning Hunger thru Neighborhood Connections on this scale and in this way required significant adjustments to the original model. Canning Hunger is designed for Christians to reach their individual neighborhood by selecting eight to ten households within easy walking distance of their own homes.

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<sup>15</sup>The gift was given between the second and third visit and is described under this chapter's subheading, "The Third Visit."

The volunteers went into the neighborhood surrounding our church's physical address. Instead of a small number of homes, we connected with 250 households.

This factor made the use of door-hangers announcing each visit impractical. Given that most of the homes are located on acreage with lengthy driveways and ample distance between them, this approach proved to be awkward and time consuming, especially on a workday when few volunteers are available. In addition, on the actual day of the food collection, volunteers found that many of the residents routinely only use one door in and out of their homes. Often the door hanger remained unseen, still dangling on the unused door where it had been previously placed. Others may well have blown away.

Before the second visit this problem had to be addressed. In doing so, the church hired a local business to print oversize postcards to be mailed. The front of each card was identical in design to the roadside banner previously mentioned. This visual correlation with the banner proved beneficial. Before the second visit, a volunteer again posted the banner. Residents repeatedly drove by each day it was posted. Meanwhile, the postcards arrived in their mailboxes. Upon delivery, they recognized the cards by their resemblance to the banner and associated the two. This recognition improved the chance that each card would be read before finding its way into the trash. The cards again gave thanks for their initial donations. As with the door hangers, they announced the day and time for a second collection, and again mentioned the church's willingness to receive prayer requests. During the second visit many neighbors did mention receiving them and expressed approval.

The second visit came just six weeks after the first with 26 volunteers participating. The time constraints imposed upon the project made this relatively rapid revisit necessary. Without this constraint, wisdom might suggest allowing at least eight weeks between the two contacts. The reduced number of donations received upon this repeat visit also suggested an allowance of more time. Out of consideration for the neighbors, some volunteers felt this turnabout uncomfortably short as well. During the

visits, however, no one received any verbally negative responses. Volunteers were able to build upon some of the acquaintances previously made. Positive interaction prevailed.

In the course of this visit, three additional requests for prayer surfaced. Two of these requests were major. One related to an adult daughter who, due to a serious illness, required round the clock care from her elderly mother. The other request was prayer for a wife with severe liver disease and the husband who had recently lost his job. The response to these requests followed the steps previously described. With this visit the church reconnected with the household that, upon our first visit, had requested prayer for the owner with cancer. The wife answered and expressed genuine appreciation for our prayers and the pastor's letter, apologizing for not yet contacting the church personally to extend thanks.

In addition to the personal letter and tract mentioned earlier, I also made attempts to follow-up on the prayer requests with a personal visit. When possible, at a later date, I would introduce myself at their doorstep, remind them of the previous visit, assure them of continued prayers, and offer any possible help. If no one was home to answer the door, a business card and a brief personal handwritten note left behind gave notice of the effort.

The day after the second visit, Sunday, March 11 an officer with the local chapter of The Salvation Army addressed the combined adult and youth Sunday school classes. His presentation placed special emphasis upon the hunger needs exacerbated by the poor economy in the immediate county. His personal interest stories tugged at heartstrings. Stories about children who were able to have dinner rather than go to bed hungry because of the ministry of The Salvation Army, and stories about families who did not run out of food before the next paycheck because of projects like ours heightened enthusiasm. The speaker emphasized that because of such efforts, The Salvation Army had been able to respond with the resources for a growing number of emergency needs. His report gave credibility to the previous day's food collection, validating it as a



ministry that could stand alone as a legitimate need and not just a stealth strategy for doing evangelism.

**The third visit.** Before the third visit the church purchased a thank-you gift for every household on our route. I wanted something that would be deemed a legitimate gift, yet tactfully evangelistic in its intent. The church purchased 250 copies of *More Than a Carpenter* by Josh McDowell.<sup>16</sup> Each book contained a letter of explanation and thanks. Rather than hand delivery, we again saved time and avoided complications by utilizing the United States Postal Service. The time limits of the project necessitated giving the gift after only two visits. This necessity proved to be strategic, timing their arrival only a few days before Easter. Thematically, it was the right fit for the season. Their arrival before the third visit also allowed the opportunity to receive any feedback about or impressions of the book upon that final visit.

After due consideration, *More Than a Carpenter* surfaced as the book of choice for this gift. It did so for these reasons: It is a small book and relatively inexpensive when purchased in bulk. It is evangelistic, but sensitively so. It appeals to one's curiosity by addressing questions that commonly arise in any conversation surrounding the truth claims of Christianity. It is an apologetic, but given just a few days before Easter tastefully so and timely. There is a reason for the recurrence of such themes in newspapers and magazines every Easter season. News outlets know what people are thinking about and seek to capitalize upon a predictable rise in interest. It is a witnessing book, but giving it just a few days before Easter hopefully alleviated any possible suspicion that the church disingenuously was merely targeting people for conversion.

Shortly after sending out these books, the church received a thank you card in the church mail with this note: "Pastor Anderson, Thank you and your church for the

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<sup>16</sup>Josh McDowell and Sean McDowell, *More Than a Carpenter* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2009).

wonderful outreach with the recent food drive. As well, thank you for the book, 'More Than a Carpenter.' We are blessed to have your church here in the neighborhood. Please accept this small donation for your continued efforts in spreading God's Word. Have a blessed Easter!"

This third and final Neighborhood Connections visit occurred on Saturday, April 28. Twenty-one volunteers participated. Except for the gift, preparations proceeded as before, with one further addition. The design of the original banner with its colors, font, and layout began to take on the function of a product label. As previously mentioned, the first side of the postcard perfectly matched the roadside banner. Seeing the value of this correlation, in preparation for the third visit, in addition to the postcards and banner, the church ordered six professionally manufactured two foot by two foot yard signs of the same design.

These signs, posted a few days in advance of the visit, were set up at the entry to each of the roads along the established neighborhood route. The lower portion of each sign contained an erasable surface where the time and date could be written in with a dry erase marker. This feature allowed repeated use for future visits. This addition continued to create awareness, assuring that the neighbors would remember the upcoming visit. The design became a kind of product branding that projected an image of an established ministry, making our outreach appear bigger than it really was.

Before this visit, I sought to remove any objections residents might have about the frequency of the visits and address any apprehension about long-range plans. Three visits within such a short period might seem excessive to some. The church did not want to be perceived as burdensome. The postcards preceding this visit again thanked the community for its earlier contributions but, on this occasion, assured its residents that this visit would be our last food collection at their location for several months. The church would be moving its canning drive on to other, as of yet, un-approached streets and neighborhoods.

With this third visit, the volunteers received instruction to specifically ask the residents if they had any prayer requests we might remember. To date, such instruction was not yet given. The expectation was that, by this time in the process, residents might feel a greater freedom to offer requests. Three separate mailings had expressed the church's willingness to pray for their needs, and now we would make a special effort to ask. The neighborhood response to this offer might also serve as some measure of this project's success in breaking down barriers. Hopefully, our neighbors would see the efforts as credible and the volunteers as real people with whom they could share freely.

The response was encouraging, albeit not overwhelmingly so. Eighteen requests for prayer were made during this visit. These requests primarily centered upon various health-related issues. Each request, however, once again afforded the church an opportunity to reply with a letter assuring prayer, along with the inclusion of a Gospel of John and a tract. These requests continued the opportunity to pursue a process of spiritual cultivation within the neighborhood, leaving long-term benefits yet to be assessed.

The value of relational prayer witnessing quickly became apparent in the case of the previously mentioned couple suffering from job loss and liver disease. Both surprised us with their attendance at the church's Easter sunrise service. In the course of the third visit, while making stops elsewhere, I also received a call from the wife asking about the times of our regular Sunday service. Church-going friends would be visiting them in a few weeks. Since these friends were committed to regular church attendance, and would be going somewhere anyway, why not, she reasoned, encourage them to attend this church, and why should they themselves not attend with them?

Another opportunity for outreach came with a man in his seventies who lost his wife 5 years earlier, lived by himself in a home of nearly five thousand square feet, with two thousand square feet of empty horse stables in the back, all on five acres of land. His home, however, had become a prison. Its maintenance issues were too much. His family lived in Chicago. He was all alone and unable, in the current market, to sell his home and

move to a place with more human contact. Starved for company, he invited me in and engaged me in conversation for some time. He even promised to drop a book by the church office after completing it. It was a book I had seen on the counter and inquired about. Here is an example of how an outreach like this one can surface needs that a church would otherwise be unaware of and open doors for future ministry.

### **Sermon Series**

This project included a series of eight sermons on the subject of praying evangelistically. Each sermon addressed evangelistic needs and urged the practice of evangelistic praying as essential to success. An early message addressed prayer and the sovereignty of God. Prayer is the ordained means toward assuring that God's decreed redemptive will is done. This reality is not by man's design but by God's sovereign choice. Human responsibility and evangelistic praying headlined the subsequent message. With these two messages working together, I hoped to remove any theological objections that might dissuade enthusiastic acceptance of the concept. The God who decrees salvation ordains prayer as the means.

Three messages showcased examples of evangelistic praying. While history is filled with many wonderful examples, there are no better examples than those of Jesus, the apostle Paul, and the early church. Each of these three examples comprised a separate message. I was hopeful that some of the dynamic characteristics of their prayer lives might become part of the congregation's experience personally and corporately. Who can argue against the practice of evangelistic praying if Jesus, Paul, and the early church can convincingly be shown to have done so? What greater motivation could there be to pray for the lost than to know that in doing so one is walking with the giants?

Along with the initial January 1 message on 1 Timothy 2:1-8, two additional messages concluded the eight week series. These two sermons included praying in faith that God is working and evangelistic prayer strategies for today. Reading God's Word is a key to praying in faith. In Scripture the intercessor discovers who God is. He or she

discovers his heart for the lost. In his Word, God also reveals desires. His desires should guide the believer's prayers. One expressed desire is that all people be saved. When a believer prays for the salvation of sinners, that individual can pray in faith, knowing such prayers are in concert with God's desired will. They can pray with confidence because they are actually praying the will of God.

How should one pray for the lost? What is the strategy for today? The answer to these questions comprised the remaining sermon. This message illustrated the challenge faced in evangelism with two passages. The first passage was Mark 9:14-29. The disciples' role in this story illustrated the task every time the believer tried to witness to someone. Satan will resist fiercely. He will do everything in his power to keep the lost in his grip. Coming down from the Mount of Transfiguration with Peter, James, and John, Jesus arrived at a scene of confusion. A man, having brought his demon-possessed son to the disciples for exorcism, found the disciples powerless to do so. An intense argument ensued, and a curious crowd quickly gathered. In spite of that, however, after a brief dialog with the boy's father, Jesus cast out the spirit. The demons resisted intensely. The boy cried, shrieked, trembled, and convulsed. He was so physically exhausted that he appeared to be dead. Later, his disciples asked him privately, "Why couldn't we drive it out?" Jesus replied, "This kind can come out only by prayer" (Mark 9:29). The same rule applies in witnessing: Pray!

The second illustration was found in Mark 3:27. Jesus warned, "In fact, no one can enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can rob his house." Satan is "the strong man." His "house" is the world (2 Cor 4:4), and his "possessions" are people who are enslaved within "this dark world" (Eph 6:12). "No one can enter" his kingdom to "carry off" his possessions "unless he first binds the strong man." "Then he can rob" the realm and release the enslaved victims.

Ultimately, Jesus is the One who has bound the strong man. There is still,

however, an application for every believer in fighting spiritual battles, foremost of which is the struggle to win the lost. The intercessor must not trust in individual strength but must first “bind the strong man” with prayer. Believers must pray for God to enlighten sin-darkened minds (Rom 1:21), to give sight to those who are spiritually blinded (2 Cor 4:4), to soften hearts hardened by pride (Luke 8:6), to lead them to knowledge of the truth, and to grant them repentance so that they come to their senses and escape the devil’s trap (2 Tim 2:26).

What one must pray is that God would deliver the person from the distractions and confusion that would keep him or her from faith in Christ. One is asking God to remove barriers to trusting in the Lord. Prayer prepares the soil of people’s hearts to receive the gospel message. In any strategy for today, the biblical rules of spiritual warfare still apply.

### **Book Display**

I hoped to reinforce the sermon series, as well as the entire church-wide emphasis of this project, with a display of books on the subject of prayer. This exhibit began on Sunday, February 5. These books, on display for the whole congregation Sunday after Sunday, became a prominent feature upon entering the church sanctuary. Some of these books were selected from our church library. Others were newly purchased. They included: *Prayer: A Holy Occupation* by Oswald Chambers,<sup>17</sup> *Lord Teach Me to Pray* by John MacArthur,<sup>18</sup> *Too Busy Not to Pray* by Bill Hybels,<sup>19</sup> *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* by Donald S. Whitney,<sup>20</sup> *Prayer Adventure* by David

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<sup>17</sup>Oswald Chambers, *Prayer: A Holy Occupation* (Grand Rapids: Discovery, 1992).

<sup>18</sup>John MacArthur, *Lord, Teach Me to Pray* (Nashville: Countryman, 2003).

<sup>19</sup>Bill Hybels, *Too Busy Not to Pray* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1984).

<sup>20</sup>Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1991).

Jeremiah,<sup>21</sup> *Talking to God: What the Bible Teaches About Prayer* by Thomas L. Constable,<sup>22</sup> *Prayer Powerpoints* compiled by Randall D. Roth,<sup>23</sup> *Alone with God: Rediscovering the Passion and Power of Prayer* by John MacArthur,<sup>24</sup> *Experiencing Prayer with Jesus* by Henry and Norman Blackaby,<sup>25</sup> *A Passion for Prayer: Experiencing Deeper Intimacy with God* by Tom Elliff,<sup>26</sup> *Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire* by Jim Cymbala,<sup>27</sup> and *Talking with My Father: Jesus Teaches on Prayer* by Ray C. Stedman.<sup>28</sup>

All of the books stood on a wire display rack. This display proved to be an excellent means of showcasing these books and highlighting the recent emphasis on prayer. Set up in the church foyer, the display immediately captured the attention of all the worshippers who entered. On the first Sunday, a small group of the curious soon gathered. Some of the books were checked out that same day. These books remained on display and were available for checkout for the duration of this project. They are now in the church library and permanently available as a vital instructional and inspirational resource.

### **Evangelistic Prayer Meetings**

In early March, I announced the start of a new prayer group called “Prayer

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<sup>21</sup>David Jeremiah, *Prayer the Great Adventure* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1997).

<sup>22</sup>Thomas L. Constable, *Talking to God: What the Bible Teaches About Prayer* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1995).

<sup>23</sup>Randall D. Roth, *Prayer Powerpoints* (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1995).

<sup>24</sup>John MacArthur, *Alone with God: Rediscovering the Passion and Power of Prayer* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 1981).

<sup>25</sup>Henry and Norman Blackaby, *Experiencing Prayer with Jesus* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2006).

<sup>26</sup>Tom Elliff, *A Passion for Prayer: Discovering Deeper Intimacy with God* (Fort Washington, PA: CLC, 2010).

<sup>27</sup>Jim Cymbala, *Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997).

<sup>28</sup>Ray C. Stedman, *Talking with My Father: Jesus Teaches on Prayer* (Grand Rapids: Discovery, 1997).

with a Purpose.” With eight in attendance, the first meeting took place on Saturday, March 17 at 6:00 PM. The meetings continued, with only a few exceptions, on each Saturday evening thereafter. I extended an invitation to all of the church’s members and regular attendees:

I know that many of you have friends and/or family members that you are concerned about and praying for—those who as of yet have not personally received Jesus as their Savior. It’s no secret; I have been speaking at great length on the subject of praying evangelistically. What about regularly scheduled prayer meetings where we do just that—pray for unsaved friends and family members by name? That is what I am suggesting! The sole purpose of these meetings will be only that—prayers for the unsaved friends and family members who weigh heavy on our hearts, and prayers for each other that we might be given opportunities to share our faith with them, along with confidence and clarity in doing so. This will be an opportunity to solicit special prayer for those of concern to you, and to join in prayer for those of concern to others. It will be coming together with one propose and in one place, becoming a cord of several strands that cannot be broken. No other prayer requests will be considered at these meetings—only evangelistic prayers. Will you come? Will you join? Let’s make it a time of prayer—just to plead the Lord of the harvest to do something special. Will you consider an initial four-week commitment, starting on Saturday, March 17 at 6 PM?

In the letter of invitation I reminded recipients of the twelve-week commitment many had made at the conclusion of the “Praying for You” seminar. Seminar attendees had joined in partnerships, agreeing to twelve weeks of prayer phone calls for the purpose of encouragement and accountability. How many had actually held consistently to that commitment? Their accountability with their prayer partner was to continue until both had found another support system. If any had lapsed in that initial commitment, I invited them to join this new prayer group as an optional support system for continuing partnerships in winning their unbelieving friends and family members to Christ.

In the first few meetings, the purpose was clarified. Participants were to pray only evangelistic prayers. We discussed that such prayer involves specifically asking God to draw the lost to himself (John 6:44), to open their ears to comprehend the gospel (2 Cor 4:4), and to soften their hearts to receive it (Luke 8:11-15). God must take the initiative in the life of the unbeliever. He does so in response to prayer. In subsequent meetings, introductory remarks included mention of the need to begin praying evangelistically for ourselves. Christians should pray for themselves that God would



give them hearts of compassion (2 Cor 5:14), open doors to share the gospel (Col 4:3), enable them to effectively articulate the message (Col 4:4), and replace timidity with confidence (Eph 6:19). Believers must talk to God about the lost, and then, with dependence upon him, go out and engage them in spiritual conversations.

We prayed for the lost, grouping them according to spheres of influence: family, friends, work, neighbors, people whose businesses we patronize, etc. I listed these individuals according to each sphere of influence, made copies, and passed out prayer sheets. We then prayed through each group sequentially. Since only a small number attended, everyone prayed, doing so rotationally. For example, I would begin with prayer for neighbors. One after the next, each participant would follow the lead by praying through that group. When it circled back, I would pray again, transitioning the prayers into the next group. Once more, the others would follow the lead until it came back full circle yet another time, whereupon, I would again transition into the next group. They would again follow, with this rotation continuing until every sphere of influence had been prayed through.

I found this approach to be most effective. Gone were the long pauses, waiting between prayers to see who would pray next. Everyone was expected to pray but without any feeling of coercion. No one felt awkward or uncomfortable. With no more than six to eight individuals, these prayers easily filled more than one hour with unbroken intercession. The participants left each meeting feeling like they had done business with God. Should this meeting grow, increased numbers could be managed by grouping participants into multiple prayer circles scattered throughout the sanctuary. This approach has since become a pattern for deacon meetings.

### **Personal Prayer Accountability**

One goal of the project was to enhance my own effectiveness in evangelism by giving increased attention to prayer in my personal life and ministry. Rather than exercising dependence upon programs and methods, I recognized my need to prioritize

prayer more intentionally. The apostles in the early church set the precedent when the twelve insisted, “We will . . . give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4). To hold myself accountable in the matter of prayer, I pursued a two-fold strategy. First, I would more carefully log my daily time spent in prayer. This personal accountability would give a measure of progress whereby I might compete against myself for greater improvement. Second, I would enlist another man from the church to which I could hold myself accountable. Previously I had never confided in, sought encouragement from, or held myself accountable to anyone in the matter of my own personal discipline of prayer. This enlistment took place. We met repeatedly throughout the extent of this project. This relationship proved to be, not only a motivator and an encouragement to me, but it also challenged my confidant to advance his own prayer life forward. The “iron sharpens iron” (Prov 27:17) benefit experienced through this discipline makes this exercise worthy of continued practice.

### **Conclusion**

I found this project to be both a challenge and a motivator. It held me to a calendar and helped move me out of some of my comfort zones. My desire is to see this paradigm continue beyond the time frame set by this project. I view it as a work still in progress that can be improved and developed further. Measured by some neighborhood feedback already received, it has proven to be a Matthew 5:16 kind of moment for our church. In chapter 5 I expand upon this assessment.

As a paradigm for community outreach, as will be discussed, its value very much is that of a tool for cultivation. Cultivation is a process, sometimes slow, but necessary. It takes time and patience, but faithfulness and persistence therein meets with reward. As an evangelistic outreach, this approach is inextricably linked with prayer and therein rests its strength.

## CHAPTER 5

### PROJECT EVALUATION

This chapter concludes this project by presenting a five-fold evaluation of its effectiveness. First, I evaluate this project's effectiveness in achieving its purpose. Second, I restate each project goal and measure its success. Third, I reflect upon the methodology by which the project was implemented, addressing the strengths and weaknesses found within it. Fourth, I give some thought to what this process has taught me theologically. Fifth, I take time for personal reflections.

#### **Evaluation of Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to encourage engagement in evangelism by equipping the members of Parkway Baptist Church in Fort Myers to pray evangelistically. Moving beyond the simple practice of prayer, the idea of utilizing prayer itself, as an actual tool for doing evangelism, also featured prominently in this purpose. When the believer is able to uncover prayer needs, solicit permission to pray for those needs, and to do so, bridges of relationship with unbelievers can be built. After requests are received and prayer is made, the believer can later seek an update on the initial request, even receiving new requests. The process, hopefully, would build relationships with unbelievers, provide opportunities to share the gospel, and tap into the power of prayer itself as a means of reaching them for Christ.

In addressing the degree of success in reaching this purpose, one should view this project as a beginning, not an end. As the beginning of a process, its purpose was achieved. The "Praying for You" seminar, both in the initial introductory Sunday morning DVD message and in the full Saturday seminar, effectively introduced the

concepts of relational prayer witnessing. With about 50 percent of the regular Sunday worshippers in attendance, the seminar's influence was substantial. Those in attendance signed good faith commitments, agreeing to apply the seminar principles with one to five unbelievers over a period of at least twelve weeks. Coming in the first few weeks, this support marked a strong beginning.

Almost as many people participated in Neighborhood Connections as with the "Praying for You" seminar, again engaging a broad spectrum of the church congregation in the process. In the course of door-to-door visits, neighborhood prayer needs did start to surface, giving participants the opportunity to begin putting the concepts of "Praying for You" into practice. Many contributed in other capacities as well. After its compilation, a list of the lost received distribution, becoming a guide for prayer in existing church prayer times and newly established meetings. Enthusiasm was apparent, resulting in a mobilized effort that can be described as churchwide. In a personal e-mail, one very active volunteer wrote, "Your ministry; messages and generally the outreach and progression that you are leading Parkway Baptist along has been both inspiring and spiritual for Kathy & I."

Realistically, sixteen weeks is not an adequate length of time to change the DNA of a church. With this project, however, our church did break out of the starting gate with a new paradigm for prayer and outreach. Gary McIntosh writes, "God honors many methods. . . . Selecting the right method is being 'response-able,' that is having the ability to do *what* needs to be done *when* it needs to be done."<sup>1</sup> Given our church's personality and chemistry, this project provided a method for outreach that is proving successful for this particular church. It provided genuine neighborhood connections and identified people with needs to which the church can minister. The needs that surfaced are fueling an expanding prayer ministry. Though this project should be considered only

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<sup>1</sup>Gary L. McIntosh, *Biblical Church Growth* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 143, emphasis in original.

one component of a holistic approach to evangelism, it shows promise in providing a pathway for outreach that fits our church and its surrounding community.

### **Evaluation of Goals**

A project survey greatly facilitated the measurement of goal outcomes. Personal observations and group debriefings also contributed largely to this analysis. Unsolicited opinions and comments from participants provided mostly favorable insights, giving helpful encouragement and welcome thought for consideration.

### **Analysis of Survey Data**

In Appendix 1 and Appendix 2, the responses of church members and regular attendees to the three-part survey are recorded. Each of the three sections assisted me in assessing the success of the project in achieving its goals. The same survey was administered twice—once in the first week of the project and again in the final week. Only those who participated in the survey the first time were permitted to take it the second time. Appendix 1 reflects the pre-project response to the questionnaire, and Appendix 2 the post-project results. I used these survey results as I considered the project's effectiveness in accomplishing its goals.

The responses to each question in sections 1 (Congregational Church Health Survey) and 2 (Personal Spiritual Health Inventory) of the survey were added together and divided by the total number of responses to the question, giving the average response to each question. Forty-six pre-project surveys and 38 post-project surveys were returned. With section 2, a “strong” response received a value of 4, a “moderate” response received a value of 3, a “slight” response received a value of 2, and a “disagree” response a value of 1. The section 2 averages are listed after each question on the right side of the questionnaire.

In section 3, Personal Prayer Skills Survey, the responses reflect the percentage of respondents who answered “yes,” “no,” or “I wish this were true.” Improvement or

decline that occurred during the project is reflected in the net change in responses. Higher numbers reflect improvement. With section 3, a higher number in the “yes” and a lower number in the “no” responses reflect improvement.

The Congregational Church Health Survey portion helped assess the strengths, weaknesses, attitudes, and perceptions in the church, providing insight into the church’s self-image in the areas of outreach, evangelism, ministry, and prayer. The Personal Spiritual Health Inventory and the Personal Prayer Skills Inventory portions helped paint a clearer picture of the average congregant’s personal spiritual health as measured by his or her passion for and practice of prayer, missions, and evangelism. In all three portions, the survey brought to light areas of neglect that might be improved upon by participation in this sixteen-week project, as well as areas of strength upon which to build.

The data recorded on Tables 1 and 2 of Appendix 3 shows an improvement in congregational assessment of the church’s spiritual health as measured by all 15 questions. The data recorded on Tables 3 and 4 of Appendix 4 records an overall improvement in the average congregant’s personal spiritual health as measured by 9 out of 11 questions where net gains are noted. In question 8 (“I attempt to establish relationships with people who do not have a church home”) no change occurred. Only in question 11 (“I have friendships with people who are not Christians”) did any net loss occur. Given the generally positive trending, this response may be an anomaly in the survey, possibly due to a handful of individuals who did not participate in the survey a second time.<sup>2</sup> The data recorded on Tables 5 and 6 of Appendix 5 reflect positive trending consistent with the net

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<sup>2</sup>The decreased number of respondents may be due to a seasonal population in our church who, by the sixteenth week of the project, returned to their northern homes. Surveys, however, were sent to their summer addresses with a request that they be returned by way of the United States Postal Service. This explanation, of course, is only conjecture. In hindsight, a better method would be to have all survey respondents identify themselves, on both the pre- and post-surveys, using only the last four digits of their social security number. In this way, one could eliminate from the comparison any who did not respond twice, and provide better tracking, while also maintaining anonymity. This approach would secure a reliable survey control group.

gains displayed in the previous tables.

Comparisons of the pre and post-project surveys (see Appendix 1 and Appendix 2) measured net gains, showing modest improvement in all areas. In the quest for church revitalization, this data advises staying the course, with commitment and time given to encouraging a continued slow but steady trajectory upward. As seen in these results, leading people to rethink ministry and their own priorities can take time, but after sixteen weeks, the church is beginning to look more outward. There has been a redirection of energies and resources from maintenance to outreach beyond its walls.

### **Assessment of Individual Goals**

The first goal of the project was that members would come to understand principles foundational to evangelistic praying. This goal was achieved entirely through expositional instruction from the pulpit and reinforced in the weekly Wednesday evening Bible study. The instruction closely followed the content contained in chapter 2 of this project, embracing an eight-part Sunday morning sermon series. In two messages, I addressed evangelistic praying as it relates to sovereignty and free will, hoping to instill the truth that, regardless of one's individual theological persuasion, prayer does matter. In three consecutive messages I made the case that, for Jesus, Paul, and the early church in Acts, evangelistic praying was a practice and a priority. Throughout history, the men and women that God has used mightily, especially in the matter of evangelism, have been people who knew how to pray and for whom prayer was important. I strove to instill that the biblical precedent for such praying is clearly discoverable in Scripture.<sup>3</sup>

It is difficult to determine to what degree during this sixteen-week project members mentally assimilated the content of these messages. In spite of this uncertainty, however, some measure of success in communication may be suggested by the results of

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<sup>3</sup>The content of these messages is dealt with only briefly here. The reader is directed to chapter 4 for a more detailed summary.

the Personal Prayer Skills Survey pre and post-project comparison. After the completion of this project, the positive response to statement 3, “I have put into practice some of the things I am learning about prayer,” increased by 10 percent. The response to statement six, “I have read one or more books on prayer in the last year,” increased by 15 percent. This data may indicate a rise in interest attributable to the recent instructional emphasis. Across the spectrum, the Personal Prayer Skills Survey reflected positive movement, suggesting the application of principles foundational to effective praying taught in the messages.

The second goal of this project was to stimulate a burden for the lost that would compel church members to engage in evangelistic praying actively, both privately and corporately. The responses to sections 2 (Personal Spiritual Health Inventory) and section 3 (Personal Prayer Skills Survey) aided in evaluating goal 2. Based upon the data gleaned from these comparisons, the project seemed to accomplish this second goal with modest gains.

In the spiritual health inventory, statement 3, “I pray for the salvation of the lost by name,” statement 5, “I pray for world missions,” and statement 7, “I pray for our missionaries by name,” all rose to a higher score during the sixteen-week project. In the personal prayer skills category, statement 1, “I regularly attend week-night Bible study/prayer meetings,” statement 2, “I enjoy praying out loud with other people,” statement 7, “I enjoy the challenge of praying for others,” statement 9, “I have a specific time set aside for prayer each day and am consistent in using that time for prayer,” statement 10, “To the best of my ability, I let nothing interfere with my prayer time,” and statement 15, “It is not unusual for me to wake up in the middle of the night with a burden to pray for a specific person,” all registered net gains by the end of the project.

From the first week of this project, people showed a readiness to pray for the lost. The strong attendance at the “Praying for You” seminar indicated a desire for training by many people. As previously mentioned, about 50 percent of the regular Sunday worshippers attended the seminar. Additionally, at the end of the final session, attendees



selected one to five unbelievers who they would begin praying for, putting it in writing with signed commitments. This response also suggests progress toward meeting goal 2.

Goal 3 was to equip members with useful skills that would promote confident and effective evangelistic praying. The instruction received by the congregation in the sermon series facilitated progress toward this goal. The book table described in chapter 4 also provided access to several excellent “how-to” evangelistic prayer resources that promoted interest and skill acquisition.

Being more intentional in corporate prayer times resulted in an unexpected benefit. People began to learn skills from each other. Simply listening to others pray and vocalizing aloud their own prayers taught some to pray more effectively. In the course of the sixteen weeks, people demonstrated growing comfort, when led of the Spirit, to interrupt a structured prayer circle by praying out of order with spontaneous prayer and leading others to join in. Participants began learning how to build upon the prayers of others as in conversation. Others added Scripture when relevant verses came to mind. These practices are growing incrementally, but progress is progress, regardless of the speed at which it comes.

It is difficult to assess with certainty to what degree people are gaining new skills and actually incorporating them into their private prayers. The surveys suggest that improvement is occurring there as well. Interest in corporate prayer generally does seem to be growing, with a greater willingness to move beyond mere silent agreement while others pray aloud to actually praying vocally themselves. Those already in the habit of praying publicly did so with greater variety. Prayers have also begun to turn outward, praying beyond our own needs.

The fourth goal was to take prayer and make prayer itself a program for evangelism. This goal was largely met with success through the church-wide implementation of principles gleaned from Canning Hunger thru Neighborhood Connections. This model for community outreach, when adapted and reinforced with the

practical instruction in relational prayer witnessing provided by the “Praying for You” seminar, gave those willing to participate in the door-to-door phase the opportunity to ease into the actual hands-on practice of that instruction.

One measure of success surfaced in the willingness of many neighbors to share requests. In the course of three visits, twenty-two individual family needs came to our attention. It was only on the third visit that participants actually asked for prayer requests, receiving at that time eighteen responses. Many of these requests appeared to be surface issues, perhaps just an attempt to humor us and politely comply, sending us on our way, but others were truly legitimate concerns for which the offer of prayer was especially appreciated. Given that the outreach included 250 households and that many were not home, this number of requests represented well over 10 percent of the households actually contacted.

Another measure of success came with the convening of a final debriefing. On the first Sunday after the project’s completion, those who had participated in the outreach remained after the morning service for feedback. Without exception, even when encouraged to express doubt, everyone supported continuing in the coming fall season with a second outreach, focusing on an entirely new section of homes before later returning to the initial target area.

This project was generally successful in accomplishing goals 1, 2, 3, and 4. Again results were not overwhelming, but they were positive and showed promise for the future. In the debriefing session, however, the need for some modifications did find expression. There has been an observably frequent influx of cults saturating the same neighborhood streets. This pattern has been observable for some time. One Saturday we were knocking on the same doors on the same morning as the Jehovah Witnesses. This frequent cult presence has bred resentment, preventing many residents from opening their doors to us as well. By some we may be viewed as another unwelcome intrusion in their day, with no distinction made. For this reason, some participants suggested scheduling

our visits on another day at another time, perhaps a Friday evening.

Early in the project it also quickly became apparent that a coordinator is greatly needed. The amount of my time personally spent on addressing and managing the details before and after each of the three visits became overwhelming, drawing me away from my priorities as a pastor, who is to be biblically defined by a focus on the Word and prayer (Acts 6:1-4). Another needed modification is the method by which prayer requests are processed. In the future each family which requests prayer will be assigned to one or more prayer partners. After prayer partners pray for the request, they will be encouraged to make another visit for an update. This visit will take place before the next Canning Hunger event. These steps will ensure accountability and will build relationships.

The selection of accountability prayer partners at the conclusion of the “Praying for You” training created discomfort for some seminar participants. One woman expressed unease in a handwritten note on the back of her “Praying for You” seminar critique and commitment sheet. She wrote, “Although I very much enjoyed the ‘Praying for You’ seminar, it was a lot to absorb in the time allotted. I felt rushed to make important decisions which I felt needed time for prayer and consideration.” This response came as a constructive and valid criticism. Prayer partners need to feel comfortable with each other. An appeal, tacked to the end of the seminar, calling participants to select partners then and there, forced some awkward partnerships where personalities did not mesh. This kind of pairing has little promise of solidifying long-term success. A longer process allowing “prayer and consideration” is a suggestion worth implementing in any repeated training sessions.

A final modification might be times for testimony during worship services. The practice of asking participants with positive experiences to share in Sunday services might build enthusiasm and support. This practice, as a celebration of achievement, would introduce the congregation to what God is doing through the church, build momentum, and encourage others to get on board. For those volunteers who might be

dispirited from less favorable experiences, such testimony might also provide an Ecclesiastes 4:10 lift: “If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!”

Goal 5 was to increase my own effectiveness in evangelism through greater attention to my own prayer life. As mentioned in chapter 4, at my request, one of the men in our church readily agreed to be an accountability partner. His enlistment proved to be a helpful motivation, not only for myself, but for him as well. My consistency and regularity modeled prayer for him. The meetings together were regular but flexible, sometime meeting in my office in conjunction with Wednesday night church activities. Other appointments were on the phone. This approach allowed for a brief summary of the entries in my prayer journal for the week. Largely, however, these meetings resulted in only a one-way interaction.

Should this practice continue, improvement will come with agreement to ground rules, allowing my partner to get past any hindrances by asking any questions with the expectation of sincere answers. The time together will also be scheduled at a time conducive to joint prayers, minus the rush of other pressing church activities. The moments spent together were just that—moments. They were brief, too few, and not significant enough in length to get in depth.

Utilizing a prayer journal over the course of the entire sixteen-week project also contributed. Journaling kept me on track, ensuring consistency and focus as I attempted to pray more evangelistically and more regularly for the church, its outreach to the community, those of personal concern to me, and the lost family members of those within our church. Surprisingly, the more I prayed, the more I felt the need to spend even more time in prayer. This desire was a welcome benefit.

### **Evaluation of Methodology**

Evaluation of the project’s methodology assessed the value of this project as a model for promoting prayer and outreach in the local church. It was an attempt to

identify strengths and weaknesses. From this assessment, insights were gained that can be used to strengthen this project for future use in the church.

### **Strengths**

For pastors and leaders in any church, evangelistic praying, as delineated in this project, can serve as a vehicle for promoting movement in the church. In many churches people get stalled and fixed in one place spiritually. They are in a rut with no intentional process to get them out and moving forward.<sup>4</sup> This project proved to be very functional in transitioning people from consumers to volunteers and from volunteers, working within the internal structures of the church (greeters, Sunday school teachers, ushers, nursery workers, etc.), to external volunteers, visibly serving people in the community outside the existing church. McIntosh writes,

The more consumers a church has, the less likely it is to grow. The more volunteers there are in a church, the more opportunity there is for growth. And as more volunteers find their way into external ministry roles, a church finds even more possibility for growth.<sup>5</sup>

The method detailed in this project was also very incarnational in its emphasis. Once again, even in this aspect, there was a process of movement. In this instance, the movement transitioned a church from isolation to incarnation. Bob Roberts describes an incarnational church:

Missional churches become very deeply involved in their communities. They are not focused so much on their buildings as they are on living, demonstrating, and offering biblical community in a lost world among a lost people. An incarnational church functions as the 'Body of Christ' because it represents the presence of Christ within a community.<sup>6</sup>

This project moved our church's focus increasingly outward. It redirected

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<sup>4</sup>Thom Rainer and Eric Geiger address this problem in chapter 6, "Movement: Removing Congestion," of their co-authored book entitled *Simple Church* (Nashville: B & H, 2006), 135-64.

<sup>5</sup>McIntosh, *Biblical Church Growth*, 113.

<sup>6</sup>Bob Roberts, *The Multiplying Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 11.

many of the church's resources and energies beyond its walls. It redirected the church from maintenance to outreach, placing an increasing emphasis on church activities outside the building. Canning Hunger participants began talking with each other about their experiences out in the neighborhood, and doing so with what I sensed to be a genuine interest and concern. The people were active in the community, beginning to function visibly as representatives of Christ. Neighbors began to notice that our church had become a presence, seeing it as such in the best of all contexts—the context of concern for the hungry.

This project, as a method for evangelism, showed promise as an effective tool for identifying those within a community who are spiritually receptive. The presence of a need in a person's life indicates receptivity. This receptivity may be more pronounced when there is an actual willingness to share the need and request prayer for it. The door-to-door offer of prayer helps a church begin to identify those who are hurting, allowing it to focus on individuals who may be ripe for the harvest.

When commenting upon the spiritual harvest as described by Jesus in Matthew 9:37-38, Neil Cole shares these insights about the harvest from Christ: "If we can't see them, we won't love them (Matt 9:36). If we can't love them, we won't pray for them (Matt 9:36-38). If we can't pray for them, we won't win them (Matt 10:1). If we can't win them, we won't send them (Matt 10:2-5)."<sup>7</sup> This pattern of seeing and loving, loving and praying, praying and winning, all begins with seeing. A benefit of this project is just that. It injected believers into the world where they took that first step and began seeing people in their need.

A final strength was this project's prayer-based approach to outreach. As a prayer-based approach, it avoided some harmful tendencies. First, it avoided the tendency to view prayer as just a warm-up exercise before they went. Second, it avoided

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<sup>7</sup>Neil Cole, *Cultivating a Life for God* (St. Charles, IL: Churchmart, 1999), 78.

the tendency to fall back into old patterns of self-reliance that focused exclusively on programs, methodologies, paradigms, and blueprints.

McIntosh advises that the Holy Spirit always brings about growth in the church. He explains that without proper ballast under a sailboat, it will not right itself after it capsizes. It needs greater weight beneath the surface than above if it is to maintain its voyage. The same is true of the church. If a church invests all of its efforts topside in programs and techniques, without building beneath the surface with prayer, it is destined to fail.<sup>8</sup> He explains,

It is the life-giving work of the Holy Spirit that empowers church programs, plans, and strategies. Churches that rely solely on human personality and ingenuity may grow for a time, but their growth will have little spiritual weight beneath the surface. This is because some churches rely too heavily on human analysis and projections. Some may become enamored with human methodologies and blueprints. Leaders may even become prideful with bloated egos. This is not what God intends. Churches that seek biblical church growth remember that apart from Christ they can do nothing, not even build a church (see John 15:5). To build a church that glorifies God requires that he be at the center of the process. Methods and personalities will take the church only so far. If God is not intimately involved below the waterline, the church will eventually capsize.<sup>9</sup>

Third, it avoided the tendency to let prayers continually drift back to personal needs and concerns. Donald McGavran and Win Arn write,

Churches have been holding prayer meetings for years, but in many cases they haven't seen growth, because Christians seldom petition God for growth. They don't pray specifically for the conversion of close friends and loved ones. They don't pray for families by name. They don't pray that new churches will be planted. They don't pray for the discipling of young believers. In other words, they don't pray intelligently for growth.<sup>10</sup>

Fourth, it avoided the tendency to pray and then sit back to wait on what God will do. In the course of this project we prayed, but we also cooperated with God and worked with God for the answers to those prayers. Nehemiah, for example, did not just

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<sup>8</sup>McIntosh, *Biblical Church Growth*, 78-80.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 85.

<sup>10</sup>Donald A. McGavran and Winfield C. Arn, *Ten Steps for Church Growth* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1977), 30.

weep, pray, and mourn before the Lord, he prayerfully devised a plan and worked it through (Neh 1-6).

### **Weaknesses**

Does this approach cater too much to people's timidity by trying too hard to make the process non-confrontational? Does it play to participants' fears of rejection by trying to ensure as soft a landing at each doorstep as possible? Is it too non-confrontational? Is it intentional enough in sowing, getting the gospel out there in either written or verbal form? I do not want to encourage a soft message preached by soft people. These questions may suggest a weakness at least worth discussing.

The offer of prayer that comprised much of this project was one way to begin initiating conversations with unbelievers. It identified those who might be the most open to spiritual conversations. This offer, as previously discussed, can open doors for relationships to begin by connecting a church's people with others in their community. It is good to open doors, but once the doors begin to open, what then? What if the unexpected happens? How prepared will the volunteers be for the unexpected comment, question, or even the perfect opportunity to present the gospel?

This question exposes another area of weakness. Training participants, with forethought and intentionality, in how to respond to common questions and objections, can address this weakness in the future. This training, of course, would lay out a simple method for sharing the gospel itself. First Peter 3:15 says, "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect."

In the future, creative ideas for repeated community connections could also strengthen and build upon our Neighborhood Connections efforts. The opportunities provided by Neighborhood Connections, though ripe with potential, as with all things, are limited and could be expanded through additional community-wide outreach events. Members could be trained to methodically and intentionally interact with neighbors



during these times, maximizing their potential. The canning drives would provide opportunities to extend invitations to these outreach events. Building upon the door-to-door interaction with additional exposure from a newsletter might also be considered as part of a community building effort. All of these approaches are opportunities for repeated touches with the gospel. A good paradigm for outreach “acknowledges that people, with few exceptions, come to Christ in steps, and those steps usually involve conversation and community.”<sup>11</sup>

Two of the teams met with experiences that led to disillusionment and discouragement. The response was not one of giving up or wishing never to return and try again. Theirs was simply an unusually unresponsive group of households. Doors remained closed, even as those within made no effort to conceal their presence. Others were abrupt and evasive. Canned food donations came infrequently. Still, there were some, even within this unwelcoming environment, who were polite, gracious, and confirming. For these volunteers, progress seemed especially slow and the prospect for any success a distant hope. Discouragement at the lack of visible results presented a looming threat to morale.

In hindsight, I might have softened this blow and fortified spirits by proactively anticipating the slow pace of any such outreach with a preemptive scriptural pep talk. The biblical metaphor of farming (1 Cor 3:6-9) pictures evangelism as a process of spiritual plowing, planting, and harvesting. Farming is a process, not a one-time event. In this instant gratification age, it is easy to get discouraged at the lack of visible results immediately. Like soil, human hearts are often hard, necessitating a slow and methodical process of cultivation. The ground has to be broken and plowed. Returning to the biblical principles of the harvest and addressing them early in a sermon or two would

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<sup>11</sup>Mike Dodson and Ed Stetzer, *Comeback Churches* (Nashville: B & H, 2007), 120.

fortify spirits for the future. Repeatedly bringing their attention back to these principles as a constant reminder is a useful suggestion for future implementation.

Volunteers might also have been reminded that Jesus predicted long ago that some seed will be destroyed by the enemy and others will fall on shallow, rocky soil. With no depth of root, those individuals would turn away for lack of commitment or because of persecution. Conversely, he also assured that some would take root in good soil and produce a crop. Fortunately, the biblical principles of the harvest remain unaltered, promising success for those who remain persistent and do not give up (Matt 13:18-23).

This cultivation process might be described as “pre-evangelism.” Thom Rainer and Chuck Lawless advise that society in general is much less receptive to the gospel than in earlier generations. Increasingly, pagan society views Christianity as just one of many religious options. Rainer and Lawless note, “In our present age much ‘pre-evangelism’ must take place just to win a hearing.” A key component in increasing receptivity “will be methods that enhance the development of relationships between believers and unbelievers.”<sup>12</sup> This development of relationships between the Christian and non-Christian comprised much of this project’s emphasis. Had the volunteers been privy to this information early on, it may have strengthened their confidence in the legitimacy of this approach to prayer and outreach, bracing them to stay the course and to “not be surprised . . . as though something strange were happening to you” (1 Peter 4:12).

### **Theological Reflections**

The theological issues relating to the subject of evangelistic praying have previously been the subject in much of chapter 2. Those questions will not be revisited here. Let it only be conceded that there is no end to the lively and often heated debate

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<sup>12</sup>Chuck Lawless and Thom Rainer, *Eating the Elephant* (Crestwood, MO: Pinnacle, 2003), 72-74.

surrounding the sovereignty of God and the free will of man. At the risk of oversimplification, regardless of where one may stand on these issues, it all comes down to what is commonly referred to as Jesus' Great Commission:

Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.' (Matt 28:18-20).

These words are not only important because of who spoke them but also because of when they were spoken. Last words always receive special attention. Spoken just before he ascended into heaven, these words of Jesus ought to capture the heart, for these final instructions most certainly emanate from his heart. It is not necessary to fully understand how it all fits theologically, it is only necessary to obey.

As to the methods of evangelism, opinions vary. One may champion this method, and another that one. Even here controversy may abound. A story from the life of D. L. Moody sheds light on any such discussion: One day a lady criticized D. L. Moody for his methods of evangelism in attempting to win people to the Lord. Moody's reply was 'I agree with you. I don't like the way I do it either. Tell me, how do you do it?' The lady replied, 'I don't do it.' Moody retorted, 'Then I like my way of doing it better than your way of not doing it.'<sup>13</sup>

The model followed in this project, "my way of doing it," is only one of many acceptable methods. The only absolute in this discussion is the Great Commission. Again the real question comes down to one of obedience. This action is the lowest common denominator. At this point there can be no debate. Doing nothing is not an option.

Consider as an illustration the parable of the talents (Matt 25:14-30). In Matthew 24 to 25 Jesus expresses his heart for people. Positioned prominently within these chapters is the parable of the talents. He, who is our Lord, is departing for an

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<sup>13</sup>SaltForSermons [online]; accessed 1 June 2012; available from <http://saltforsermons.org.uk/sermon-illustrations/topics/evangelism>; Internet.

unrevealed length of years. He delegates to those who are his disciples the responsibility of stewards, stewards to care for his kingdom interests during this absence. Upon his return those who invested the riches of his kingdom faithfully are praised and rewarded. The one who buried his talent and did nothing is rebuked and punished. This parable expresses the weight of responsibility placed upon believers in the final words of Jesus, prior to his departure. The gospel is a trust, the riches of his kingdom. Neglecting to apply his instruction and doing nothing meets with serious consequences.

The narrative surrounding the Great Commission also models the priority of evangelistic praying. After hearing Jesus' final words and seeing him ascend, his disciples immediately held a ten-day prayer vigil. Only then did the Spirit come down empowering them for ministry. From that prayer meeting his disciples were thrust out into the world with a transforming message that built the church, advanced the kingdom, and continues to change lives today. Regardless of theological views and evangelistic methods, prayer remains the priority.

### **Personal Reflections**

In *Comeback Churches*, Stetzer and Dodson observe that no church, whether on a plateau or in actual decline, has ever experienced turnaround growth without a change in leadership. They write, "One of the things you will see below is that we believe all comeback churches need a new pastor—either one brought in from the outside or one changed from the inside."<sup>14</sup> My tenure in this church has been a long one. Consequently, these words clearly struck a chord in my heart, bringing conviction and soul-searching. Consistency in the spiritual disciplines and in biblical church leadership requires constant vigilance. My desire, nonetheless, is for personal and church renewal. This desire first prompted my interest in the Doctor of Ministry program at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. This desire continues to drive my efforts today.

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<sup>14</sup>Dodson and Stetzer, *Comeback Churches*, 177.

My hope is that a renewal process has already begun in me and that it will continue. My prayer for the church is that this project might be a means of casting up the sails of this church to catch the powerful wind of the Holy Spirit, preventing aimless drift and bringing this church, with its pastor, out of the doldrums and onto the high seas where great business can be carried out for God. The goal of this project has largely been that of giving the Holy Spirit the invitation and the opportunity to work within this church. We must never stop believing that He is always ready and waiting for any such moment, and in response is present to impact and transform the individual, the church, and the community.

### **Conclusion**

Coming as I have to the conclusion of this project, I am again impressed with the weight of responsibility placed upon me, this church, and the church globally to stay the course. The words of Jesus in Matthew 5:16 ring clearer and with greater urgency: “In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.” For Parkway Baptist Church, the completion of this project marks both a continuation and a new beginning for this process. There is more work to be done, battles to win, and people to reach, but always and only with prayer.

## APPENDIX 1

### PRE-PROJECT SURVEY WITH RESULTS

#### Agreement to Participate

The research you are about to participate in is being conducted by Leonard Anderson for purposes of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will take the survey before the project has been implemented and again answer the same questions upon the project's completion in fifteen weeks. The survey will be anonymous. This will insure confidentiality, as well as encourage complete honesty and openness in your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary, and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

**Using the scale below, answer this question: To what degree do you agree or disagree that each of the following statements describes our church health:<sup>1</sup>**

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree

#### Average answer

- 2.8 1. Our church is well connected with the surrounding community.
- 4.0 2. Our church regularly stresses the importance of prayer.
- 3.8 3. Our church encourages members to actively share their faith.
- 4.1 4. Our church regularly prays for world missions.
- 3.2 5. Our church provides its people with evangelistic outreach opportunities.
- 3.2 6. Our church has an intercessory prayer emphasis in which many people participate.
- 4.2 7. Our church places a prominent emphasis on prayer in its worship services.
- 3.0 8. People in our church share their faith regularly.
- 3.2 9. Our people are provided with the training they need to share their faith effectively.

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<sup>1</sup>See Appendix 3 through 5 for a comparison of the results of the pre-project survey and post-project survey.

- 3.9 10. The theological and biblical principles of prayer are regularly taught.
- 4.3 11. Our church supports world missions generously.
- 3.2 12. Our church regularly engages in providing local relief for people in need.
- 3.4 13. Our church tries to identify ways to reach people in our community.
- 2.7 14. Our church makes available to everyone a list of prayer needs.
- 3.0 15. Our Sunday school classes and small groups seek to reach people outside our groups.

**Listed below are a number of statements. To what extent do you agree or disagree that each statement describes your personal spiritual health?**

1. It is easy for me to invite friends to our church.	Strong [ ]	Moderate [ ]	Slight [ ]	Disagree [ ]	3.0 <sup>2</sup>
2. I am concerned about meeting needs of the hungry.	Strong [ ]	Moderate [ ]	Slight [ ]	Disagree [ ]	3.4
3. I pray for the salvation of lost individuals by name.	Strong [ ]	Moderate [ ]	Slight [ ]	Disagree [ ]	3.3
4. I am involved in doing ministry in or through our church.	Strong [ ]	Moderate [ ]	Slight [ ]	Disagree [ ]	2.6
5. I pray for world missions.	Strong [ ]	Moderate [ ]	Slight [ ]	Disagree [ ]	2.8
6. I know who our missionaries are.	Strong [ ]	Moderate [ ]	Slight [ ]	Disagree [ ]	3.0
7. I pray for our missionaries by name.	Strong [ ]	Moderate [ ]	Slight [ ]	Disagree [ ]	2.2
8. I attempt to establish relationships with people who do not have a church home.	Strong [ ]	Moderate [ ]	Slight [ ]	Disagree [ ]	3.0
9. I invite unchurched and/or unsaved people to our church.	Strong [ ]	Moderate [ ]	Slight [ ]	Disagree [ ]	2.4

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<sup>2</sup>A rating of 4 was assigned to “strong,” 3 for “moderate,” 2 for “slight,” and 1 for “disagree.” The result is an average of those answers.

10. I attempt to reach people for Christ.	Strong [ ]	Moderate [ ]	Slight [ ]	Disagree [ ]	2.9
11. I have friendships with people who are not Christians.	Strong [ ]	Moderate [ ]	Slight [ ]	Disagree [ ]	3.2

**Survey of personal prayer skills: Answer “Yes,” “No,” or “I wish this were true.”**

	Yes	No	Wish it were true
1. I regularly attend week-night Bible Study/Prayer Meetings.	[29%]	[47%]	[24%]
2. I enjoy praying out loud with other people.	[43%]	[37%]	[20%]
3. I have put into practice some of the things I am learning about prayer.	[85%]	[7% ]	[9% ]
4. I wish I could spend more time in prayer.	[84%]	[2% ]	[14%]
5. I pray by myself for an average of about 30 minutes a day, or more.	[33%]	[33%]	[35%]
6. I have read one or more books on prayer in the last year.	[26%]	[54%]	[20%]
7. I enjoy the challenge of praying for others.	[65%]	[24%]	[11%]
8. I regularly see answers to prayer.	[85%]	[4%]	[11%]
9. I have a specific time set aside for prayer each day and am consistent in using that time for prayer.	[46% ]	[33%]	[22%]
10. To the best of my ability, I let nothing interfere with my prayer time.	[37%]	[20%]	[43%]
11. I often find I have a deep burden to pray for things I hear from others and from church.	[74%]	[20%]	[7% ]
12. I am involved in a small group with my church and participate in the prayer times.	[46%]	[39%]	[15%]
13. At times tears may come to my eyes or I may get upset with things I hear about on the news. These cause me to ask the Lord to intervene and change things.	[76%]	[17%]	[7% ]
14. When I am praying I often lose track of time.	[46%]	[52%]	[2% ]
15. It is not unusual for me to wake up in the middle of the night with a burden to pray for a specific person.	[41%]	[50%]	[9% ]



**Now that you have completed this survey, please answer the following questions:**<sup>3</sup>

1. Do you feel satisfied with your prayer skills as they are?       Yes       No
2. Would you like to learn more about prayer so you could in the future be able to respond in the affirmative to more of these questions?       Yes       No
3. Do you feel satisfied with your evangelism skills as they are?       Yes       No
4. Would you like to learn skills that would help you learn to pray evangelistically?       Yes       No
5. Would you like to learn a method of evangelistic outreach that will help you reach non-Christians through relational prayer witnessing?       Yes       No

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<sup>3</sup>The results of this portion of the survey are unrecorded. This portion of the survey was included solely for the respondent's benefit—to bring them to a personal acknowledgement of need, thereby setting each one up for participation in the initial “Praying for You” seminar as a solution to that need.

## APPENDIX 2

### POST-PROJECT SURVEY WITH RESULTS

#### **Agreement to Participate**

The research you are about to participate in is being conducted by Leonard Anderson for purposes of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will take the survey before the project has been implemented and again answer the same questions upon the project's completion in fifteen weeks. The survey will be anonymous. This will insure confidentiality, as well as encourage complete honesty and openness in your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary, and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

**Using the scale below, answer this question: To what degree do you agree or disagree that each of the following statements describes our church health:<sup>1</sup>**

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree

agree

#### **Average answer**

- 3.9 1. Our church is well connected with the surrounding community.
- 4.6 2. Our church regularly stresses the importance of prayer.
- 4.3 3. Our church encourages members to actively share their faith.
- 4.5 4. Our church regularly prays for world missions.
- 4.0 5. Our church provides its people with evangelistic outreach opportunities.
- 3.8 6. Our church has an intercessory prayer emphasis in which many people participate.
- 4.3 7. Our church places a prominent emphasis on prayer in its worship services.
- 3.5 8. People in our church share their faith regularly.

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<sup>1</sup>See appendix 3 through 5 for a comparison of the results of the pre-project survey and post-project survey.

- 3.9 9. Our people are provided with the training they need to share their faith effectively.
- 4.6 10. The theological and biblical principles of prayer are regularly taught.
- 4.7 11. Our church supports world missions generously.
- 4.1 12. Our church regularly engages in providing local relief for people in need.
- 4.2 13. Our church tries to identify ways to reach people in our community.
- 3.7 14. Our church makes available to everyone a list of prayer needs.
- 3.4 15. Our Sunday school classes and small groups seek to reach people outside of our groups.

**Listed below are a number of statements. To what extent do you agree or disagree that each statement describes your personal spiritual health?**

1. It is easy for me to invite friends to our church.	Strong [ ]	Moderate [ ]	Slight [ ]	Disagree [ ]	3.3 <sup>2</sup>
2. I am concerned about meeting needs of the hungry.	Strong [ ]	Moderate [ ]	Slight [ ]	Disagree [ ]	3.7
3. I pray for the salvation of lost individuals by name.	Strong [ ]	Moderate [ ]	Slight [ ]	Disagree [ ]	3.7
4. I am involved in doing ministry in or through our church.	Strong [ ]	Moderate [ ]	Slight [ ]	Disagree [ ]	2.9
5. I pray for world missions.	Strong [ ]	Moderate [ ]	Slight [ ]	Disagree [ ]	3.2
6. I know who our missionaries are.	Strong [ ]	Moderate [ ]	Slight [ ]	Disagree [ ]	3.2
7. I pray for our missionaries by name.	Strong [ ]	Moderate [ ]	Slight [ ]	Disagree [ ]	2.7
8. I attempt to establish relationships with people who do not have a church home.	Strong [ ]	Moderate [ ]	Slight [ ]	Disagree [ ]	2.9
9. I invite unchurched and/or unsaved people to our church.	Strong [ ]	Moderate [ ]	Slight [ ]	Disagree [ ]	2.7

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<sup>2</sup>A rating of 4 was assigned to “strong,” 3 for “moderate,” 2 for “slight,” and 1 for “disagree.” The result is an average of those answers.

10. I attempt to reach people for Christ.	Strong [ ]	Moderate [ ]	Slight [ ]	Disagree [ ]	3.1
11. I have friendships with people who are not Christians.	Strong [ ]	Moderate [ ]	Slight [ ]	Disagree [ ]	3.1

**Survey of personal prayer skills: Answer “Yes,” “No,” or “I wish this were true.”**

	Yes	No	Wish it were true
1. I regularly attend week-night Bible Study/Prayer Meetings.	[35%]	[43%]	[22%]
2. I enjoy praying out loud with other people.	[51%]	[27%]	[22%]
3. I have put into practice some of the things I am learning about prayer.	[95%]	[3%]	[3 % ]
4. I wish I could spend more time in prayer.	[83%]	[3 % ]	[14%]
5. I pray by myself for an average of about 30 minutes a day, or more.	[32%]	[35 %]	[32%]
6. I have read one or more books on prayer in the last year.	[41%]	[49%]	[11%]
7. I enjoy the challenge of praying for others.	[84%]	[5%]	[11%]
8. I regularly see answers to prayer.	[86%]	[5%]	[9%]
9. I have a specific time set aside for prayer each day and am consistent in using that time for prayer.	[62%]	[11%]	[27%]
10. To the best of my ability, I let nothing interfere with my prayer time.	[49 %]	[5% ]	[46%]
11. I often find I have a deep burden to pray for things I hear from others and from church.	[84%]	[8%]	[8% ]
12. I am involved in a small group with my church and participate in the prayer times.	[46 %]	[38 %]	[16%]
13. At times tears may come to my eyes or I may get upset with things I hear about on the news. These cause me to ask the Lord to intervene and change things.	[74%]	[21% ]	[5% ]
14. When I am praying I often lose track of time	[58%]	[34%]	[8% ]
15. It is not unusual for me to wake up in the middle of the night with a burden to pray for a specific person.	[60%]	[29%]	[11%]

**Now that you have completed this survey, please answer the following questions:<sup>3</sup>**

1. Do you feel satisfied with your prayer skills as they are?       Yes       No
2. Would you like to learn more about prayer so you could in the future be able to respond in the affirmative to more of these questions?       Yes       No
3. Do you feel satisfied with your evangelism skills as they are?       Yes       No
4. Would you like to learn skills that would help you learn to pray evangelistically?       Yes       No
5. Would you like to learn a method of evangelistic outreach that will help you reach non-Christians through relational prayer witnessing?       Yes       No

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<sup>3</sup>This portion of the survey was included solely for the respondent's benefit. The results are unrecorded.

APPENDIX 3

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH HEALTH SURVEY

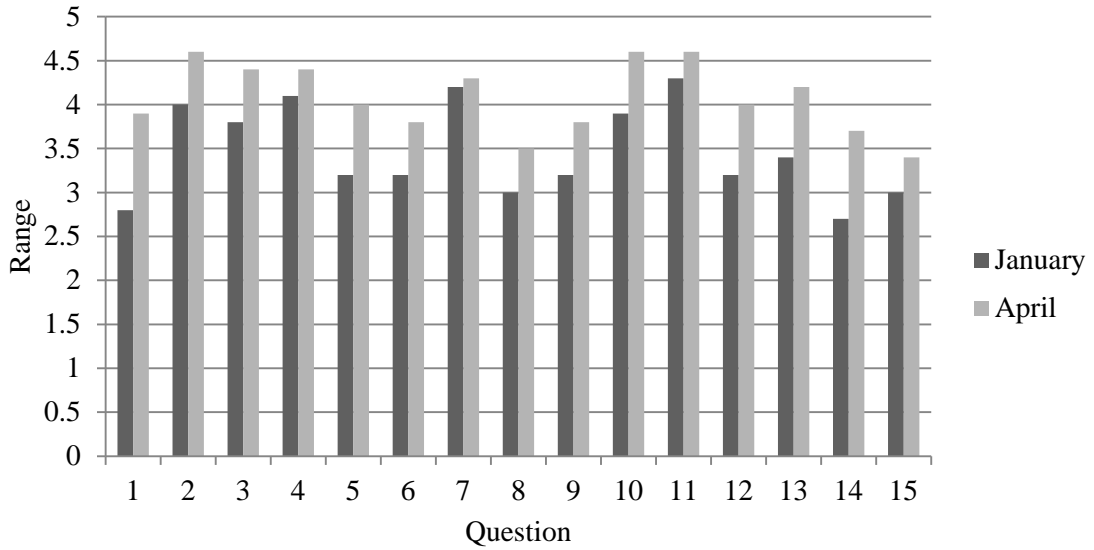


Figure A1. Congregational church health survey—bar graph

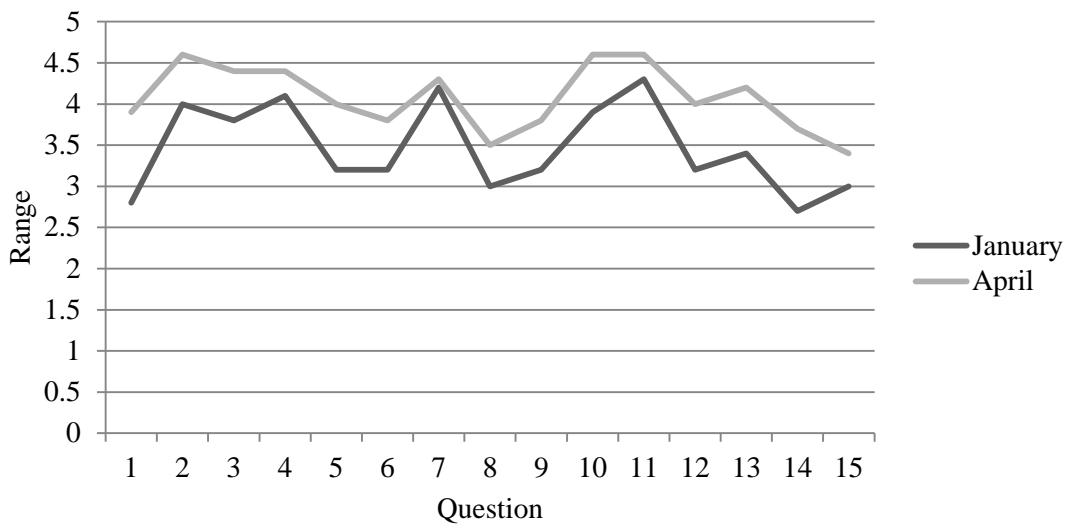


Figure A2. Congregational church health survey—line graph

APPENDIX 4

PERSONAL SPIRITUAL HEALTH INVENTORY

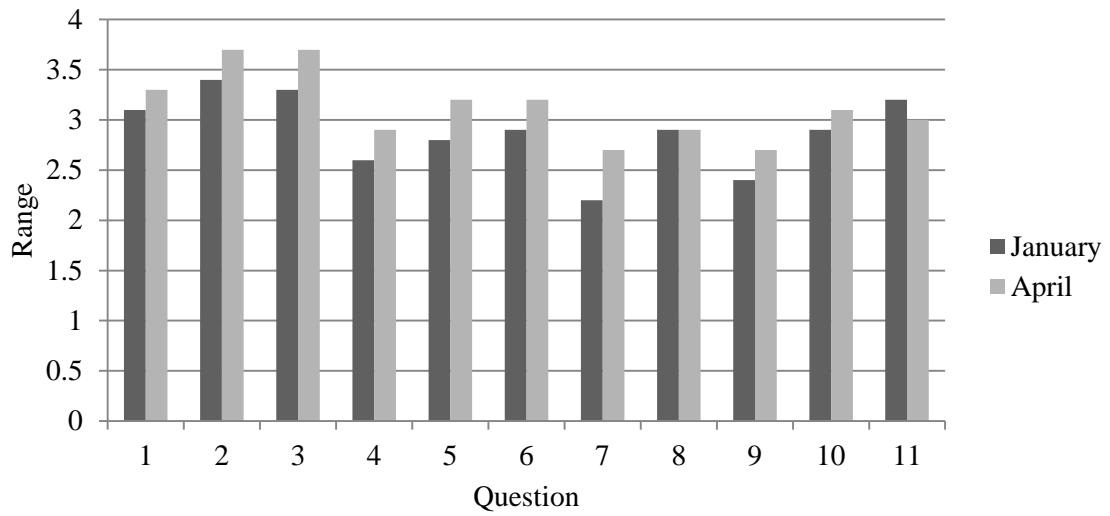


Figure A3. Personal spiritual health inventory—bar graph

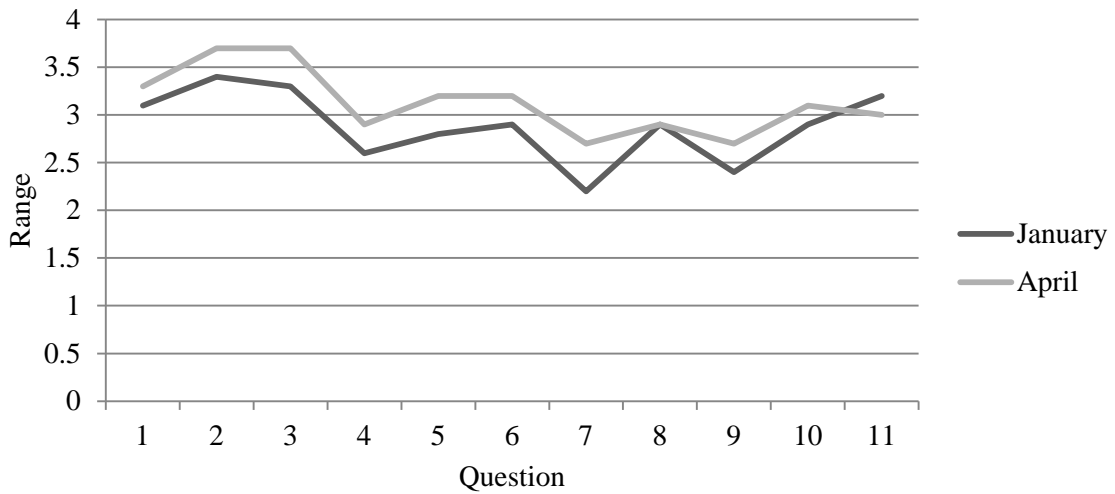


Figure A4. Personal spiritual health inventory—line graph

APPENDIX 5

PERSONAL PRAYER SKILLS SURVEY

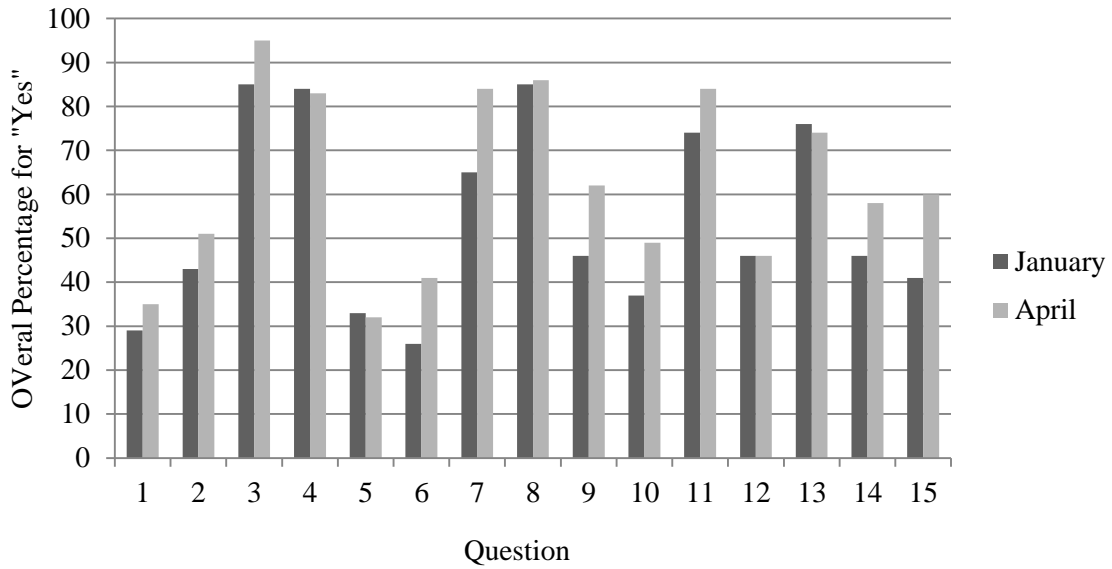


Figure A5. Personal prayer skills survey “yes” response

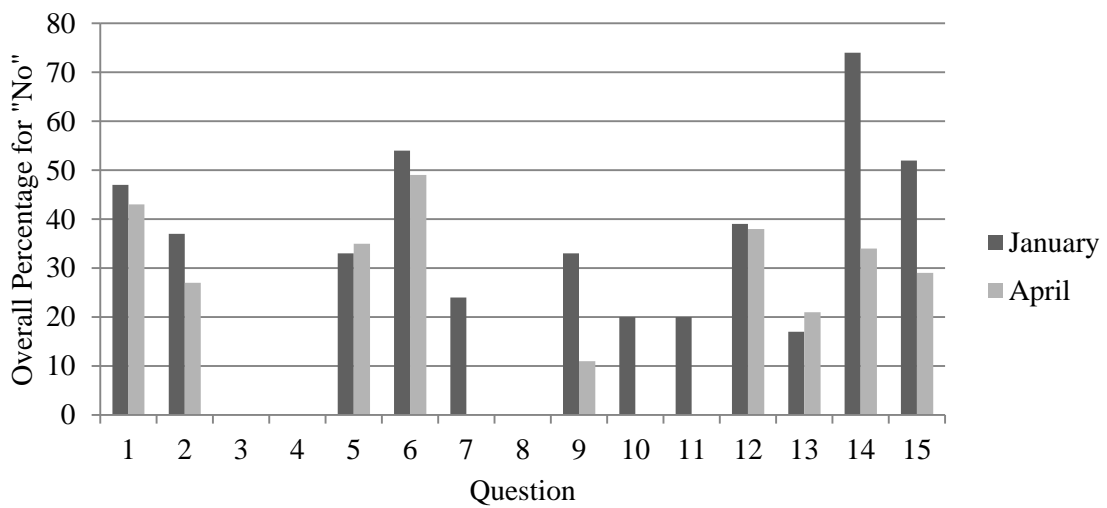


Figure A6. Personal prayer skills survey “no” response



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## ABSTRACT

### TRAINING THE PEOPLE OF PARKWAY BAPTIST CHURCH, FORT MYERS, FLORIDA, TO PRAY EVANGELISTICALLY

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012  
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This project provided training in evangelistic prayer to the people of Parkway Baptist Church in Fort Myers, Florida. Chapter 1 lists the project goals, describes the church's history and current status at the time of writing, along with its ministry context and demographics. The dearth of evangelistic praying explained the need for this project with the intent not just to pray evangelistically, but to train in the use of prayer as an evangelistic tool—relational prayer witnessing.

Chapter 2 defends the concept of evangelistic praying by establishing its biblical and theological precedent. Chapter 3 traces the historical precedent for evangelistic praying, explaining that every great harvest of souls in the New Testament church can be traced to prayer. Chapter 4 details the methodology used to implement and execute this project, with neighborhood food collections playing a prominent role. Chapter 5 presents a final analysis, evaluation, and reflection on the project's effectiveness.

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