IMPLEMENTING EVANGELISM AND CHURCH GROWTH AT
THE OLIVER GROVE LAOTIAN BAPTIST CHURCH,
COLLEGE PARK, GEORGIA

A Project
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the Faculty of
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Doctor of Ministry

by
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APPROVAL SHEET

IMPLEMENTING EVANGELISM AND CHURCH GROWTH AT
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COLLEGE PARK, GEORGIA

Oudone Thirakoune

Read and Approved by:

__________________________
An Van Pham (Chair Person)

__________________________
Timothy Beougher

Date ______________________
To my dear beloved life partner,

Sompeng,

whose passion and enthusiasm in the ministry
motivated me through the years.

To our precious son, Samuel,

my joy and inspiration in life
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This project was made possible primarily through God’s divine empowerment, without which I would not even have become a Christian let alone have pursued doctoral degree. When I first arrived in the United States, I went though a difficult experience adopting to our new homeland’s language and culture. When I came to a church to serve as a pastor, I did not have any biblical training. Fortunately, with God’s leadership in my life, he brought many people into my life to really love and care for me and my family.

I learned just enough English to get by and enable me to get on with my life. I never dreamed I would return to school. Things began changing for me. I met Dr. An Van Pham, who really has made difference in my life. Dr. Pham was persistent in encouraging me to go to school that I might be better equipped for church ministry. I probably would not have begun the schooling process had it not been for his encouragement and assistance. He worked with me, one on one, for countless hours. Many times, he went the extra mile to assist and encourage me and my fellow students to continue on with our course work when we felt like giving up. His persistent love has meant much in my life, as it has in the lives of many of my fellow ethnic pastors.

Writing of my project would have been more frustrating had it not been for the many hours my friend Dr. Dennis Rogers who patiently invested in it. His cheerful and willing spirit to assist me, even in his busy schedule, convinced me that I could make it through. My gratitude includes other staff members of the Georgia Baptist Convention. I was also equally assisted by friends and my fellow leaders and members at Oliver Grove Laotian Baptist Church. Their encouragement and insight contributed to the
development and effectiveness of this project. They were gracious enough to partially provide financial assistance for me to pursue my studies at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. For the past eleven years, they have faithfully served with me in carrying on the ministry and mission that God has given us. Their faithful partnership and cooperation in the implementation of this project has brought great encouragement and helped me to transform this thesis from a mere theory to a reality.

Finally, I thank God for my wife, who has faithfully served the Lord with me for over twenty years. Even though she has a hard time with chronic illness, she compensates for my weaknesses and my inability to be sometimes at my church. She sacrificially touches many people’s lives with her compassion, hospitality, cheerfulness, and friendliness. Many times, in my absence at home and at church, she has been a major source of encouragement and comfort for our people as well as for our only child, Samuel. Samuel has been bought up to faithfully serve God with us. His works of service, words of encouragement, and his help at home have inspired me to press on with my studies.

Thank you so much, Samuel, our dear son for all you do and support in the work of ministry through the years. I love you so much!

Oudone Thirakoune

Locust Grove, Georgia

December 2013
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project was to implement an evangelism and church growth strategy at the Oliver Grove Laotian Baptist Church in College Park, Georgia, to reach the Laotian community for Christ.

Goals of the Project

This project set forth five goals. First, the project sought to promote better understanding of the importance of evangelism and church growth among the church leaders and members of the Oliver Grove Baptist Church (OGBC). The use of expository preaching communicated the urgency of evangelism for the church and helped instill the desire for the congregation to become well-equipped and involved in the ministry of evangelizing lost Laotians for Christ.

The second goal was to motivate the members to be personal evangelists who rely on the Holy Spirit to overcome their fear in witnessing and lead them into a commitment toward personal evangelism. The church leaders became the evangelistic core of the project to serve the function of encouraging, recruiting, and training volunteers. The project also served to awaken church members to the evangelistic task of the church.

The third goal was to train the members of Oliver Grove Laotian Baptist Church in the skills necessary for personal evangelism and church growth. Participants had the opportunity to engage in personal evangelism and to help disciple their new converts from the results of their labors at the end of the training. The pastor developed a
systematic discipleship training series by using the results of the responses received from a church member survey. This training sought to increase the church leaders’ ability to evangelize as well as to prepare them spiritually for the task. All church members had an opportunity to receive training in evangelism and church growth in order for them—with their own unique God-given talents—to play key roles as part of the team.

The fourth goal was to organize members to go into the Laotian community with the task of reaching the lost. They were personally involved in evangelism by telling their friends and neighbors about the Good News of the Lord Jesus. Starting from Laotian homes, the church members shared the Good News conversationally and informally with their immediate neighbors and gradually expanded to a wider circle, thus reaching as many Laotian households as possible for Jesus Christ.

The fifth goal was for my personal growth. As the pastor of Oliver Grove Laotian Baptist Church for nearly twenty-five years, I assumed when people came to Jesus Christ, over time, they would become spiritually matured and naturally awaken to a task of evangelism. But this assumption was unrealistic. There were examples in the Gospels of Jesus teaching his disciples basic skills such as outreach visitation, prayer, and servanthood. Jesus taught his disciples how to pray (Matt 6:5-15) and how to go out into communities preaching, healing, and testifying (Matt 10:1-32). He instructed them in developing their faith. For example, when they encountered the epileptic boy whom the disciples could not heal, Jesus indicated that their lack of faith was the problem (Matt 17:14-21). In fact, during the three years Jesus led his disciples, he taught them the basics of the Christian life and the type of leadership they needed to display.

Likewise, I wanted my own personal growth to include improving my skills in recruiting and training leaders. In addition, I also wanted to grow along with church members as they progress through the series of evangelism and discipleship training. What a joy to see the Laotian Christians recognized that the primary reason the church existed was to be obedient to the Master, Jesus Christ, in following the Great
Commission that mandated all disciples to “go and make disciples of all nations”
(Matt 28:19).¹

**Ministry Context**

Two contexts are important for this project. First, this project is designed to help church members understand the current demographics of the Laotian population in the Atlanta Metropolitan Area. The population growth provides opportunities and challenges for the church members to evangelize lost Laotians for Christ. We will also discuss the dynamics of the growth of the population. Second, we will review the birth and growth of the Laotian Baptist Mission, the ministry of First Baptist Church of Red Oak, College Park, Georgia.

**Atlanta Laotian Demographics**

The Oliver Grove Laotian Baptist Church is almost on the county line between southeast Fulton and northern Clayton County, not far from the DeKalb line. The church is less than five miles west of the Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport. From 1975 through 1980, Laotian refugee resettlement mainly occurred in Fulton, Clayton, and DeKalb counties. These communities welcomed the Laotian refugees when they arrived in Atlanta. According to Teum Saleumsy, the former president of the Laotian American Association of Solidarity of Georgia (LAASG), “The majority of these families are still living in these counties and the Laotian population continues to grow.”²

The former director of the Atlanta Christian Council for Refugee Resettlement, Gail Hoffman, explains, “During the period of 1975 through 1980, more than 650 refugee families came to live in Atlanta. And 126 Laotian families were among them.”³ These

¹Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible.
³Gail Hoffman, interview by author, Atlanta, GA, January 12, 2009.
families lived in many of the communities around the Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport, located on the south side of Atlanta. Many worked in manufacturing companies close by the airport which was easily accessible by the bus system.\(^4\)

According to the earliest record of the LAASG, the former president, Khamfone Mahathirath, states that, “Laotian population in the late 1980s and early 1990s easily exceeded 5000 people.”\(^5\) He further explained that 328 Laotian families in the Atlanta Metropolitan Area were members of the association. However, not all of the Laotian families were members of the LAASG, but most of them belonged to Buddhist temples. The first temple named Wat Phouthamoungkhoun was organized in the early 1980s in Riverdale, Georgia. Many families still worship at this temple on a regular basis.

Today, in addition to Wat Phouthamoungkhoun in Riverdale, Laotians have organized four more Buddhist temples in the Atlanta metropolitan area: one of these is in Conley, Clayton County, a second one is in DeKalb, and a third and fourth ones are in Habersham County. Each of these temples has supporters of more than 300 families. In the past ten years, the Buddhist Temple of Riverdale has renovated its auditorium several times to accommodate more people. A Laotian Buddhist society official of Georgia, Thongsouk Thiphasone, claims, “When the temple has religious ceremonies, the 600 seat auditorium is filled, and it still has hundreds of people overflowing.”\(^6\)

The Lao American Society (LAS) is another Laotian Association. Most of the members of this association are young professionals. They are 1.5 and second generations of the original families.\(^7\) Fawn Nguyen Boutviseth, a LAS member who


\(^5\) Khamfone Mahathirath, interview by author, Atlanta, GA, June 28, 2008.

\(^6\) Thong Thiphasone, interview by author, Griffin, GA, November 25, 2009.

\(^7\) Reference to 1.5 and second generations are ways missionaries refer to the children of immigrant parents, being either born in their native lands and brought to America very early in life (1.5) or second generation born in America. See the section “Definitions and Delimitations” later in this chapter for a more complete explanation.
moved to Atlanta in 1999 from Bridgeport, Connecticut, says, “I moved to Atlanta from New England because part of my family is here. Atlanta offers better employment opportunities for me. I also like the warmer weather.”8 In the same statement she remarked that about 40 percent or more of her Laotian friends are moving here from other states.

Dao Malaythong, a member of the Board of Directors of LAS in Gwinnett County, says, “Over 985 Laotian families live in DeKalb and Gwinnett counties. Not all Laotian families are accounted for, but only those families that we have records of are the ones that belong to our local LAS.”9

Soy Xayaseng, a steel worker, moved his family of five to Atlanta over 25 years ago. He currently lives in Cobb County. Like many other Laotians, he and his family prefer Atlanta because of warmer weather and better employment opportunities. He is also actively involved in a local Laotian Association. In an interview he explains,

Over 350 Laotian families live in the county. I helped my friends to organize a local Laotian Association of Marietta. Our association is small because we cannot take everyone. Our records show more than 1,465 Laotians live in Cobb County alone. Over 95 percent of our families are moving in from other states.10

According to the statistical report from the studies of People Groups conducted by the North American Mission Board, an agency of Southern Baptist Convention, the following counties such as Cobb, Clayton, DeKalb, Fulton, and Gwinnett, have recorded very low numbers of Laotian residents (please see a comparison of these numbers on table 1). The actual number of the people, counted by the local Laotian associations county by county, is much higher, exceeding the number in the report by North American

Board. The Laotian Associations count their members in families as well as individuals in those families.

The Buddhist Society provides a different number because it gives the number of Laotian families. The Buddhist Society official of Georgia, Thongsouk Thiphasone, indicates that the number of people counted by the Buddhist temple is his best estimate because the temples have recorded families by their associations with the temples. However, the Buddhist temple’s records show only those people who regularly give supports or families who have close relationships with the temples. These numbers are also overlap each other simply because one family may go to and support several Buddhist temples (please see table 1). The figures do not reflect those 1.5 and second generation families or those who do not regularly attend the Buddhist temples.  

Regarding the counties making up the Greater Atlanta Metropolitan Area, a former president of the LAASG, Teum Saleumsy, says, “According to my records, in our association alone, we would have over 7,500 people as members. Altogether, including non-members of our association, those of 1.5 and second generation families, and people who are moving into Atlanta daily, we could easily have 10,000 to 15,000 people.”

From 1995 to 2005, the Laotian population experienced a growth explosion due to two factors. First, a rapid growth of Laotian children as the 1.5 and second generations are growing up, marrying and having their own families. These young families could easily double or, perhaps, even triple the number of the original families. Second, more Laotian families are moving into Atlanta from other states because Atlanta offers better living, employment opportunities, and a milder climate similar to the one in their home country.

11 Thiphasone, interview.
13 Ibid., interview.
Table 1. Numbers of Laotian Population In Metro Atlanta Counties Provided by Different Organizations

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<th>Buddhist Temple Number by families 15</th>
<th>Actual Number from Local Association 16</th>
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<td>Cobb County</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>1465</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clayton County</td>
<td>1017</td>
<td>645</td>
<td>3280</td>
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<tr>
<td>DeKalb County</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>1308</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fulton County</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>173</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gwinnett County</td>
<td>1093</td>
<td>535</td>
<td>2384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Number</td>
<td>2845</td>
<td>2068</td>
<td>9072</td>
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The Birth of the Laotian Mission

In the early 1980s, the First Baptist Church of Red Oak, Georgia, with the help of church families and the support of the Fairburn Baptist Association and the Georgia Baptist Convention, took up the challenge of a church-sponsored language ministry. The church started reaching out to the Laotian families by providing much needed physical and social adjustment assistance such as locating apartments, accompanying them to health clinics, enrolling children in school, and teaching them English. The church also provided classrooms and Sunday school teachers for biblical teaching for these immigrant families. 17

In June 1988, the church called a Laotian bilingual pastor to serve by proclaiming the Word of God among the families at Red Oak Laotian Baptist Mission of College Park. In the early stage, the mission started working with a small group of

14“People Groups” [on-line]; accessed 17 February 2010; available from http://www.namb.net/site/c.9KLU0zEpH/b.1477837/k8coc/North_American_People Group_Project_Center_for_Missional_Research.htm; Internet.

15Thiphasone, interview.

16These figures reported on this column are numbers of members obtained from different county LAASG or LAS from Cobb, Clayton, DeKalb, Fulton, and Gwinnett County.

17Nancy Sanders, interview by author, College Park, GA, October 06, 2008.
Laotian children and teenagers. The school buses dropped these children at church while on their way home in the afternoon. The church opened the door for these children and cared for them for a few hours until their parents picked them up. While waiting for their parents, the Laotian pastor helped these children with their homework, shared the gospel of Jesus Christ with them, and trained them in singing hymns and songs of praise. They met for Bible studies on Wednesday, Saturday afternoon, and Sunday morning in a small house next to the sponsoring church.  

**Growth Pattern of the Church**

Even though the mission started from a humble beginning, over a few years, many Laotians slowly came to know Jesus Christ and took him as their Lord and Savior. They were very small in numbers; they came to church very early Sunday morning to pray and train each other in discipleship. The mission gradually grew and expanded its facility to accommodate more people. Despite many struggles, people strove hard to be obedient to Jesus. As An Van Pham expresses in his dissertation “the foundation for church growth is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who leads the church from a simple beginning to expansion.”  

The mission made steady progress. However, when compared to Laotian population growth during the same period of time, the growth of the church was not increasing fast enough to catch up with the growth of the Laotian population. 

In 1995, the mission was constituted into a church named Oliver Grove Laotian Baptist Church and moved into its own building near the sponsoring church. From 1995 to 2003, the church grew from 45 to 85 members which showed a net increase

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18 Ibid.

of 90 percent during a period of eight years with an average of an 11 percent increase annually. From 2003 to 2008, the church gradually increased from 85 to 165 members. Even though the church membership has been continually growing, the progress has been slow and the increase still lags far behind the explosive growth of the Laotian population in the same period of time. Thom Rainer correctly points out that “the Church is a long way from keeping pace with the population growth.”

The growth is unable to make a significant impact on the rapidly growing Laotian community.

**Cultural Barriers to Evangelism**

Over the years, church members have had two main obstacles to overcome in regards to reaching out to the Laotian community. Although some of these church leaders and members have received outreach training, a majority of them are still unable to break through the cultural barrier of being shy and introverted. They are reluctant to break away from the small church mentality that causes people to focus more on fellowship with one another instead of evangelizing the lost. Elmer Towns puts it this way: “Members often feel the strain. They feel that they cannot receive new members without losing touch with those whom they already know.”

The single-cell church members are afraid of taking a risk of losing their intimacy, a sense of belonging, relationship with one another, and warm fellowship. They choose to remain a single-cell church or family church where only a few families attend and control. They form their own solidarity and because of their close knit association with one another, it becomes a barrier and difficult for new comers to break in. The author of *The Every Church Guide to Growth*, Elmer Towns, defines a single-cell church this way:


“In a single cell church everyone knows everyone, everyone relates to everyone, and everyone waits on everyone before anyone will do anything.”\textsuperscript{22} The people in the church work hard and look busy with the people within the church’s walls rather than spend time and energy reaching out to those outside of the church. The main operation of the ministries is focusing more on maintaining relationship and entertaining one another. Elmer Towns writes, “They lose sight of their vision and the opportunity to reach their community for Christ.”\textsuperscript{23}

\textbf{Evangelism Is the Work of the Soul-Conscious Believers}

To do effective evangelistic work, one must be willing to take up what the task requires, as the apostle Paul expressed in his first epistle to the church of Corinth. He emphasized, “I have to be all things for all men” and “to do all things for the sake of the gospel” as he wrote,

For though I am free from all men, I have made my self a slave to all, so that I may win more. To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being my self under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law; to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some. I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow part taker of it. (1 Cor 9:19-23)

Perhaps, the best example of crossing ethnic and cultural barriers is that of Peter’s rooftop vision and subsequent encounter with Cornelius, a Roman centurion. The event in Acts 10:1-45, especially verses 34-35 illustrate this point: “Opening his mouth, Peter said, ‘I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears him and does what is right is welcomed to Him.’”

\textsuperscript{22}Ibid., 152.

\textsuperscript{23}Ibid., 54.
wants to communicate the message of the gospel to all sinners. Through conviction of sins by the Holy Spirit, he transforms a sinner who hears his message and turns to him in repentance. The apostle Paul described the change this way: “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come” (2 Cor 5:17). The task of sharing the gospel with the lost is the work of the Holy Spirit led new man. The apostle Paul also wrote to the confused church in Galatia, “Neither circumcision nor non-circumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation” (Gal 6:15). The followers of Christ are free from those cultural traits that tend to limit their vision and effectiveness. Rather, as Robert E. Coleman states,

Evangelism had to become a burning compulsion within them purifying their desires and guiding their thoughts. . . . The fact that these men were of the common lot of mankind was no hindrance at all. It only serves to remind us of the mighty power of the Spirit of God accomplishing his purpose in disciples fully yielded to his control. After all, the power is in the Spirit of Christ. It is not who we are, but who he is that makes the difference.24

In order to be effective witnesses, Christians must seek the leadership of the Holy Spirit and continue to be dependant upon him and him alone. The church as a whole must strategically work together with a strong effort using reasonable resources to systematically evangelize the community. Each of this project’s components should provide a step in moving the church across cultural barriers. By working together the members can move toward the goal of becoming effective in the work of evangelism. In his dissertation, An Van Pham writes, “Paul depicts the church as a dynamic growing organism, containing parts of apparent insignificance, which in fact contribute to the body as a whole. Every part does its share and causes growth to the entire body for the edification of itself in love.”25 Every member can make a contribution toward reaching the evangelistic goal, no matter how small that task might be.

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All church members need to become personally committed to evangelism and church growth. Church leaders need to assist members to become enthusiastic and encourage them to live their lives responsibly by passionately reaching their lost neighbors. In the beginning, this task may be very slow, but it is necessary. Thom Rainer and Chuck Lawless write, “The process will be slow, especially in an established church. By eating small bites of the elephant slowly, progress will be made devouring the entire creature.”

In Acts 1:8, Luke recorded the last words of the Lord: “[A]nd you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.” For the purpose of this project, the geographical area covered by South Fulton and Clayton counties, is considered “Jerusalem.” The church may first start reaching out to the community that is closer to the church and then, it will gradually work its way to a wider circle. Other than Clayton and South Fulton, other counties of Metropolitan Atlanta are considered the equivalent to the early church’s “Judea,” as defined in this project, a wide area, larger than what one small church can reach.

Judging by the above comparison and contrast, Oliver Grove Baptist Church should improve its evangelism and church growth ministries in order to fulfill the Great Commission of our Lord, Jesus. This project may establish a foundation for equipping members in outreach. Through the implementation of the project both leaders and members should be transformed. The project may also provide on-going training whereby church leaders and members can sharpen their skills in personal evangelism by sharing their faith with clarity, compassion, and confidence.

**Rationale for the Project**

A very small number of church members is currently involved in evangelistic

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ministries at Oliver Grove Baptist Church. Only one-tenth of the members is present at any given evangelistic meeting and only one in ten persons is actively serving through church ministries. Even fewer people are reaching out to the lost for Christ. Obviously, many do not have the passion and courage for the work of evangelism, nor do they have an interest in any other church ministries.

When the church members meet to plan for evangelism, young members rarely attend unless they are requested to do so. This trend indicates that young people are lacking interest in church ministry activities. The church needs to take action to correct this trend and to encourage the younger generation to become active in the church’s evangelistic work. They are more likely to commit themselves to participate in these activities if the church leaders properly motivate them and help them to understand the urgency of evangelism. It is also necessary to equip them to do the work of evangelism and church growth.

Further rationale for this project centers on the desire of this pastor to share with all church members and leaders the need for them to serve in the church ministries. Aubrey Malphurs writes, “This is what I refer to as the church’s unemployment problem. As many as 80 to 90 percent of the typical congregation are sitting on the shore, watching a faithful few racing their boats on the ministry lake.”27 Furthermore, only mature church members serve in the church ministries and they try to reach out to all people, including those of 1.5 and second generation families. The church needs to do a better job of recruiting church members of all age groups and involving them in the evangelistic teams so that they all may work side by side, reaching out to all people.

The church working effectively with all age groups is of the utmost importance. Teams need to be divided according to age groups. Each age group should

\[\text{27 Aubrey Malphurs, Advanced Strategic Planning: A New Model for Church and Ministry Leaders, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 232.}\]
be led by a spiritually mature Christian so the team will learn to reach out to its own age
group. Then, the evangelist and the evangelized may both have a better chance to
understand each other. Thom Rainer writes, “The mandate is clear. Everyone is to be
involved in ministry. If all of the saints are not doing the work of service, the body of
Christ, the church is not built.”

The Olive Grove Laotian Baptist Church must be intentional in its efforts to
evangelize the community if it is to have a vibrant future. It must also encourage and
equip all church members to do their parts. In the process, the church will equip the
saints through discipleship training; in turn, the saints will be knowledgeable about the
ministries of the church. The disciples, Christ followers, will become involved in church
evangelism and church growth ministries. They will be able to reach out to the lost more
enthusiastically and effectively. In the process, church members will grow in their own
spiritual walk and some may take positions of leadership in the church. Hopefully, the
project will activate church members to their tasks and they, in turn, will take
responsibility to mobilize other people and to evangelize the community.

The church needs to equip its members well and to educate all of its members
about the nature and purpose of the church and its obligations toward the community.
Church leaders must be willing to prepare members spiritually, both young and old, so
that they approach their respective communities as their mission fields. As the authors of
the book 11 Innovations of the Local Church precisely describe,

Being a transforming community of faith is more than just building a big church.
It requires being a transformed and transforming church—a church that is
transformed by the gospel and that seeks to transform its community. That means it
impacts its community more than by just existing within it.

The church members must realize that they are vessels of the Lord for the purpose of


29 Elmer Towns, Ed Stetzer, and Warren Bird, 11 Innovations in the Local
telling people the Good News of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The purpose of this project is to meet the evangelistic needs of the members of Oliver Grove Laotian Baptist Church where they are, and lead them into a pattern of spiritual and numerical growth consistent with Jesus’ teaching on evangelism. Thus, this project is designed to work with the church leadership teams and members to ground and train them biblically, so they understand their tasks. This project should also enable them to explain the Gospel in their own way, and to mobilize them for reaching out to the lost. From all organizations of the church, every participant of the project would understand the purpose of his or her calling; together, they would be able to function in a mutual concerted effort to win the lost. John Mark Terry points out, “The church grew because it worked at growing. The early believers were not content with the status quo. They wanted the church to grow and expand into new areas. Bishops, clergy, and laity alike shared the gospel wherever they went.”30

**Definitions and Delimitations**

Throughout the project, the following terms may appear repeatedly. The term “Indochinese refugee” refers to the people who escaped from their countries known as Indochina and may include Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. These people are scattered around the world, escaping the political persecution and retaliation that resulted from the fall of their countries to communism in 1975.

The term “Lao or Laotian” refers to people who are natives of Laos, one of the countries of Indochina, Southeast Asia. The term can also mean a language spoken by the majority of people in Laos and Northeast Thailand. When the term “Lao Hmong” or “Hmong” is mentioned, it is referring to people of an ethnic tribe of Laos. The Lao

Hmong have their own language and culture; the majority of them can also speak the Lao common language.

The term “Lao-Thai” refers to people who are of Laotian background, but were born in Thailand. They are Thai by nationality because they were born in Thailand; at the same time, they are Laotian by ethnicity and culture. These people live in a way typical of Laotian life-style. They are known as Thai Isaan (Northeastern Thai) or Lao Isaan. Linguistically, Laotian and Lao-Thai understand each other because they speak the same common language, the Lao or Laotian language.

The term “original generation” or “first generation” refers to people who were born and raised in Laos. When the country fell to communism in 1975, they fled from their homeland as adults. Together with their families, they resettled in the United States and tried very hard to adjust to life in their new homeland.

The term “1.5 generation” refers to people who were born in their native homeland and escaped from their homeland with their parents when they were very young. They came to the United States with their families for resettlement. They grew up and were educated in this country. They had little knowledge of their native homeland, culture, and language.

The term “second generation” refers to people who were born in the United States raised and educated in this country as American children. They have very limited understanding of their family’s background—culture, language, and traditions. The United States is the only home they have known.

The main focus of this project is to help the Oliver Grove Laotian Baptist Church reach the first Laotian generation and their families. The people of this generation are still speaking their native tongues, practicing their culture, and living their native way of life. The majority of church ministries are conducted in their native language including evangelism and outreach activities. The youth ministry of the church, however, works with the younger generation bilingually, English and Laotian.
The term “evangelism” is telling the Good News of the Lord Jesus Christ—his love, his finished work on the cross, and the salvation available through forgiveness of sins—to anyone who does not know him personally. It also involves asking the hearer to put his trust in Christ, in order to be saved from God’s wrath and his final judgment. J. I. Packer writes, “Evangelism means exhorting sinners to accept Christ Jesus as their Savior, recognizing that in the most final and the far-reaching sense, they are lost without Him.”

The term “discipleship” refers to a training that offers the church members and leaders alike the opportunity to learn from the Master, Jesus Christ, and walk with him in their daily life in praying, worshipping, serving, evangelizing, equipping, and fellowshipping with one another. The Great Commission also mandates that believers are to “teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” (Matt 28:20). This part of the Commission takes the church beyond simply “converting” the lost, but also making them disciples or followers, which is contained in the third goal of the proposal. In this we see the element of church growth as the members grow in their spiritual life. Thom Rainer writes, “He [McGavran] saw evangelism as more than just proclaiming the gospel; he insisted that evangelization is incomplete until the person becomes a responsible disciple of Christ.”

The term “church growth” refers to spiritual, numerical, and biological growth within the church. “Spiritual growth” refers to the process of discipleship as the converted believer matures in his walk with Christ. He always seeks the Lord’s guidance in his life to serve, praise, and do that which pleases the Father and glorifies the Son. This


kind of growth happens when the mature Christian experiences the Spirit’s work in his life, as the Apostle Paul describes, “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Gal 5:22-23).

The term “numerical growth” refers to an increase in the number of the church membership, mainly through a conversion experience. Another form of growth is “transfer growth” which occurs when a church member transfers from one church to another. This latter growth, however, does not include conversion as part of decision to join the fellowship of another church.

Lastly, “biological growth” results from children of church members, who grow up and regularly attend the church, accepting Christ as their Lord and Savior when they come of age. For the sake of this project, “church growth” includes spiritual, numerical, and biological growth.

The duration of this project is fifteen weeks. The proposed project, however, intends to generate a long-term outcome for Olive Grove Laotian Baptist Church. Therefore, because of the project’s duration, other long-term results may not be available or measurable within the scope of the project.

**Research Methodology**

The project was designed to help Olive Grove Laotian Baptist Church members to understand clearly, to affirm, and to be personally involved in the implementation of the work of evangelism. Church members needed to understand the vision and mission of the church. Chuck Lawless writes, “They teach the purposes of the church. They guide in learning to worship. They teach how to serve, evangelize, pray, equip, and to fellowship. They help believers apply and evaluate this faith in every area of their lives.”

Resources for the project came from a combination of resources

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33 Chuck Lawless, *Discipled Warriors: Growing Healthy Churches that are equipped for Spiritual War Fare* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publication, 2002), 47.
including books, journals, articles, statistical data, internet sites, personal observation, and professional consultation.

The research targeted two main groups: the church leadership team and the church members. The participants came from the various church organizations and departments. The research utilized a simple questionnaire that included closed questions and multiple choice answers. The format was Likert scale questions with five choices for answers, such as Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (U), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). Only one response might be chosen. The research results illustrated the participants’ understanding of the biblical and theological issues of evangelism and church growth, which, in turn, determined the proper materials for any adjustment to the project.

The project lasted fifteen weeks and included a session to preview the total project. There was an explanation of the composition and objective of the project. A question and answer period permitted a better understanding and fuller participation in implementing the project. At the end of the session, each participant received an accompanying written explanation. The participants received a questionnaire that they returned at the next session. Adjustments and modifications to the format and the implementation of the project followed the information gathered from the completed surveys if necessary.

The project began with a two-weekend seminar for the church leaders, which included a project orientation and an overall description of its implementation. Participants received detailed information of the five purposes of the church as a prerequisite for leading different groups. During the following five weekends, participants had the opportunity to enroll in the seminars.

The church leaders called on each member to become involved in the project. All participants took part in classroom discipleship training in all seminar components and in the purposes of the church regarding evangelism and church growth. At the end of each
training session, sufficient time was scheduled to discuss a strategy for implementing and evangelizing the area, which the church considers its “Jerusalem” and “Judea.” I led one hour and thirty minutes of each topic seminar presentation, followed by group discussions. Each group will have time to discuss and plan its part in implementation. Each group selected a leader to help coordinate its part in cooperating with other groups.

I met regularly with leaders and any concerned parties at least once a week to enable cooperation and support from all members, while conducting the planning and implementing phase of the project. The meeting served to answer questions and addressed some concerns that might arise. Also, they made necessary adjustments and modifications per their respective assignments as needed. A time of mutual encouragement from the Word of God and prayer aided the church as it continued to carry out its commitment to the implementation of the project.
CHAPTER 2
BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL, AND HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR EVANGELISM AND CHURCH GROWTH

To implement an evangelism and church growth in their immediate and extended communities, church leaders and members of the Oliver Grove Laotian Baptist Church need a solid biblical understanding of their obligation to God’s calling. This chapter includes an examination of the biblical, theological, and historical foundations of evangelism and church growth. It brings to light of the biblical record of God’s demonstration of love for his people through his words and actions. Included also in this chapter is a discussion of God’s desire for his people to respond to his call by bearing the Good News of redemption at home and throughout the world.

Biblical Foundations

Examples of an evangelism and God’s calling to bear the Good News are evidenced throughout the Bible. The first example of evangelism was prompted by the fall of man, which was a direct result of his sin of disobedience to God. Ever since that initial fall, the effect of sin has been deadly and immediate. The event is vividly recorded in the Bible:

When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruits and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings. (Gen 3:6-7) \(^1\)

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\(^1\)Unless otherwise indicated, all Scriptures quotations are from the New American Standard Bible.
The result of Adam and Eve’s sin of disobedience was their realization that they were naked. Instead of running to God and repenting, they tried to cover their mistake and hide their shame with fig leaves. Afterwards, they hid from the Lord as he walked in the garden. This story recounts the beginning of the effects of sin, a pattern that Darrell W. Robinson writes “. . . was set to continue through the stream of human history.”

Mission in the Old Testament

God promptly initiated redemption and reconciliation, beckoning with a plaintive cry. The Lord God calls Adam: “Where are you?” (Gen 3:9). This cry has echoed down through every age of human history. The invitation to “come,” “come all,” and “come back to me” is a motif that runs throughout the Scriptures. Whether through those preaching a citywide crusade, witnessing one-on-one on a busy street, or in a remote part of the world, both in proclamation and in conversation, God demonstrates his loving heart toward his fallen creation. He unceasingly seeks the lost and provides the way for reconciliation with him. It is a real life drama of the heavenly Father pleading for the lost world to repent and return to him.

The Bible is a reliable source of the evangelistic activities of God and God’s people. God’s plan and efforts of salvation are preserved through human writers. The Bible records how God sends out the redeemed to evangelize the lost so that he can save


all those who trust in him. It is a smart and convincing strategy. Harry Piland notes, “God has chosen to use redeemed sinners to tell unredeemed sinners about Christ.”

The Bible records that when God had finished his creation, he was pleased with it and considered it to be “very good” (Gen 1:31). However, not long after the fall of man, sin marred God’s creation and corrupted the whole human race. From that moment on and throughout history, creation as a whole is no longer “very good” (Gen 1:31). Men have been rebellious toward God and his eternal purpose and needed to be reconciled to God. Men have continued to make their choices to be disobedient down through the stream of human history. Reginald M. McDonough precisely argues,

Thus by their own choice, they [Adam and Eve] disrupted the special relationship with God. They failed to live up to the full potential that God placed in them. From Genesis 3 to contemporary history, individuals have continued to use their freedom to disobey. Disobedience was and continues to be sin.

Since God knows that men are lost without him, and he places a high value on his creation, God is willing to redeem mankind even though it requires his personal sacrifice to do so. The Bible records the drama of God’s long and enduring search for his beloved subjects. From the beginning and continuing over the centuries, God’s call to man has always been, “Where are you?” Bert Dominy puts it this way: “What a prologue is to a drama, Genesis 1-11 is to the Bible, specifically Genesis 3:8-9. It provides essential background for understanding God’s saving activity.”

The scene continues to play out over the course of the Old Testament as the anticipation of the fulfillment of God’s promise points ahead in times to come. Throughout the entirety of the Bible, the Scriptures record God’s profound concern for


his creation. Indeed, as Bruce Demarest precisely points out,

> It is obvious even to the casual reader that the central message of the Bible concerns the spiritual recovery or salvation of lost men and women. From the *protoevangelium* of Genesis 3:15 to Revelation 22:21, Scripture relates the grand story of how God has acted in grace to save his wayward image-bearers.9

**God’s covenant with Abraham.** God’s evangelistic efforts continued with the covenant he made with Abraham when he called him out from his native home of Ur, Mesopotamia. God promise was that through Abraham he would bless all nations:

> And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed. (Gen 12:2-3)

Through generations after Abraham, God reaffirmed the same covenant to the children of Israel. When they were on their way from Egypt to the Promised Land, God reiterated this covenant (Exod 19:6); however, the nation of Israel did not come into being until thirteen hundred years later.10 God is persistent and patient in fulfilling his plan of salvation. An Van Pham writes,

> God did not want Abraham to keep his promise and commission to himself. He intended for Abraham to tell his children, and they in turn their children and their children’s children and on and on until all families of the earth should know that they were to be blessed through Abraham.11

God chose Abraham to carry out his message to the world. Two important factors are particularly evident from the initial covenant that God made with Abraham. First, out of the multitudes of people on earth, Israel was God’s choice to be his own treasured possession. God called Abraham to fully obey and trust him, pursuing his call and leaving

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10Ibid., 11.

11An Van Pham, “Establishing A Language Culture Congregation in the Savannah Baptist Association” (D.Min. project, The Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1990), 27.
everything else behind—being fully dependent on him. Second, through Abraham, Israel would become a nation of priests in unequivocal and absolute service to God.

As the Nation of Priests to the world (Exod 19:1-6; 32:10; Num 14:12; Deut 4:6), Israel shouldered many important responsibilities and privileges before God and the community. In addition to liturgical service, priests led the community to worship God, taught his Word, and reminded the people of the will of God and his laws. They interceded for the people as mediators before God. Although, specific men were chosen to wear the title of “priest,” the entire nation served as an example of God’s servant priest.

Whenever Israel strayed from God and his laws, God disciplined Israel and molded her back to her rightful responsibilities as “a nation of servant priests.”12 God intended the nation of Israel to be a holy people who lived for God’s holy purpose of representing him to all nations. Israel’s calling is an awesome privilege and a daunting responsibility. Pham writes,

The high priest had the privilege of entering the holy of holies—into the very presence of God—and this privilege carried with it the awesome responsibility of entering on behalf of others. Likewise, God gave Israel the splendid privilege of access to Him, and this privilege involved the responsibility of approaching God on behalf of all the people of the earth.13

As a prophet is to a people, so Israel was to the nations of the world for God intends his chosen people solely to accomplish his purpose.

God called Abraham to be his instrument for his purpose. In obedience to God, Abraham left his native homeland of Ur, Mesopotamia, the place where his ancestors had lived for many generations. He wandered as a stranger in a new land that one day would be his inheritance from God. At times, God’s promises seemed that they would never materialize. Yet, Abraham determined to live by faith, full of passion for


God. He chose to live a disciplined and different kind of life and steadfastly endured through the tough and difficult times he faced.\textsuperscript{14} Because of his faithfulness, a great number of people received God’s blessing.

As exampled by Abraham’s life, God may choose to use a handful of Laotian Christians at OGLBC. He could call hundreds of Laotian families who live on the south side of Atlanta to live and bring others to him. God does not want only a small band of Laotians to receive his blessing. He wants all of them to tell their children, relatives, neighbors, and friends about him and his works. E. G. White writes, “Abraham was human; his passion and attachments were like ours; but he did not stop to question how the promise could be fulfilled. He knew that God is just and righteous in all his requirements, and he obeyed the command to the very letter.”\textsuperscript{15}

\textbf{God calls his prophets.} From among this chosen people, God called spokespersons and messengers whose responsibilities were twofold: to bring the Word of God to the people of the world and to bring the concerns of the people to the Lord. Yet, some people so reviled God’s prophets for bringing his message that they sought to destroy them, persecuting and even stoning them to death. Despite being resisted and abused by the people, the prophets and evangelists of both the Old and New Testaments loyally carried out their duties and confronted their contemporaries with God’s message. For example, even though Jeremiah remembered his past persecution and protested, he faithfully persisted in speaking the Word of the Lord (Jer 20:9). Consistently throughout the Scriptures, God exhorts the prophet to remain focused, faithful to the task, and well-disciplined. The prophet’s task is clear: “Go and proclaim” the Lord’s specific message to a people. Jeremiah 3:12-15 records, “Go proclaim these words toward the north and


\textsuperscript{15}Ibid., 108.
say, ‘Return faithless Israel,’ declares the Lord.” God’s message was typically full of love for his people. Through the prophets, God urges the people to “return, faithless Israel” (Jer 3:12) and “return O faithless sons” (Jer 3:14). God still cared for them in spite of their faithlessness. Eventually, God voiced his deep concern for his people when they formulated an alliance with Egypt, moving the nation toward even greater separation from him. God urged the people of Israel to return to him while there was still time.

Nonetheless, God’s intention has always been and remains to bring all people to himself—not just the people of Israel. God entered into a covenant with Abraham because he wanted to bless the world through him. God consistently claimed that Israel was his chosen people: “I will be your God, you will be my people” (Lev 26:12). He had no plan to change his mind because “he is God, the faithful God, who keeps his covenant and his loving kindness to a thousand generation with those who love him and keep his commandments” (Deut 7:9).

A major component of God blessing the world through Israel ensued through interactions with the strangers, the poor, the aliens, the fatherless, the sick, and the widows. The Bible records that God always had a special concern for weak, vulnerable, and oppressed people. He gave special instructions to the Israelites to deal justly with these people (Ps 10:14-18). God commanded his people to love him and do the things that he required of them (Deut 10:12) as a reflection of his grace and mercy. In the Law of Moses, the Lord tells the Israelites to save portions of their harvests to give to those who were in need so that they too could eat (Deut 10:17-18; 26:12). Evangelism to the world required that Israel not only impart the spoken Word of God, but also share their wealth, do good deeds, and care for all people.

God revealed the responsibility of Israel to treat others justly by sharing their wealth through the Mosaic Law. An example of this revelation is God’s injunction on how to treat strangers (Lev 19:33; Num 9:14). John D. W. Watts writes,

God expects justice for all men. But he Himself takes the part of those who have no civil rights of their own: fatherless, the widow, and sojourners. The latter are non-
citizens somewhat like migrant workers. The Israelites are urged to drop their prejudices and selfish notions. Only then can they understand what their great God wants from them and be in a position to obey.\footnote{John D. W. Watts, \textit{Deuteronomy}, in vol. 2 of \textit{Broadman Bible Commentary}, ed. Clifton J. Alan (Nashville: Broadman, 1970), 233.}

In \textit{Mission in the Old Testament}, Kaiser writes, “Accordingly, it is not an outlandish idea to think that the Lord was simultaneously extending the offer of salvation to others during the Old Testament era in addition to Israel.”\footnote{Walter C. Kaiser Jr., \textit{Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as a Light to the Nations} (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 24.} Indeed, the good news of salvation is intended for all of creation.

During the Babylonian captivity, the people of Israel became a witness of the one true God. Wherever their captors placed them, the Israelites prayed and worshipped God through constant practice of their religion. God used their captivity in foreign lands as an opportunity for missionary work. God gained the attention of foreign kings and their subjects through the Israelites’ life style when they were in captivity. These Gentiles could not help but recognize the awesome and magnificent power and glory of God that eventually led them to praise him.

Gentile nations, foreign kings, and their subjects witnessed the mighty acts God performed through the lives of his chosen people. In one such act, Almighty God revealed the meaning of King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream to Daniel. This Babylonian king immediately responded by praising God and acknowledging that “surely your God is a God of gods and a Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries” (Dan 2:47).

By his own will, God chose to show his awesome and magnificent glory in order to reconcile the lost world to himself. Sometimes, he communicated his message through his chosen people and the prophets. Sometimes, he accomplished his goal through ordinary people. Yet, other times, he chose to work through a pagan king, such as when he saved the three Hebrew young men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from
a fiery death (Dan 3:26). This event led King Nebuchadnezzar to declare,

It has seemed good to me to declare the signs and wonders which the Most High God has done for me. How great are His signs and how mighty are His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and His dominion is from generations to generations. (Dan 4:2-3)

During the years of captivity, the population of Israel dwindled. The land laid fallow, and homes, villages, towns, and cities became desolate. God allowed Cyrus, king of Persia and Media, to invade Babylon. The invasion resulted in the return of some Hebrew captives to Jerusalem, their native home. Their liberation was followed by a time of productivity and growth. The prophet called on the people to enlarge their tents and extend their tent cords—a metaphor for making room for growth.

During the captivity, Israel was called a “barren wife.” She was “desolate,” but her condition was not final. Through restoration, Israel experienced new life. Through the servant’s vicarious suffering, Gentiles became part of God’s family. Many new babies were born into this family. The living quarters were no longer adequate. The “tent” needed to be “enlarged.” Longer “cords” and stronger “pegs” were needed. Spiritual growth would occur; the one would become many (Isa 54:1-3).18

Theologically, outreach and growth were the will of God for people. The children of Israel were taken captive because of their disobedience to the Lord; however, God heard their cries for forgiveness and gave them opportunities to be reconciled with him. He gathered them back to himself like a hen gathers her chicks under her wing (Matt 23:37). Everyone who receives such redemption consequently has something to tell others of God’s goodness and of his redemptive acts.19

God intended for Israel to be a missionary nation among nations of the earth.

19Ibid., 46.
Walter C. Kaiser emphasizes, “The whole nation was to function on behalf of the kingdom of God as mediators between God and the nations.”\(^{20}\) Israel was to represent him to all nations of the world so that they would come to know him and recognize his work. Regrettably, instead of living their lives for God’s purpose, Israelites enjoyed receiving the blessing of God, but were unwilling to be a blessing to others.

God called his prophets to be servants and mediators and servants between him and his people. They were to be light to the people and reflect his character. They were called to love and show concern for all people, especially those who were weak and vulnerable. Sometimes, their presence in the community was not welcomed. Their task was extremely dangerous and difficult. Even though it was intended to bring love, forgiveness, and hope from God to the lost world, they drew harsh and judgmental treatment in return. They steadfastly stood their ground and continually went about their task faithfully, even if it meant losing their lives.

The call to these humble and brave prophets is not different from that of the Laotian Christians of OGLBC. When God called Abraham, he left everything behind. He never returned to his old home, but went forth with God’s purpose for the rest of his life. The Lord called the prophet Jeremiah to be his spokesman to the Israelites. His task was not less difficult than that of Daniel’s and of his Hebrew friends before king Nebuchadnezzar. Their task seemed unbearable at times; however, they endured to the very end. In fact, because of what they went through, their witness brought people and kings to their knees praising God. Kaiser claims that “we were all intended by God to participate in that priesthood as the agents of blessing to the nations of the earth. Exodus 19 makes it clear that this was God’s plan.”\(^{21}\)


\(^{21}\)Ibid., 14.
Evangelism and Church Growth in the New Testament

In the narrative of the Gospel of Matthew, the angel of the Lord announces the purpose of God: the salvation of his people through the sacrifice of his Son, Jesus. The angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and announced, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. She will bear a Son; and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins” (Matt 1:20-21). Jesus was born for God’s sanctioned purpose to “save His people from their sins” (Matt 1:20-21).

Jesus Christ is the hope of the world. In spite of God’s promise to make his special people, a kingdom of priests and the light for Gentiles (Exod 19:6; Isa 42:6), the Israelites did not live up to God’s expectations. Instead, they repeatedly committed sins against God and wandered away from him. Because of God’s love for them, he yearned to reconcile his people to himself. This was made possible through the atoning death of his Son, Jesus Christ. Consequently, Luke records Jesus’s conversation with Zaccheus noting, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:9-10). The Son of Man is the salvation of the children of Abraham, the Israelites, and of the Gentiles around the world.

Jesus is the Savior; he is the provider of salvation and the model of evangelism. As the apostle John records in the conversation between Jesus and the Pharisee Nicodemus, Jesus says, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him, should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16). Jesus came to save everyone in the world; to “whoever believes” in him, whether Jew or Gentile, Jesus offers eternal life.

With the original fall of man, the tragedy of physical and spiritual death began to taint all of God’s creation. All of mankind has suffered from the consequences of that
fall: “The wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23). Physically, man must die because he has sinned against God. Throughout the ages, man has attempted to reestablish a relationship with God, but it is impossible for him to do it on his own. The more attempts he makes through his own effort, the farther he wanders from God. Man’s image of God has been distorted by sin, and man’s conduct and his understanding of God are corrupt. Timothy K. Beougher writes, “As Adam was sinful, he could give us no better than he had himself, and therefore being a son of death, he could not beget sons of life; being guilty, he could not beget persons that are innocent; nor bring a clean thing from himself, who was unclean.”

This is a truth reiterated by many scholars, like Guthrie, who writes,

To say that sinners are dead in their sins is to say that just as dead people cannot make themselves alive again, neither can we help ourselves out of our self-contradictory inability to live in real community with God, our families, our associates, and people of other races, classes and cultural heritage.

Yet man’s limitation is not the end—it is not the only story. When man suffers the agony of defeat, God reaches out with love for him. God always aims to gather his people to himself as recorded in the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus said, “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I want to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling” (Matt 23:37). Historically, God has been and always is willing to restore his relationship with mankind, but man often looks elsewhere for the solution to his dilemma.

The acts of the apostles are bridges to the Lord. The disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. From that point in history they began to change the world in mighty ways. The Holy Spirit continued to be present and remain in their lives. The apostles gave their all to the cause of the Lord’s “Great Commission.”


They faced opposition bravely and remained true to their call even to their death. How did they do it? Where did they find such courage and conviction? And what was the result?

The apostle Peter (Matt 14:30, 26:69-72) was at times argumentative (Matt 16:22; John 13:8, 18:10), and cowardly, even to the point of flatly denying he ever knew Jesus (Mark 14:67-71). However, after Pentecost, empowered by the Holy Spirit, Peter spoke with boldness to the crowd conveying the truth that Jesus is Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36). He called the people to repent and to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. As a result, “That day there were added about three thousand souls” to the Kingdom (Acts 2:41). This event became a tremendous impetus for the growth of the early church. The church continued to grow among Jews as well as Gentiles (Acts 2:47, 4:4, 5:14, 6:7, 8:39-40, 9:31, 11:18, 21, 24, 14:1, 16:5, 17:4, 18:8). Gary L. McIntosh states, “That is why churches that desire to experience biblical church growth rely on the right power: the Holy Spirit. Put simply, life giving churches trust in the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit for the growth of the church.”

Post Pentecost, the disciples of Jesus Christ met together daily at the Temple.

And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common. They began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. Day by day, continuing with one mind in the temple, and braking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved. (Acts 2:44-47)

The disciples were together not only physically, but they also combined their possessions in order to share with others in need. In addition, they were of one mind: doing the ministry and praising God with their whole being. They prayed and worshipped God and went from house to house breaking bread together. The newly born infant church

24 Gary L. McIntosh, Biblical Church Growth: How You Can Work with God to Build a Faithful Church (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 81, emphasis original.
at first seemed to be no more than a new sect within the religion of Judaism. Henry Chadwick writes, “At first Christianity must certainly have appeared only as one more sect or group within a Judaism that was already accustomed to considerable diversity in religion expression.”\textsuperscript{25}

The celebration of the Pentecost involved an annual pilgrimage of Hellenistic Jews who came to Jerusalem from all parts of the Roman world (Acts 2:5-13). No doubt, while remaining in Jerusalem, they witnessed the powerful teachings by Peter at the temple and many became new converts. When they returned to their home countries, they shared the message of salvation, forgiveness, and “Jesus the Messiah for all.”\textsuperscript{26} At the same time, the disciples of Jesus in Jerusalem continued to draw more converts from local Jewish communities (Acts 4:4; 5:16; 6:7). At times, the movement attracted too much attention with its multitude of followers; thus, it created conflict with the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:1-22).

The new faith community was a tight knit group of people. The believers lived typical lives of their day; however, they carried the message of hope when they traveled from place to place (Acts 8:4-40). Being empowered by the Holy Spirit, they healed the sick, drove out demons, and performed miracles. They spread the message of Good News and attracted new converts wherever they went. Chadwick describes the early church movement this way:

Before long there were substantial groups of Christian Jews not only in Jerusalem but also in the surrounding country side of Judea. The faith rapidly reached not only Damascus but Antioch, the capital of Syria and third city of the Roman Empire, where the pagans soon gave the nick name “Christian.”\textsuperscript{27}


\textsuperscript{27}Chadwick, “From Jerusalem to Rome,” 14-15.
Theological Foundations

Throughout biblical history, God longingly and lovingly calls for all people to return to him: “Come to me” (Matt 11:28). Because of his sinful nature, man chooses to go his own way and distance himself from God. Isaiah comments, “All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way” (Isa 53:6). In contrast, God is always willing and ready to forgive man of his sin: “Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord. Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool” (Isa 1:18).

The God of Israel Is a Jealous God

Man is God’s crowning creation. God is not willing to share his glory with other gods. For the sake of his people’s well-being, God provides protection, comfort, and hope along with warnings. Throughout Israel’s ordeals and journey, God was always there lending aid and giving instruction, much as he did with Noah. God told Noah to build an ark and gave him very specific instructions that enabled Noah, his family, and representative creatures to survive the flood (Gen 6:13-22, 7:1-24). Similarly, God called Abraham from his home and gave him specific instructions to go to a land that the Lord would later show him (Gen 12:1).

The Bible records God’s interactions with mankind. It is a book of God’s communications with his people—about himself, his kingdom, his authority, his activities, and his intentions. The interactions and communications, oftentimes, are very specific, such as when God appeared to Moses at Horeb, the mountain of God. He called Moses by name and identified his relationship to Moses through the words, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” (Exod 3:6), and he revealed to Moses his name: “I AM WHO I AM” (Exod 3:14). God displays his awesome power and love through his protection of and provision for his people. He delivered his people from the bondage of slavery in Egypt and also from the oppression of captivity by their enemies in
Babylon. Gilbert L. Guffin writes,

The thing God was about to do for Israel was no provincial matter. The whole earth would witness the event. In the deliverance and redemption of Israel, the nations would see also the strength of the Lord revealed, his “holy arm” made bare. Thus “the end of the earth” or the remotest places would be caused to acknowledge him.\textsuperscript{28}

God also provides a revelation of things to come. He reveals his future plans so that his people might know and prepare themselves for what lies ahead. Because sin stains his life, man has lost his ability to sense the right path for his life’s journey. Only God knows the right destiny and correct course; therefore, God desires his people to stay close to him at all times, attentively listen to his call, and heed him wholeheartedly.

One such call foretelling the birth of Jesus Christ came through the prophet Isaiah 760 years before the event: “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel” (Isa 7:14). Another call came to Ahaz, King of Judah, when the nation was on the brink of war against Israel and its ally Syria. Gilbert L. Guffin writes,

Looking back now upon this marvelous assurance in the light of the New Testament, we must interpret the prophecy as having its highest fulfillment not in an event of Ahaz’s day, but in the coming of him who is the Word that “became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). As the New Testament affirms, Christ is truly “God with us” (Matt 1:23).\textsuperscript{29}

Throughout history, God never left his people to struggle blindly. He consistently provided hope, guidance, and a promise that he would remain with them. God gave Israel mandates or commandments, such as the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:1-17) to help them remain true and loyal to him. He provided guidelines for the Israelites including prohibition of idol worship and unfair treatment of others. God desires his people to trust and be totally dependent upon him (Exod 20:5). He gave instructions to his people as \textit{commands}—not mere ideas or suggestions. These commands were given in


\textsuperscript{29}Ibid., 65.
order for God’s people to keep peace with him, and live a long and prosperous life. The book of Deuteronomy records these words,

So you shall keep His statues and His commandments which I am giving you today, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may live long on the land which the Lord your God is giving you for all time. These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You should diligently keep the commandments of the Lord your God, and His testimonies and His statutes which he has commanded you. (Deut 4:40; 6:6, 17)

Responding to God’s authority, the people of God through the ages recorded the instructions and commandments by which they were to live their daily lives. W. Robert Godfrey writes,

* Sola Scriptura was one of the ringing cries of the Protestant Reformation. This affirmation spoke to the issue of religious authority and summarized the Protestant conviction that religious truth could be known with certainty, not from the popes and councils, but from the Bible alone. As the declarations sola fide (by faith alone), sola gratia (by grace alone), and solus Christus (Christ alone) summarized the essence of the gospel, *sola Scriptura* pointed to the reliable source for all knowledge of that gospel.  

God revealed his truth and authority through the Scriptures. By faith in the grace of Jesus Christ alone comes the knowledge of the gospel. The Holy Spirit and the Bible are the sources from which the followers of Christ are to derive the standards of their behavior, and most particularly the way in which they are to be his witnesses, his salt, his light, and his ambassadors in the world.

**Gracious King of Host**

The Gospel of Matthew and Luke record the parable of the wedding feast of the king’s son (Matt 22:2-14; Luke 14:16-24). This story depicts God’s will and everlasting commitment to save man, his lost creation. In the parable, the king is

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30Similar commands occur in Deut 10:13; 26:18; Josh 22:5; 1 Kgs 2:3, 6:12, 8:58, 11:38; 2 Kgs 17:13; 1 Chr 28:8, 29:19.

extremely gracious. He repeatedly sends out his slaves to invite guests: “Come; for everything is now ready” (Luke 14:17). The people, however, do not pay attention. Some of them even act violently toward the king’s messengers.

The king persists in his invitation in spite of the violence and the lack of interest of the people. He continues to send out his servants to “the roads and country lanes and make them come in” (Luke 14:23). Still, the wedding hall is not filled. The king extends his good will toward anyone and everyone who is willing to come. This parable exemplifies that the Good News was available to all men at the time, and so it continues to be for mankind today. Delos Miles writes,

> The gospel is good news, good news for all persons and for every person everywhere: good news for the poor; good news for the rich; good news for the captives; good news for the blind; good news for the prisoners; good news for the slaves; and good news for the masters.\(^{32}\)

God continues to command his servants to go out and share the Good News with all people in order that the wedding hall might be filled. The servants carry out their duties to go out into the highway with honor, humility, and love. At the end of their lives, they pass on the torch of the gospel to the next generation so the Word of God never stops. J. I. Packer says, “His royal Master has given him, the servant, a message to proclaim; his whole business, therefore, was to deliver that message with exact and studious faithfulness, adding nothing, altering nothing, and omitting nothing.”\(^{33}\) This is the premise of evangelism and church growth. The task requires true humility, love, persistence, sacrificial commitment, perseverance, and endurance in all things.

**The Great Commission**

After the resurrection, which was the completion of the work of atonement for

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sin on the cross, Jesus prepared his disciples to carry out the task of spreading the Good News of salvation to all people everywhere. Jesus first asked his disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit. Then he commanded them to “go” saying,

All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. (Matt 28:18-20)

The Great Commission was literally the last word the Lord Jesus Christ spoke to his followers. He spoke to them with all authority that was given to him in heaven and on earth” (Matt 28:18). He alone had that authority and power and with that authority he gave marching orders to all who had trusted him and had given their lives to him. They were to conduct their lives as he did and carry the torch of the kingdom to the rest of the world. Julian N. Hartt explains,

This message was not of the church’s own devising: the church was created by the living Word uttered through it. Created so the Christian community has a divine commission to be only purely [sic] the humble servant of the Word, declaring unto the ends of the earth and until the end of time the good news concerning the kingdom of God.  

**The command of the Great Commission.** Jesus commanded his followers, not just a mere man, but with “all authority in heaven and on earth” (Matt 28:18). He gave his disciples marching orders to “go and make disciples of all nations.” He promised his disciples, “Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matt 28:20). As they went, they would “baptize” and “teach” the people, who had come to acknowledge Jesus as their Lord and Savior, to observe all he had commanded them. Jesus does not exclude anyone out from hearing his Good News, whether then, now, and in the future. Rose Dowsett expresses this way,

Jesus’ claim to authority is sweeping. There is neither place nor time, nor even heaven or eternity, which falls outside it. It has been given, not seized. It is the

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authority of one who is equal in status with both the Father and the Holy Spirit, in other words fully God. He is Lord of the universe and King of eternity.\textsuperscript{35}

Jesus, the King of eternity, commanded his disciples to “go and make disciples” by using an action verb in its imperative form. According to the \textit{Scott Foreman Advance Dictionary}, an imperative is something that (1) is not to be avoided; that is to be done; urgent, (2) expresses a command or a request, and (3) (in grammar) has to do with a verb form which expresses a command; request.\textsuperscript{36} Hence, the Great Commission is a \textit{command} from the Lord Jesus Christ for believers. The \textit{command} is not to be avoided but rather to be completed in every detail. It is a charge for followers to keep. It renders discipleship as a part of everyday life as believers go about their daily activities wherever their lives may take them. It is the ultimate command by which all Christians should live! Hartt further points out,

\textit{[W]}e honor Christ as our Lord. How then can we reject his commandment, his charge? How shall we take thought to reduce that charge to inanity and triviality? These dire things we can try to do only so far as first \textit{we} are minded to write our own gospel and to create a Christ after our own hearts.\textsuperscript{37}

\textbf{The obligation of believers.} Believers are to fulfill the Great Commission. In his letter to the Galatians, the apostle Paul wrote, “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who lives, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loves me and gave himself up for me” (Gal 2:20). The Apostle Paul’s words, “I have been crucified with Christ,” explain to the Galatians that his former life as Saul, the learned authoritative Pharisee and persecutor of Christ’s believers, was no longer existent. By faith, he was crucified and no longer lived.


\textsuperscript{37}Hartt, \textit{Toward a Theology of Evangelism}, 10.
But, he said; now “Christ lives in me”: Paul was no longer the person he once was. Christ had renewed him and he obediently entrusted his life totally to the cause of Jesus Christ as an act of love. The same passion that Jesus had for the world was now Paul’s passion, and the Great Commission became his life’s mission. He expressed in his letter to the Corinthians, “To the weak I become weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that I may by all means save some” (1 Cor 9:22).

God gave the Ten Commandments with his power and authority. Jesus likewise authoritatively gave his followers the Great Commission: “All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth.” Then, he said, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (Matt 28:19). As the Ten Commandments are still in effect for those who fear the Lord, the Great Commission is a command for all believers. Kenneth L. Gentry Jr. explains,

The Great Commission sends down from above an obligation upon God’s people. It can no more be reduced to “The Good Idea” than the Ten Commandments can be deemed the “Ten Suggestions.” It is not an option for the people of God. It is an obligatory task laid upon those who are not only created in the image of God (as all men are), but who are ethically renewed in that image by the saving mercies of Christ.38

**Historical Foundations**

It is evident from such passages that God clearly intended to extend the gospel of salvation to every nation on earth. After Pentecost, the Holy Spirit performed many miracles through the lives of the apostles. The apostles preached the gospel boldly and powerfully to the people, and great numbers of Jews and Gentiles turned to the Lord and were added to the church daily. In addition, severe persecution of Christians drove believers of Jesus Christ into all directions, but wherever they went, they preached the Good News and more people became believers.

Soon after the Christian faith came on the world scene, it became a focal point of the whole Roman Empire. Herbert Kane expresses, “What began as a Jewish sect in A.D. 30 had grown into a world religion by A.D. 60.” Impassioned by the message from their Lord and empowered by the Holy Spirit, an inspired handful of disciples and believers turned the Roman world upside-down.

**God Called the Apostle Paul**

The Lord Jesus called Saul to repent while he was on his way to persecute the church in Damascus. From the moment of his conversion, Saul changed inwardly. Instead of persecuting the church, Saul became Paul and proclaimed the Good News of Jesus Christ. The church grew rapidly in both the Jewish community and also the non-Jewish world of the Greeks and others in Jerusalem. The church flourished in cities like Antioch, beyond Jerusalem. The apostles in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to investigate what was happening there, and having seen the great work of God in the church of Antioch, Barnabas went to Tarsus to enlist Paul’s help. They served at Antioch for a year and “taught great numbers of people” (Acts 11:26) as Jesus had mandated, “Teaching them to observe all that I commanded you” (Matt 28:20). Without a doubt, Gentiles were among their pupils (Acts 11:20-21), but God had a bigger plan for his followers as they took his reconciliation message to the whole world.

After their work at the church of Antioch, Barnabas and Paul were set apart by the Holy Spirit and sent off to proclaim the Good News of God (Acts 13:3) to other nations. Thom Rainer reminds Christian that “the Great Commission is a mandate to go.” Barnabas and Paul understood this and that is the reason they committed their

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lives to go into all the world. Gentry claims,

For in that Commission we find a vivid expectation of a gospel-induced conversion of the world. An expectation fully compatible with the teaching of Scriptures in all sections. An anticipation that does not require a reading of words into the text. A glorious hope that is fully commensurate with the authority available and the goal set.\(^\text{41}\)

Paul and Barnabas went to Seleucia, sailed to Cyprus, and from there went on to Salamis. In Salamis, they preached the first message on the mission field as commissioned missionaries. At the end of their journey, they came back to Antioch and continued to preach the Word of the Lord.

Paul and Barnabas attracted large crowds. The local Jews became jealous of them and sought ways to challenge their message. Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, “It was necessary that the Word of God be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it and judge yourself unworthy of the eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. For the Lord has commended us” (Acts 13:46-47). Paul whole-heartedly began his mission to the Gentiles. Though not authorized by the Jerusalem church leaders, his work among the Gentiles eventually met with their approval.

Paul made three missionary trips throughout Asia Minor continuing on to the heart of the Roman Empire at Rome. He preached in both small and large cities such as Antioch, Ephesus, Galatia, Thessalonica, Corinth, Philippi, and Rome until his journeys finally ended in imprisonment and martyrdom in Rome. Of his end, Reymond writes,

This incarceration eventually brought him to that site near the third mile stone on the Ostian Way where he laid down his life for the ‘Faith’ which he steadfastly kept to the end, to that place not far away a basilica in which two ancient slabs bear the simple engraving: “To Paul, Apostle and Martyr.”\(^\text{42}\)

Burning with passion, filled by the Holy Spirit, and prompted by the Great Commission, the apostle Paul gave his all to preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and


Paul accepted his assignment of taking the Good News to the Gentiles as the primary obligation of his life. Because the message of Christ was preached, he rejoiced even though he was in chains (Phil 1:14, 18). His imprisonment encouraged many brothers to speak the truth boldly. To the Christians in Corinth, he wrote,

I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles; dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. (2 Cor 11:26-27)

Paul emptied himself in order to take on the business of spreading the gospel and he expressed that “for to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain” (Phil 1:21). Reymond remarks,

It is not overstating the case to assert that the apostle Paul is the most influential Christian who ever lived. Every ‘Paul scholar’, sooner or later, expressed sincere admiration for the man and a deep appreciation of his unparalleled significance with respect to the theology and spread of the Christian faith.43

During his broad missionary travels, Paul wrote thirteen letters to address different issues of theology including Christology, justification by faith, and eschatology. His pastoral letters dealt with orderliness in the churches and with teaching the faith.44 Geerhardus Vos Avers writes that “Paul’s writings reveal the genius of the greatest constructive mind ever at work on the data of Christianity.”45 In reference to Paul’s missionary labors, Martin Hengel argues that Paul was the first Christian theologian and the first Christian missionary:

The success of the Christian mission was unique in the ancient world. Paul’s mission [was] unprecedented happening, in terms both of the history of religion in antiquity and of later church history. With Paul, for the first time we find the specific aim of engaging in missionary activity through out the world. [As a result,

43Ibid., 17.

44Ibid., 28-30.

45Geerhardus Vos, The Pauline Eschatology (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 149.
what he did] has remained unparalleled over the subsequent 1900 years.\(^{46}\)

Paul was devoted to evangelism, the task God entrusted to him. In his letter to the Ephesians he wrote, “To me the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ” (Eph 3:8). To the Corinthians, he said, “Christ sent me . . . to preach the Gospel” (1 Cor 1:17). Packer further points out that he was to deliver it, not as another man’s bright ideas, but as a Word from God, spoken in Christ’s name, carrying Christ’s authority, and to be authenticated in the hearers by the convincing power of Christ’s Spirit. When I came to you, I came declaring to you the testimony of God.\(^{47}\)

Wherever Paul went he preached the gospel. He was not primarily driven by his own intelligence, his creative mind, his own power and authority, nor by his past education and experience. Rather, he was compelled by the power of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. Leroy Eims says it well when he describes the effort that the apostle Paul gave to the call of his life:

> God had abundantly blessed his efforts. Many had been brought to the Lord. Thousands had heard the gospel. The mission had almost cost him his life. But on that trip, after he had been stoned and left for dead on one occasion, he returned to the very places where the hostility had been the greatest.\(^{48}\)

Paul encouraged believers and strengthened the disciples so they might remain true to the faith (Acts 14:22). He worked tirelessly to bring people to the Lord Jesus Christ and his churches grew in numbers. God bestowed gifts to his followers to enable them to serve him and each another better, strengthening the body of Christ. Paul wrote in his epistle to the Ephesians: “And he gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ” (Eph 4:11-13). Each believer


\(\text{\textsuperscript{47}}\)Packer, Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God, 43-44.

\(\text{\textsuperscript{48}}\)Leroy Eims, The Lost Art of Disciple Making (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 46.
has been given a spiritual gift(s) to serve so the body of Christ might be strengthened.

In his letter to the Colossians, Paul described the impetus of his ministry, “We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. For this purpose also I labor, striving according to his power, which mightily works within me” (Col 1:28-29). He worked hard to win people to Christ and bring them to full maturity in him. To be fully mature in Christ the new person not only passes from death to life, but also needs to grow spiritually. Paul told new converts, “Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears” (Acts 20:31).

Donald Anderson McGavran sums up Paul’s life and work this way:

Paul lived for one consuming purpose, that of knowing Jesus Christ and bringing others into the redeemed fellowship. His intellectual achievements and his mystical awareness were both tremendous. He wrote with such penetrating light that each succeeding generation has been his debtor.  

The Spread of Christianity

For many reasons Christianity spread far and fast in all directions, especially westward. Improved means of transportation by both land and sea made travel relatively easy during the first century era. By land, direct Roman highway systems connected city to city for better control of provinces throughout the Roman Empire. Travel by sea could be accommodating to different conditions. New ideas, including the gospel of Christ, could be spread faster than ever across the land and the sea. Fred H. Wight explains, “Ships for war, although furnished with sails, were propelled by oars. Merchant vessels depended for the most part on sails, but many of the navigators resorted to oars when it became necessary.”


50Fred H. Wight, Manners and Customs of Bible Lands (Chicago: Moody, 1953), 277.
The intensity of Jewish persecution after the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 changed conditions drastically for early Christians. At the end of the Jewish revolt, inhabitants of Antioch hated the Jews so much that they requested Titus, the Roman general, to drive the Jews from their country and strip them of all rights. The general granted the request and his action ushered in the great Diaspora of the Jews.\(^{51}\) Stephen Neill writes, “Many trained and lay evangelists spread out, carrying the message of Christ with them. Every Christian was a witness and nothing is more notable than the anonymity of these early missionaries.”\(^{52}\)

Because of persecution and easier travel, the gospel quickly spread westward for two reasons. First, the power of the Roman Empire was centralized in Rome. Many Jews lived in Rome as Roman citizens, like the apostle Paul (Acts 23:27). Second, the Jewish state had close connections with Rome. Their political, social, and administrative matters, which included commerce and travel, were strongly linked with Rome. Many Jews served in the Roman army or worked for Rome, such as tax collectors like Matthew (Matt 10:3). Any change in the Jewish state administration had to be discussed and approved by Rome, so Jewish delegations traveled to Rome often to exchange, inform, and request changes from the Emperor. Since the gospel had already reached the heart of the Roman Empire, its message easily spread onto every corner of the empire and beyond.\(^{53}\)

Persecution scattered believers throughout the Mediterranean world, and Christianity quickly took root in most of the major cities of the empire due to advances in communication and travel. Ruth A. Tucker explains,

By the end of the first century, the church was in this way established to some extent in Europe, Africa, and Asia. By the middle of the fourth century the Christian


movement, especially in the eastern part of the empire, had become so powerful that even the emperor had to bow to its presence.\footnote{Ruth A. Tucker, \textit{From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya: A Biographical History of Christian Missions} (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 21.}

Tucker further states that “perhaps even more significant than the evangelism conducted by the traveling lay preacher was the informal testimonies that went out through the everyday lives of the believers.”\footnote{Ibid., 27.} These believers were the ones who lived in the communities where God had placed them. They knew their neighbors, cultures, and languages. Living their lives in obedience to the Lord and empowered by the Holy Spirit, these believers quietly carried out the Great Commission by sharing the Good News with every person with whom they came in contact. John Foxe describes the great witnessing movement saying,

\begin{quote}
The soldiers try to win recruits for the heavenly host; the prisoner sought to bring his jailor to Christ; the slave girl whispered the gospel into the ears of her mistress; the young wife begged her husband to be baptized that their souls might not be parted after death; everyone who had experienced the joys of believing tried to bring others to the faith.\footnote{John Foxe, \textit{Foxe’s Christian Martyrs of the World} (Chicago: Moody, n. d.), 41.}
\end{quote}

Witnessing and sharing the Good News was and is everyone’s duty and it spreads into all arenas of life—from high court officials to the lonely household kitchen, or from the busy streets of the city to the lonely places of the countryside.

Toward the end of the fourth century, the tribes of northern Europe and Asia began to challenge the power of Rome. Disrupting the power of the Romans, they invaded the Roman Empire. Among them were Gauls, Scandinavians, Vandals, Franks, Anglo Saxons, Gemanic tribes, and others. The Romans called these people “barbarians because during early contacts with Romans they spoke no Greek and no Latin.”\footnote{Bruce L. Shelly, \textit{Church History in Plain Language}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1995), 153.} They
migrated into Christian territories, and once settled in the land, they were exposed to the Christian faith and many became believers. After becoming accustomed to central and southern European cultures, they adapted to the way of life of those societies and to their Christian faith. Since many worked for the empire as soldiers, wherever their military assignments took them, they then began to spread the faith along the way.\textsuperscript{58}

**Centuries of Exploration and Discovery**

From 1492 onward, with the discovery of the West Indies by Christopher Columbus, the Christian faith was brought to the New World. The natives of the new world heard about Jesus Christ for the first time from Spanish missionaries and believers who settled on the new continent. A new age of worldwide missions began, along with the era of colonization that moved in all directions, including South Africa and Asia.\textsuperscript{59}

As this expansion of Western culture continued and the Christian faith was brought to the new territories, indigenous peoples were force-fed the Catholic faith. Bruce L. Shelly claims, “The Spaniards had plundered and conquered the New World from California to the tip of South America. The work of these courageous and brutal conquerors planted the word *conquistadores* in our vocabulary.”\textsuperscript{60} By 1521, the new faith had been firmly planted in the New World.

At the height of global exploration, Roman Catholic missionary monks carried the gospel to colonies throughout the newly conquered worlds of North and South America, as well as the continent of Africa and the seaport cities of India, Japan, the Philippines, China, and Southeast Asia. As colonies spread, Catholic missionaries established permanent communities, set up forts, and established mission stations. The sole duty of these mission stations was spreading the gospel, typically by working with

\textsuperscript{58}\textit{Ibid.}, 155.

\textsuperscript{59}\textit{Ibid.}, 281.

\textsuperscript{60}\textit{Ibid.}, 282, emphasis original.
the indigenous people through schools for children and hospitals for the sick.\textsuperscript{61}

\textbf{The Rise of Reformation}

This period of territorial exploration and expansion also brought about many changes in the Roman Catholic Church. Throughout Europe, people responded negatively to the taxes, corruption, and abuses of power from the Catholic Church. The rise of humanistic scholars such as Martin Luther, who believed in justification by faith alone and the Bible as the only absolute source of authority for believers, brought the Christian faith to people throughout Europe.\textsuperscript{62} Lutheranism made great gains and became widely accepted as the official religion of the Scandinavian and some northern European states. Because of these events and the rise of the reformation the gospel firmly took roots in every continent at the closed of the sixteenth century.

\textbf{Conclusion}

The message of the Bible is the Good News of salvation through God’s Son, Jesus Christ. The Scripture is a record of God’s actions. Since the fall of man, God has been continually calling his beloved creation to return to him. In both Old and New Testaments, evangelism always alludes to God’s plan of redemption unfolding in the Scripture.\textsuperscript{63} Jesus is the Savior because it is he who saves, and he is the provider because it is he who provides the model for evangelism. Through all time, it has been God’s desire to involve the company of his believers in carrying out the work of spreading the Good News.


Disciple making and church growth are the primary works of the church. Christians, “having been built upon the foundation laid by the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus himself being the corner stone,” are the members of the household of God (Eph 2:19-20, emphasis added). The work of disciple making and church growth proceeds from the Lord Jesus himself and has Jesus as its “pillar and foundation of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15 NIV). The Lord has laid the foundation. He has set the course and charges his followers to reconcile humanity back to him. The struggles are many, but the outcome is already promised.

God made man and woman in his own image. He made them perfect and declared all of his creation to be “very good” (Gen 1:31). Even after the fall of man, God still loved mankind so much that he gave his promise that man would be saved by the seed of the woman. God teaches everyone that they need to stay close to him and heed his Word so that when the hour finally arrives the people will not miss him.

God calls the whole community of mankind to have a personal relationship with him. The faithful who hear his call and come home to him receive the blessing of eternal life and become “fishers of men” (Matt 4:19). Paul described believers as God’s fellow workers, God’s field, and God’s building (1 Cor 3:9). As God’s fellow workers, one should take the message of reconciliation to the world; as God’s field, one needs to continue producing fruits; and as the building in which God dwells, one’s life should reflect God’s caring love. The Lord gave his followers many different gifts so that they might be co-laborers with him to accomplish the work of service (Eph 4:11-12).

From the very beginning of time, God has revealed his plan of salvation. The heavenly Father calls his fallen creation to come home to him. It plays out through human history and finishes with the incarnation of God’s Son Jesus Christ and his, once for all, atonement for the sin of the world (John 19:30).

Evangelism and church growth are not only evident, but also biblically mandated in the Great Commission as believers are commanded to “go therefore and
make disciples of all nations” (Matt 28:19). Disciples are made by conveying and living out the message of God’s love and forgiveness: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16). The driving force of that message has always been the love of God, empowered by the Holy Spirit. It is a love and salvation that Jesus promised would accompany people, “Even to the end of the age” (Matt 28:20).
CHAPTER 3
A HISTORICAL, CULTURAL, SOCIO-ECONOMIC, RELIGIOUS, AND
CHARACTERISTIC BACKGROUND OF LAOS,
LAOTIAN PEOPLE, AND THEIR NEW
LIFE IN THE UNITED STATES

Laotians are new immigrant residents from Laos or the Lao People’s
Democratic Republic, one of the Indochinese countries of Southeast Asia. Laotians or
Lao are multi-ethnic people. Laos is a small, land-locked country located between
Thailand to the west, Vietnam to the east, China and Myanmar to the north and
northwest, and Cambodia to the south.\(^1\) Two-thirds of the country is covered by rugged
mountains and plateaus, especially on the northern and eastern mountain range which
borders Vietnam until it reaches Cambodia. Plains and valleys cover a third of the
country, which is cultivable terrain, often flooded during the monsoon season. The
country has 236,800 square kilometers (91,400 square miles) with a population of
5,900,000 people.\(^2\) Many Laotians came to the United States as refugees as a result of
the Indochina War and they have made this country their new home.

A Historic Background of Laos
and the Laotian People

The country of Laos existed well before the sixth century B.C. The Laotian
occupied a large territory in southern China—the present Yunnan and Southern Sikang
provinces. LeBar and Suddard record, “They [Laotians] appear in Chinese records from

\(^1\)Sal J. Foderado, ed., *Lexicon Universal Encyclopedia* (New York: Lexicon

\(^2\)“Lao History, Geography, Government, and Cultures” [on-line]; accessed
the sixth century B.C. as ‘a barbarian’ beyond the Yangtze.”3 Even though at times they were subject to Chinese authority, Laotians were always moving southward until the eighth century A.D., when they established a new kingdom, known as Nan Chao. They later moved to their present location; the country was known as the Kingdom of a Million Elephants. The capital city of the country was, then, at the city of Luangphrabang. In 1560, Xaysethathirath, a king of the country moved government administration to Vientiane which is the present day capital of Laos. Under King Xaysethathirath and his younger generation, the country was prosperous, and became well-known and respected among the countries in the region.

In 1698, the country was divided into three kingdoms, Vientiane, Luangphrabang, and Champassack. Many kings tried but none were able to reunite the country. Neighboring countries exploited the weakness of these divided kingdoms. In 1779, all three kingdoms became tributary states to Siam, which is Thailand today. In 1828, the kingdoms of Vientiane and Champassack tried to free themselves from the yoke of Siam, but they were defeated and completely destroyed.4

In 1887, a French protégé, led by Augusté Pavie, went into Laos and established a French consulate in the city of Luangphrabang.5 France took the kingdom of Luangphrabang as a protectorate in 1893.6 At the same time French colonial administration took the rest of the left bank of the Mekong River under its power; the area was later incorporated as a part of French Indochina Colony. Sixty years later, with the cooperation of French colonial countries, Cambodia and Vietnam, the country was

5Ibid., 184.
6LeBar and Suddard, Laos, 16.
able to pitch off the yoke of French colonialism and received its full independence in 1954. Today the country is known as Lao People Democratic Republic or Laos.  

**Recent History of Laos and Laotian People**

In 1954, Laos emerged as an independent country. It did not have sufficient time to develop politically, financially, or militarily. While the country was still weak and fragile, Laos became involved in an ideology that created an internal strife and civil war. Eminently and unavoidably, the war had drawn the country into a complex regional struggle of the Indochina War. After 30 years, the democratically elected Laotian government collapsed. The country fell into the control of the Laotian revolution regime: the revolutionary party took power of the country rapidly and forcefully. This led to fear and politically unsafe conditions for many who had worked for the former government.

**Laotian refugees.** During this chaotic crisis, many people, afraid of political retaliation and persecution, risked their lives and fled from their homeland. Some took their families along with them, while others fled alone and harbored grave concern for their remaining families. Leaving at night, hundreds of thousands left their homes and crossed the Mekong River to seek temporary shelter and safety as refugees in neighboring Thailand.

According to Barry Wain Reports, between 1978-79, an estimated 150,000

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7Ibid., 8.


Laotians and Cambodians crossed into Thailand.\textsuperscript{11} From 1975 and 1981 the United States resettled a total of 360,000 refugees. W. Randall Ireson records,

In all, more than 360,000 Laotians—about 10 percent or more of the Population—fled the country between 1975 and 1992. By the end of 1992, approximately 305,000 Laotian refugees had been permanently resettled in third countries, most commonly in the United States and France.\textsuperscript{12}

**Resettlement programs.** Most of those who left Laos remained in various refugee camps for many years. Some Asian, European, and western countries accepted a limited number of refugees for resettlement. In response to effective humanitarian efforts, the United States welcomed some of the Lao as part of a resettlement program;\textsuperscript{13} they had to go through an interview process and meet certain resettlement qualifications. With help from volunteer agencies, charities, and the sponsorship of local churches, many were able to resettle in communities throughout the country. Ultimately, this brought about the growth of Laotian community in the metro counties of Atlanta, Georgia.\textsuperscript{14}

**A Characteristic, Cultural, and Socio-Economic Description of Laos and the Laotian People**

Laos is comprised of many ethnicities. It is a small country but is home to diverse people groups. These groups have lived side by side for hundreds of years. They speak many different dialects and have a variety of religious faiths. Laotians have


\textsuperscript{14}Terrance J. Reeves and Claudett E. Bennett, “We the People: Asian in the United States” [on-line]; accessed November 5 2011; available at http://www.census.gov/apsd/wepeople/we-3pdf; Internet.
lifestyles that are unique to the geographical areas where they live. They may be different in their way of life, but they are all Laotians.

**Characteristics of the People of Laos**

The Laotian population is comprised of 4 major family groupings with 49 smaller ethnic divisions. The Laotian and Lao-Thai family has 8 ethnic groups. This family group makes up 52.5 percent of the population. The Mone and Mone-Khmer family has 32 ethnic groups claiming 25 percent of the population. The Tibeto, Tibeto-Burmese family has 7 ethnic groups and makes up about 9 percent of the population. The Hmong, Hmong-Ioumien family has 2 ethnic groups representing 13.5 percent of the population.¹⁵

**Their culture.** In Laotian society, people have high regard and give respect to their parents. Success in raising a family in Laotian culture is measured by how well the children carry on the values that have been instilled into them. This is the cultural heritage that each family strives to maintain. It is through love and respect for ancestors that the cultural heritage lives on from generation to generation.

Laotian children are reared to humbly trust their parents in all circumstances. They are taught not to talk back or raise voices to their parents. Laotian children are subject to two sets of rules. First set of rules governs daily living and behavior which sets perimeter of responsibility, expectations, and relationship within people in a family. Parents use these rules to train their children in order for them to be submissive and respectful to all people, especially those older than themselves. In Laotian society, the elderly receive the highest honor. Second set of rules is untold and unspoken. These rules are culturally relevant and they are practiced by common sense such rules govern

relationships between boys and girls. Parents want to decide the marital choice for their children. Pre-arranged marriages are parents’ honored responsibilities. Children should understand that it is better not to fall in love with anyone until parents give their approval. While living with parents, any income children produce belongs to parents, unless parents gracefully choose to return it to them.

**Their language.** Laotian or Lao is the official language of the country and is derived from Pali and Sanskrit, ancient languages of India. The language is spoken slightly different from one region to another; however, it is the common language of the people and is also generally spoken in eastern and northeastern Thailand.\(^{16}\) Due to the diversity of the Laotian population, each tribal minority speaks a different dialect, which can be traced to four different linguistic families: the Lowland Lao, the Mone and Mone-Khmer, the Tibeto, and the Hmong-Ioumein. The majority of the population is Laotian. They speak Lao, the common language of the country. Throughout the country, Laotians speak 86 different dialects.\(^ {17}\)

**Their socio-economic background.** In 2006, according to the World Health Organization, Laos ranked 133rd among the 179 nations on the human development index. Since Laos is an agricultural country, 83 percent of the population dwells in rural areas. The majority of these rural peasants work cultivating their rice paddy for their family’s needs. According to the International Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) standard, 71 percent of the people lived on two US dollars per day and 23 percent lived on less than one US dollar per day. The World Bank estimated that the per capita gross annual income was 500 US dollars.\(^ {18}\)

\(^{16}\)Ibid.


\(^{18}\)Ibid.
Very few industries are capable of employing five hundred people or more. Those that can are located mainly in the city and provide employment opportunities for those who live close by. Throughout the country, these large companies may only employ 2 percent of the work force or about 70,000 people. These industries include tin and coal mining, lumber, hard wood furniture manufacturing, and harvesting fruit, and coffee. The big export item in Laos is hydroelectric power.\(^{19}\)

**Their society.** As a result of the war, Laotian society remains primarily in a primitive state. Due to limited roads and communication, most of the rural areas of Laos are isolated. Villages are located deep in the jungles and are scattered far off highway 13, which is the only main road in the country. This highway links main cities along the Mekong River. From the northern tip to the southern part of the country, the Mekong River and its tributaries serve to connect the country. For the most part, the river and its tributaries are the only means of communication and transportation used. Using dugout boats, people travel and transport their goods through the rivers to cities and towns where roads are not available. Travel on the river, however, is very dangerous because of torrents, rapids, and underwater rocks, which make navigation on some portions of the Mekong River almost impassible, especially during the dry season.\(^{20}\)

**Their community.** Safety is the duty of everyone who lives in the villages. All families of a village care for one another, whether or not they are related. They consider the benefit of the community and value its survival before their own. Everyone in the village has a duty to keep an eye on each other, especially the children of the village—no matter whose children they may be. Wynetta Devore expresses, “The family is

\(^{19}\)Ibid.

\(^{20}\)G. Edward Roffé, “Mekong Chronicle: A Life Time in Laos 1929-1975” (unpublished manuscript, 1999), 125. After Roffé death in 1999, the manuscript passed to his son-in-law, George Funé, in whose possession it remains.
responsible for the care of the young, transmission of values, and emotional substance. It is the source of strength, identity, and cohesion. All families are expected to carry out such tasks.”21

**Their family.** Family concept among Laotians is similar from one tribe to another. Many tribal Laotians have their own culture and tradition; therefore, a composition of a family might be slightly different from generation to generation and from one region to another. Even though they may be different in culture, traditions, and beliefs, they still have a close relationship with one another.

It is normal to find a family of four to six children or more in a Laotian home. Living arrangement among rural Lao consist of multiple generations. Related families always live close to each other. It is a common practice for Laotian parents to keep the youngest child, together with their life partner, especially if the youngest is a female. The ultimate objective is to have someone care for them in their golden years.

**Religious Faith of the People of Laos**

Laotian people believe in Phi spirits or ghost spirits and superstition. The majority of the people still believes and practices animism. As Buddhism spread into Laos from Cambodia, it brought with it Brahmanism, a part of Hinduism.22 Mysticism and superstition are also a part of the Laotian belief system.

A small portion of the Laotian population is Christian. Catholicism, and later Protestantism, spread into Laos after France annexed the country as part of the French Indochinese colony. Daniel McGilvary, a Presbyterian Missionary, was among the

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earliest who visited and sought missionary pioneer work in Laos. Swiss Brethren, the first Protestant missionaries, went into Laos in 1902 and began their work in the province of Savannakhet, middle of Laos. Many years later, missionaries from Switzerland, England, Canada, and the United States joined their effort. In 1929, a lone missionary, Edward G. Roffé, of the Christian and Missionary Alliance (C M A), began missionary work in the city of Luangphrabang, the king seat city of Laos.

**Ghost Spirit or Ancestor’s Spirit**

The Laotian people continue to worship the spirits of their ancestors in spite of Laos being a predominantly Buddhist country. The people believe their ancestors’ spirits remain involved in their daily lives. It is believed that the spirits occasionally come back to pay a visit to their living children or grandchildren. They learn about their ancestor’s spirit visit through their dreams or a message by a spirit-possessed living person. The message always requires the living to do something to appease the spirit or someone’s life in the family may be in danger.

Phi cult practices and influence among Laotians remain strong and deeply rooted in their daily life. Many believe that before they can attempt to do any major work, they must seek the Phi spirit in order to be successful and avoid getting sick. It is a common practice of devout Buddhist believers that after offering alms to a Buddhist monk to go to either to a spirit house or an altar in his house made for Phi, to offer alms to it. Eugene A. Nida writes,

> The average Buddhist in a small town . . . is vaguely aware of the importance of self-mastery by the denial of the ultimate reality of human existence. It is much more important for him to show respect for the spirit house which stands in the yard, to buy a little patch of gold leaf to decorate his favorite Buddha, or to discover his

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fortune by whirling a numbered wheel after appropriate fortune.²⁵

**Buddhist Faith in Laos**

About 65 percent of the Lao people consider themselves believers of Theravada Buddhism. Every Laotian village has at least one Buddhist temple. Main Buddhist teaching is for men to do good, make all merit while living to achieve Niravarna, a state of nothingness—for the purpose of not returning to the cycle of suffering: birth, getting old, being sick, and death. Since Buddhism is as diverse as Christianity it is hard to identify its central doctrine. Four major teachings of Buddhism are karma due to sin, reincarnation, the cycle of suffering; and the four noble truths; ways to put an end to suffering. Steve Cioccolanti writes,

> All of this diversity makes it very difficult to pin-point exactly what Buddhism is or to make universal statement about what every single Buddhist believes. There are so many different ways people practice it. We will start with what everybody virtually agrees on—the life of Buddha—then cover the absolute fundamental teaching of Buddha on the four noble truths, five moral laws, ten karmas, and reincarnation, before exploring the rarely translated parables and prophecies of Buddha.²⁶

People continue to practice animist rites side-by-side with Buddhism although the majority of Laotians are Buddhist. The Laotian people, in general, practice their faith through multiple beliefs.

A Buddhist temple or monastery is a place where Buddhist monks live and study. It is also the center of village life. The temple may be used for village meetings or religious rites and public celebrations, in which all villagers take part. Some temples may have a religious school that houses dozens of monks and novices, which depend on villagers to keep them fed through their offerings of alms. Frank LeBar gives his opinion,


²⁶Steve Cioccolanti, *From Buddha to Jesus: An Insider’s View of Buddhism and Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Monarchs, 2007), 42.
The daily gift of food to the bonzes is mandatory to the degree to the Lao it is not a surplus at all but necessary of life. Over and above these are the recurring contributions, in company with all the others of the village, of materials, labor, flowers, candles, robes, and the whole furniture of living to the bonzes and the pagoda . . . all entered into with generosity and joyfulness. The same combination of expending for pleasure and merit is seen in the ceremonies that mark the stage of life from birth to death.27

Many religious rites and celebrations are derived from Buddhist faith and practice. The daily activities of monks include performing religious rites, reciting, chanting, and meditating on Vinaya, which are sets of Buddhist rules. Buddhist monks are required to live by 227 commandments. A Biksunī, a yellow-clothed Buddhist monk, is required to live by 311 commandments, which is impossible for any woman or man to abide by.28 However, Biksunī is no longer allowed to practice. The whole idea of monks’ practices are to imitate Buddha in their quest for breaking free from the cycle of karma and reincarnation by denying themselves the things of this world. Buddhist monks hope to achieve Niravarna, which is the state of non-existence.29 If a birth is not taking place, the cycle of suffering such as old age, sickness, and death will not become materialized; therefore, the goal of obtaining Nirvana is achieved.

Buddhist monks may not completely understand the old Pali language they recite daily, but they follow its religious traditions and cultures. Steve Cioccolanti points out that “religion to a Buddhist is a set of practices, not a set of answers.”30 Buddhists believe that if they perform enough good, their merit will predestine them to Niravarna and they will not return to the cycle of suffering. Lilliam Johnson Curtis sums up the practice for merit: “They sweep the monastery ground; build bridges and salas and wats; make gifts for monks and present them with their daily foods; give a drink of water to a

27LeBar and Suddard, Laos, 101. A bonze is a Buddhist monk.
28Cioccolanti, From Buddha to Jesus, 63.
29Ibid.
30Ibid., 36.
thirsty traveler; all to add little credit to their account.”

In Buddhism as well as in Christianity, mankind is trying to break away from the chain of death due to sin. However, Christians do not struggle alone; they have Jesus Christ who paved the way to salvation for all humankind by his work on the cross.

Cioccolanti writes,

Eventually, I realized that neither the cross nor the Buddha on my neck had any power to help me. What I was needed was what Buddha was searching for, and what Jesus had offered—a way to escape the curses (Galatians 3:13). If a Buddhist is truly like Buddha, she would be trying to find a way to escape the curses that resulted from our accumulated karma. Buddha pointed out to the way. Jesus said “I am the way” (John 14:6).

Catholicism in Laos

Laos was a French Indochinese colony from 1887 to 1954; Catholicism reached the country soon after the country was colonized. Roman Catholics established churches and schools for children in many important cities. Although they began their missionary work in the late nineteenth century, their faith did not spread far. Catholic churches can be seen in only a few cities. Catholic schools, hospitals, leprosy colonies, and outcast villages were among the results of their ministries. The impact of this good work is still felt today.

Saint Mary Catholic Schools were populous primary and secondary institutions for the privileged families during the colonial time. After a period of transition from colonial status to independence, many of the graduates of these schools became well-

31 Lilliam Johnson Curtis, The Laos of North Siam (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1903), 189-90, emphasis original. Sala is a small pavilion built by Buddhist monks or villagers. It provides a resting place for weary travelers. A Wat is a Buddhist monastery or a Buddhist temple.

32 Ibid., 54, emphasis original.

known elite members of the early Laotian government. As a result of their influence, more schools were gradually made available to all Laotian people. Bounnam Vorachack says,

The Roman Catholic Church organized many leprosy colonies throughout the country. Monks and nurses provided care, not only for the lepers, but also for others who needed medical help. Every leper colony had its own church or worship hall. A Catholic priest and a nurse often lived in the colony to care for sick members of the village. Today, many of these churches are still active.34

Even though many Catholic monks lost their lives in the first Indochina War from 1946 to 1954, the church faithfully remained and served their mission field. To this day, many Catholic communities in remote areas continue to carry on their traditions, worship, and rituals as they spread their teachings. Communities have been converted to Catholic faith because the church cared for the physical needs of the people.35

**Protestant Missionaries in Laos**

The earliest Protestant missionary who visited Laos was a Presbyterian named Daniel McGilvary from the United States. McGilvary was not a missionary to present day Laos, but to Chiengmai, Laos of northern Siam, which is today Thailand. He journeyed on an elephant crossed the border and visited the province of Sayaboury in 1872.36 In 1902, two Swiss Brethren missionaries of les Assemblées de Suisse from Switzerland took initiative step and went to Laos.37 Many missionaries arrived to the country later. The Christian and Missionary Alliance (C M A) church also sent a missionary to Laos in 1929 and opened a mission field in the city and province of Luangphrabang. In 1971, Southern Baptists also sent missionaries to Laos and they

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34 Bounnam Vorachack, interview by author, Cornelia, GA, June 8, 2012.

35 Ibid.


37 Ibid., 14.
worked in Vientiane, the capital city of the country.

**Presbyterian missionary works.** Presbyterian missionaries established their missionary work in “Laos of North Siam in the city of Chiangmai,” a northern city of today’s Thailand. From 1872 to 1898, Daniel McGilvary and his missionary colleague Vrooman, a medical doctor, often crossed the border into the province of Sayaboury, Laos. His trip took him 25 days from his mission station in Chiangmai, Thailand to reach the province. On every trip into Laos the missionaries stayed from three to six months. They preached the gospel to the Khmu, an ethnic minority of the province, and they planted a church on one of their visits.

In December 1931, Presbyterian missionaries Hugh Taylor and his wife traveled from a mission station in the city of Muong Nan, province Nan, Thailand, to care for Khmu Christians in the province of Sayaboury. Over the years, these stalwart missionaries won many Khmu tribes to Christ. The new converts were later trusted to the care of G. Edward Roffé, the Christian and Missionary Alliance missionary in the city of Luangphrabang.

**Swiss Brethren missionaries.** In 1902, two young Swiss Brethren missionaries, Gabriel Contesse and Maurice Willy, began their work in the village of Ban Songkhone, in Savannakhet, central Laos. Other missionaries joined them later in their effort to reach Laotians with the gospel of Christ. They tediously worked on a Bible translation. Two unnamed Buddhist monks left their monastic life to join the effort of

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40 Samuel Mattix, telephone interview by author, February 5, 2013. Mattix was a former missionary to Laos from Centralia, WA. He arrived on the mission field in 1972 with a young Canadian man, Lloyd Dudley Coppel, from Courteney, British Columbia. These missionaries ended up in prison in Hanoi and were released after the Indochina peace treaty signed in Paris.
translating the Bible into Laotian.\textsuperscript{41} By 1908, Matthew, Luke, and John had been completed.\textsuperscript{42}

After many years evangelizing in the city of Savannakhet, the missionaries focused more of their effort on the tribal minority of Khmu who lived primarily in the remote area of the province.\textsuperscript{43} Later, they led some lowland Laotians to Christ; however, the lowland Lao converts were fewer in number. By 1936, twelve churches had been organized. Eight of these churches were led by indigenous pastors.\textsuperscript{44} Today, many second generation believers have become leaders of Lao Evangelical churches all over Laos. They all have the same name, Evangelical Church.\textsuperscript{45}

\textbf{Christian and Missionary Alliance Church.} Christian and Missionary Alliance (C M A) missionaries entered French Indochina in 1929 and began missionary work in Laos. The first missionary, Edward G. Roffé, chose Luangprabang, a king seat city in a northern province, to establish his base for spreading the gospel. After many years of labor, he saw the first convert won to Christ. During his time there, Roffé had very good relationship with the king of Laos, crown prince and princesses, and government officials.

Like Swiss Brethren missionaries, Roffé diligently evangelized the people of the city. He settled in a town that had thirty Buddhist monasteries and the people were devout Buddhist believers. He records,

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\textsuperscript{41}Dupertuis, \textit{L’Évangile}, 16.
\textsuperscript{42}Mattix, interview. Note log from “Bible Society in Laos,” obtained from Sam Mattrix indicated many details about the gradual progress of Bible translation by the early missionaries to Laos.
\textsuperscript{43}Mike Prasavath, telephone interview by author, February 2, 2013.
\textsuperscript{44}Dupertuis, \textit{L’Évangile}, 23.
\textsuperscript{45}Roffé, “Mekong Chronicle,” 312.
\end{flushright}
The fact that the King was also the titular head of the state religion, Buddhism, as well as being its civil ruler, and the considerable number of loyal government officers and civil servants, combined to erect a wall of resistance to the gospel message we proclaimed.  

Roffé often made evangelistic tours to distant villages in the province of Luangphrabang and Sayaboury where he won many Khmu people to Christ. One of the new converts was Kheng. As was his normal practice, Roffé immediately began biblical training for his new convert. Four months into the training, because of an immediate need of help on the field, Roffé assigned the Andrianoffs to work with his new Khmu Christian and his family. They began their work at a new mission station in Xiengkhouang—a northeastern mountainous province next to Luangphrabang.  

Kheng and his family rented a house not too far from the Andrianoffs. Kheng’s assignment was to sell literature and witness as he could. Every day he took a bag of materials and went door to door trying to sell the items. Moua Yia Thao, a shaman who lived a few doors from Kheng, kept an eye on Kheng to see how long he would stay in his rented house. He knew that bad evil spirits dwelled in the house and no one could spend a night in that house let alone live in it. While Kheng was on his daily trip to witness and sell biblical tracts and pamphlets, the Hmong shaman approached Kheng and asked, “Are you not afraid to live in that house, which we all know, is haunted? It is full of evil spirits.” Kheng replied that he was not afraid; instead, he told the shaman about Jesus Christ and the powerful Spirit of God. The shaman expressed an interest in God’s Spirit.

46 Ibid., 44.

47 Helen Sawyer, telephone interview by author, May 22, 2012. Helen and Mac Sawyer were a husband and wife team serving as C M A missionaries in Laos from 1929 to 1975. From 1981 to 1982, the Sawyers often came to Rockford, IL, where my family lived. They preached the gospel of Jesus Christ to Laotians. I often attended the meetings. His amazing language skill drew large crowds to hear him speak. He brought many to the Lord. Those believers congregated themselves and formed a church that became the Lao Church of Rockford, which is now a self-reliant and self-propelled church. It has become the largest Laotian church in the United States.

48 Sawyer, interview.
Kheng asked the Andrianoffs to meet the shaman who inquired about the powerful Spirit of God.

The missionaries and Kheng talked with the shaman, who was not an ordinary shaman. He was the personal spiritual leader for Touby Lyfong, who was the principle chief Hmong of all Hmong Lai. Missionary Andrianoff shared a simple gospel message with Moua Yia Thao and led the man and his family to receive Christ. The shaman took out all of his fetishes and sacred idols and burned them.

While the Andrianoffs were away at a conference, Moua Yia Thao and Kheng won entire Hmong villages to Christ. After two months, the Andrianoffs returned and received a long list of names of new believers from Kheng. Kheng simply said, “These are the names and villages who entered Jesus during the time you were gone! Nearly a thousand people have believed!” Kheng and the shaman became instrumental in the work of the kingdom even though they were new Christians. Edward Roffé received a wire message that read, “OVER 1000 CONVERTS—COME OVER AND HELP US.”

Another Hmong tribe, white Hmong, also experienced God’s Spirit within a few weeks of a spiritual awakening through Sai Pao Vang, a well-known man who headed a large district in Xiengkhouang. Through these men, the spread of the gospel went out forcefully like wild fire into neighboring provinces.

49 Dupertuis, L’Évangile, 140.
50 Naolue Taylor Kue, A Hmong Church History (Thornton, CO: Hmong District, 2000), 63.
52 Roffé, “Mekong Chronicle,” 243, emphasis original.
53 Andrianoff and Andrianoff, Chosen by the God of Grace, 25.
54 Sawyer, interview.
The mission field at Xiengkhouang was open in 1939; the number of Christians had grown from none to 4,000 by the end of 1953. Often, churches had very long baptismal services, sometimes baptizing converts two or three hundred at a time.

People walked a distance of two to three days to participate in a service, even in the midst of war. Edward Roffé records,

The men had little equipment with them and told of eating out of a frying pan to the tune of big guns practicing bombardment of the surrounding hills. One outstanding experience was the baptism of 294 individuals in two very long services. The candidates had come in for a distance ranging up to two days’ walk to obey the Lord in this public testimony. The number of believers in Xieng Khouang province had now risen to about 4,000.\(^\text{55}\)

It was impossible for a few missionaries to meet the spiritual need of every individual convert. In order to better use their time in the spreading of the gospel and bringing new believers to spiritual maturity, the missionaries knew they had to have more knowledgeable and well-trained leaders. They especially needed indigenous people like Kheng to gradually and systematically become a bigger part of their missionary works. John Mark Terry writes, “[John] Wycliffe believed that laymen could and should be trained to preach the gospel. He argued that the common people needed to hear the gospel in their language.”\(^\text{56}\)

To insure well-supported growth of the Christian community, missionaries began their work of training people through a program called the Bible Training Center for Pastors (BTCP) located in Luangprabang and later moved to Xiengkhouang where the need for leaders was greater than ever. Terry writes, “Jesus worked hard at evangelism, but he understood the concept that it is better to train ten men to do the work than it is to do the work of ten men.”\(^\text{57}\) Later, the BTCP became a four-year Christian School. The

\(^{55}\text{Roffé, “Mekong Chronicle,” 298.}\)

\(^{56}\text{John Mark Terry, Evangelism: A Concise History (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1994), 63.}\)

\(^{57}\text{Ibid., 13.}\)
first students graduated in 1952 and the school continued until the fall of Laos in 1975.\textsuperscript{58}

Because of his proficiency of the Lao language, Roffé finished the modification of the Bible translation that was originally completed by the Swiss Brethren missionaries. In 1973, it became available to all Lao churches. In spite of newer versions of the completed Laotian Bible, Roffé’s translation is still available.\textsuperscript{59} First generation Laotian Christians are still using the newer version because it was written in their language spoken before the fall of the country. People like Moua Yia Thao, Sai Pao Vang, and Kheng made a very important impact on the lostness of the world. They became an instrumental example of living out and witnessing the gospel to the rest of their communities. They anxiously offered their time and talent to systematically exaggerate their own communities with the Word of God, biblical tracts, and other religious printed materials. Even though the rate of literacy was then very high; amazingly, Christian communities were sprung up everywhere even at the remotest part of Laos.

Two illiterate Hmong men, Boua Khue and Khai, went to Vientiane for a purpose of purchasing merchandise for their stores in their Hmong village. They returned to their homes with packages of Christian literature. As soon as they arrived, they gave the literature to the village chief, Chong Yer Moua, who could read. After Moua finished reading the literature he was convicted of his sin by the Holy Spirit. Following the biblical tract instruction he and his family of ten, as well as Boua Khue Yang, invited Jesus Christ into their lives. They burned all of their fetishes and idols. They immediately took a three day journey to meet with a missionary in Xiengkhouang for more instruction.\textsuperscript{60}

\textsuperscript{58}Sawyer, interview.

\textsuperscript{59}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{60}Timothy Vang, \textit{The History of a People Movement: The Hmong} (Thorton, CO: Hmong District of the Missionary Alliance, 2000), 9.
In the absence of the missionaries at the height of the Second World War, the indigenous leaders carried on the work of spreading the gospel to their own people. Missionary Roffé states,

Missionary activity had been reduced to absolute zero, but God was active, working through his humble and, for the most part, untrained servants, to open hundreds of hearts to the gospel. It was the gracious work of the Spirit of God, during the absence of the missionaries, that produce a district total of from 600 to 700 believers and inquirers in Luangphrabang alone.⁶¹

A great spiritual revival took place from 1949 to 1950 and continued for the next twenty-five years. The ripple effect continued throughout the province of Xiengkhouang, as well as neighboring provinces and even spilled across borders into Vietnam and Thailand. A magnificent act of God was displayed through Kheng to reach people who were scattered and lived in a remote part of the world.

Today, sixty years later, the revival is still being experienced half way around the world. Many Hmong resettled in the United States after the war and have continuously carried the gospel message to their own people. “Presently, over 100 Hmong and Khmu churches are thriving. About 100,000 Hmong Christians live in the United States. They actively participate in sending missionaries back to Asian countries such as China, Thailand, and Myanmar.”⁶²

**Southern Baptist missionary work.** At the height of the Indochina conflict in March 1971, the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention sent two American missionary couples, Murphy and Linda Terry and Jerry and Elaine Perrill, to Vientiane, Laos. Their work was limited to the capital city and suburban areas due to war. Their ministry was to work with refugees who had fled from the war zone and sought safety for their families. The missionaries distributed necessary household items

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⁶²Sawyer, interview.
such as pots and pans, kitchen utensils, food, blankets, and clothing to refugees. They also provided medical service to the sick with the assistance of a Japanese medical team.\textsuperscript{63}

Missionary Jerry Perrill taught western civilization at the Teachers’ Institute in Dong Dok, Vientiane. Through his work in the school, he discovered that many of the students came from distant provinces and had difficulty finding a place to live. The missionary rented apartment buildings and allowed these students to live there. The students found that the apartments were a safe and friendly place for them to live. The missionaries regularly visited and shared the gospel message with them. This project brought many students to Christ. One of those students who came to Christ was Inta Chanthavongsouk. He frequently went with the missionaries to the mission field and distributed aids to the people in the refugee camps.\textsuperscript{64}

While the war was escalating and the fighting had intensified, the fall of Laos was eminent, missionary Murphy Terry and his wife were on furlough in the United States. Finally, in May 1975, the Pathet Lao, a war faction, finally took over the country. The new revolutionary government told all foreign missionaries to leave the country immediately. Inta Chanthavongsouk and many Christians also fled home into Thailand where they remained for a few years.\textsuperscript{65}

The Church after the Fall of Laos

After the fall of the country, a new revolutionary government took control of the country. All church properties and Christian schools were confiscated and used by the government for other purposes. Any public meeting of any kind, which involved more than five people, was strictly prohibited. Anyone suspected of having a secret

\textsuperscript{63}Murphy Terry, telephone interview by author, September 9, 2012.

\textsuperscript{64}Inta Chanthavongsouk, telephone interview by author, August 24, 2012.

\textsuperscript{65}Ibid.
meeting, regardless of whether or not it was true, was arrested, jailed, and sent to hard labor camps with little or no hope of returning to their families. Public worship service became illegal and prohibited.66

**Christian leaders.** Christian leaders were taken to unknown locations for hard labor and brainwashing seminar camps. The majority of them went into hiding and scattered throughout the country because they were afraid of being arrested and jailed for their beliefs. Christians could not even speak the language of faith such as the word “God,” “Jesus Christ,” “prayer,” “Bible,” or singing a Christian song. Owning a Bible was a crime and was punished. Many Christian families fled their homes and went to neighboring countries.67

From 1975 to 1985, the first ten years of the new Lao revolutionary administration, the government officials continuously pursued a policy of eradicating Christians from the country. Churches were locked and some of them were torn down or used by the government. Even though Christians were not allowed to worship, they did not participate in any other secular religious rituals and festivities. At times, officials repeatedly arrested and jailed Christians without a charge. While in jail, authorities asked Christians to rescind their faith.68 Often, the authorities brutally abused them and starved them to death if they did not do what the officials asked them to do. The evangelical churches in Laos were outwardly dormant.

66John Doe 1, personal interview by author, Vientiane, Laos, August 4, 2012. John Doe 1 was personally involved in the event and this interview was confidential; the real name of the interviewee is withheld by mutual agreement.

67John Doe 2, personal interview by author, Bangkok, Thailand, August 8, 2012. The interview with John Doe 2 was confidential; the real name of the interviewee is withheld by mutual agreement.

68John Doe 3, personal interview by author, Vientiane, Laos, August 8, 2012. The interview with John Doe 3 was confidential; the real name of the interviewee is withheld by mutual agreement.
At certain point, Christians felt that they were pushed too far by the authorities. Christians decided to take their stands. To avoid being arrested, Christian leaders were always on the move, but wherever they went, they spread the good news. They took the gospel to paddy fields, brooks, and huts where people were and worked. As a result of their ordeal, they planted many underground churches. They fellowshipped, prayed, and encouraged each other when opportunities arose. When their activities were disclosed to authorities, they were arrested and jailed; subsequently, many of them bravely faced their consequences and lost their lives. Others while incarcerated, they sang, prayed, and quietly shared the message with other inmates and with one another. These Christians frustrated their jailers and officials so that they did not know what to do with them but simply let them return home to their families.  

A new era for Lao Evangelical Church. Christian persecution by the Laotian officials faced tough resistance from Christians which created a public outcry. Many international communities raised their concerns. As the last decade of the millennium drawn near to the end, the persecution of Christianity in Laos was somewhat alleviated. The first Lao Evangelical Church in Vientiane was offered to purchase back from the government in 1995. Many churches in the capital city and in other provinces were gradually bought back from the government. Although limited in activities and with the threat of harsh persecution remained in effect, Laotian Christians returned to public worship. Many underground churches were recognized by the authorities and allowed limited freedom to conduct church services openly. Before the fall in 1975, the country had no more than 65 churches and not more than 20,000 people Christians could be counted.  

Today, there are over 600 churches officially recognized by authorities and

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69 John Doe 4, personal interview by author, Vientiane, Laos, August 24, 2012. The interview with John Doe 4 was confidential; the real name of the interviewee is withheld by mutual agreement.

have worship services every Sunday. About 400 churches are still operating in underground status because they are newly planted in a new geographical area where local authorities and community leaders are still hostile to the gospel. Today as of May 2013, an estimate of the Christian population in Laos is now 200,000 people.71

**New Life in the United States**

Thousands of Laotian families moved to the United States with help from charity, religious organizations, and individual sponsors. These families had experienced physical, psychological, and mental suffering due to the long struggle of being misplaced from their context. They finally found a place they could call home. They have tried to resume normal life and at the same time, they keep their culture in which they were reared.

**Post Resettlement in the United States**

Laotian families resettled in many communities across the United States. They faced enormous challenges in adapting to new environmental realities with which they were unfamiliar. Most of the families struggled with cultural and language changes. Due to new cultural environment, many lost their families and respectable status in their communities because they were uninformed of cultural differences.

**Laotian families in the new homeland.** Most Laotian families in the United States live close to each other as they did in their home country. Those who came from the same village or town continue to cluster as close-knit families would, even if they are not related to one another. While living in the United States, they continually look for friends and relatives from their homeland or refugee camps. If they find someone, they try to relocate to live close to each other. This offers much needed fellowship and

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71 Interview, John Doe 3.
encouragement as they continue to assist and care for one another. Laotians need this mutual support as they struggle to overcome the cultural barriers that they encounter in their new homeland. These patterns of living are also true among Laotian ethnic minorities who might not do exactly as they did in their native home. However, if one Laotian lives on a certain street, another Laotian home is usually not far away.

One and a half and second generation live differently and tend to be more comfortable assimilating into American society. They network with friends and contemporaries. The younger generation’s social circle is not limited to Laotians only, but includes others as well. However, they keep in touch with their parents, siblings, and relatives regularly. Pham writes, “Second generation also expresses an appreciation for their siblings. This familial closeness is cultivated from shared experiences of living under the heavy influence of first generation parents.”

Laotian families undergo some changes to adapt to their new cultural environment. They tend to have fewer children compared to families in their home country. Changes also occur in their family living arrangement. Older children more quickly move from their parents’ home. In Laos, multiple generations can easily live together in a single-family house. Phetsamone Khamvongsa says,

It makes it easier for us to live by ourselves. This way, we can do whatever we want to do. We think that each of us has our own lives to live and we cannot live for others. That way, our parents and our siblings can do what pleases them in the absent of us. Though, we check on them periodically if they need help with something from us.

Social-economics in their new homeland. Even though Laotian families had little experience working in factories in their home country, they are doing exceptionally

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73 Phetsamone Khamvongsa, interview by author, Marietta, GA, September 17, 2012.
well working in industrial work places. Laotians in the United States are employed according to their educational background and skills. Some of them work in manufacturing companies; others are employed in semi-skilled position such as plumbing, welding, heat and air conditioning maintenance, and machine operation. Many become entrepreneurs. Laotians own grocery stores, jewelry stores, laundromats, and restaurants. Many of those who have grown up in the United States do well in their jobs. They take advantage of opportunities to work and go to school. Many work in white collar management in well-paid positions; others are medical doctors, dentists, nurses and nurse practitioners, teachers, accountants, computer programmers, bankers, and lawyers. Thomas McDough, the general manager of Aircraft Webber Company in College Park, Georgia, says,

> These people are working very hard and they are doing very well. They are dependable. As the company, we are proud of them. Even though, some of them have a hard time to express themselves in English; however, we understand each other very well. English is not a problem for them.\(^7\)

**The first generation.** First generation refugees were those who fled their homes with their families and came to the United States for resettlement. Living in the United States was drastically different from life in their homeland. They had the most difficult time adjusting to life in their new environment. Families had to cope with many new things, chief of which was language.

When Laotians first arrived in the United States, many were embarrassed when someone asked them questions or tried to communicate with them. They did not know how to respond properly because they did not know what was being said to them. Some, however, had worked with Americans while in their country and as a result they adjusted better and found it easier to adjust to the American society.

\(^7\)Thomas McDough, interview by author, College Park, GA, February 2, 2013. The interview with Thomas McDough was confidential; the real name of the interviewee is withheld by mutual agreement.
When first generation refugees came to America, they enrolled in English as a Second language classes (ESL). English classes became difficult to complete as employment was their first priority; they went to ESL class when they could. Some had difficulty learning and felt they were not making progress, so they simply dropped out. The need is still real for first generation Laotian-Americans to become more fluent in English. This would enable them to utilize their fullest potential in their new country.

**Laotian-Americans, the 1.5 generation.** Children born before coming to the United States are the one and a half generation. In addition to problems of adjusting to life in America, Laotian students faced issues in adjusting to their schools. Since almost all Laotian refugees were non-English speaking, children had a hard time keeping up academically with their classmates; especially refugees who came to America in their late teens. In spite of many barriers, the majority of them worked hard and not only did well in the classroom, but adjusted well when mainstreamed into their new society as adults. Wynetta Devore and Elfriede G. Schlesinger claim that “many immigrants left their homelands hoping to improve upon the meager economic, social, and political opportunities available to them in their own lands.” Some children, however, still had difficulties adjusting to life in America. They and their families struggled socially and psychologically, unable to connect with their new cultural environment.

The one and a half generation retained some customs and traditions from their homeland. Their experiences enabled them to identify with their parents’ frustration in the resettlement process. Issues with food, language, employment, culture, and lifestyle in general motivated this generation to work with their parents to make resettlement in their new homeland successful.

Culturally, a young man does not leave home to start his own family until he is certain that his parents and siblings are stable. Therefore, he works and gives his

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paycheck to his parents until they tell him to save money for his own future. Pham explains, “Others [1.5 generation] choose to help in their parents’ businesses or start their own small businesses. However, family pressures are often much more complex. First generation parents often place high expectation on their 1.5 generation children.”

Laotian-Americans, the second generation. Children born to refugee families in the United States are second generation. As these children grow, several areas of tension exist between them and their parents. An obvious area of tension is cultural. These children have very little understanding of their parents’ language and traditions. They have a different set of values from their parents. Their foods, clothings, and social interactions vary greatly. Generally, refugee parents have a difficult time communicating with their children during their adolescent years.

A second tension arises from the lack of the parents’ language skills. Many first generation Laotian refugee adults do not have functional English abilities. Even though these parents want to help their children with schoolwork, they are limited due to their lack of English skills. When children bring report cards home for their parents’ signature, they sign it without question. Often, children are not honest with their parents if there are issues on the report card that need attention and concerns may not come to the parent’s attention until it is too late. Sometimes, they feel cheated and out-smarted by their own children. They also may choose to discipline their children physically as if they were in Laos, which may create problems for the entire family.

Teenage children may meet openly with their friends of the opposite gender, which is not acceptable within their parent’s culture. Parents may try to educate them on what is appropriate according to their Laotian native culture, however, their children often keep their intentions to themselves and continue to do what they think is culturally acceptable in their new homeland. Wynette Devore and Elfried G. Schlesinger argue that

“the sense of family cohesion often diminishes in the second and third generations of immigrants or migrants. The family as transmitter of old values, customs, and language is often seen as restrictive by members of the young generation.”\textsuperscript{77}

Although Laotians have been in the United States for decades, most first generation refugees continue to have problems adjusting to life. In addition to other difficulties, they continue to face problems with their own children. Some families experience major conflict in their home because their children are growing up in a totally different culture. Often, parents do not understand their children because they do not speak Lao at home. The parents want to discipline their children as they did in their native homeland but could not because of a difference in customs.

Parents often leave their children to suffer the consequences of their decisions to avoid further conflict at home. As a result, if a child is going to succeed, he or she needs good guidance from other people. Many Laotian children drop out of school, hang out with delinquent youth, and sometimes become violent gang members. They cause problems for their community, families, and themselves. Some families simply live lives full of frustration due to social adjustment difficulties.

Another significant tension comes from the expectations parents have of their children. They expect their children to behave in the manner in which they were raised in their native homeland. Children need to understand their parents’ culture and simply obey, not challenging their request, regardless of the issue. However, second generation children do not have knowledge of their parents’ cultural background. Pham points out,

The elders try to influence the children with their native customs and ideas, but the younger generation took to an American idea rapidly. \ldots The lifestyle and worldview of the second generation are very different from the first generation because they were raised in this society.\textsuperscript{78}

\textsuperscript{77} Devore and Schlesinger, \textit{Ethnic-Sensitive}, 157.

\textsuperscript{78} Pham, “A Missiological Strategy,” 30.
Religious Faith and Beliefs in the New Homeland

When Laotian refugees came to the United States and made it their home, they also brought their religious faith and beliefs with them. As much as they know how, they tried to resume their lives at where they left off. At the same time, they try to hang on to their beliefs, traditions, and culture that they are brought up with. In their first few years of resettlement, they practiced their religious faith and rituals in their homes. Currently, over seventy Laotian Buddhist temples are present in the United States. 79

In Georgia, the first Laotian Buddhist temple was organized in 1987 in the city of Riverdale. It attracts Laotian Buddhists from neighboring states to participate in religious rituals and activities. Currently, four monks and novices live there. Four more Buddhist temples recently organized; two of them are in the Atlanta area. Two temples are in Cornelia, Georgia. 80 A small number of Laotian refugees, however, were Christians. They too brought their faith as they resettled in their new homeland.

Churches in the New Homeland

When they arrived in the United States, Laotian families were introduced to the Christian faith whether or not they are Christians. Through an act of kindness of their Christian sponsors, Laotians went to churches, even if they were Buddhists. Regardless of denominational affiliation, they attended churches with their sponsors. Later, when they learned and understood enough about the Christian faith, they joined those churches—especially the children who were cared for and grew up in the church environment. Due to the limited pages of this paper, only a few church affiliations may be briefly elaborated on.


80 Banliith Thieppapanh, telephone interview by author, April 2, 2013.
Lao-Khmu Christian and Mission Alliance Church. Moune Douangmala was a first generation believer from the labor of itinerate Presbyterian missionary, Hugh Taylor and his predecessors. After the fall of Laos, Moune Douangmala and his family came to America and resettled in Stockton, California. Douangmala faithfully continued to preach the gospel among his people. In 1980, with help from many first generation Khmu, Laotian, and Hmong believers, he organized Laotian Christian and Missionary Alliance Church (LC & MAC). Out of a humble beginning, this little church gave birth to 2 Hmong churches, 2 Khmu churches, and 1 Laotian church.81

Hmong Christian and Missionary Alliance Church. In 1979, 5 Hmong Christian and Missionary Alliance churches were organized. These churches were in Dallas, Texas; St. Paul, Minnesota; Denver, Colorado; Santa Anna, California; and Utah.82 Through these 5 churches, today, 110 Hmong Christian and Missionary Alliance churches have been planted around the country. These churches vary in size, the largest being in St. Paul, Minnesota with an average Sunday school attendance of 1,300. Collectively, Hmong C and M A churches in the United States have over 35,000 members.83

Lao and Lao-Hmong Southern Baptist churches. During the height of resettlement, many Southern Baptist churches sponsored refugees to help them resettle in their towns and cities. These churches needed help with communication between sponsors and refugee families. Joshua Vang, former secretary of Lao Evangelical Church in Laos84 and the eldest son of Sai Pao Vang, was called to work with the Home Mission

81Praseuth Douangmala, telephone interview by author, February 25, 2013.

82Kue, A Hmong Church History, 113.

83May Yang Her, telephone interview by author, March 25, 2013. Her is the secretary of Hmong Christian and Missionary Alliance secretary.

84Kue, A Hmong Church History, 112.
Board of the SBC as a language consultant and a church planting strategist.

In 1978, Vang began traveling around the country to meet people and plant churches among the Hmong and Laotian people. Presently, 52 Hmong Baptist churches are part of the Hmong National Baptist Association in the United States. These churches have a total of 4,500 members. In addition, Vang also planted many Laotian churches. Presently, 42 Laotian churches are accounted for and have about 3,700 members.

Inta Chanthavongsouk, a first generation believer from the work of missionary Terry Murphy, settled his family in Whittier, CA and became pastor of a Laotian Southern Baptist church. Today, he is a well-known zealous preacher who works tirelessly among his people. Additionally, he works with the Lao Conference of Churches (LCC) in America and Canada. The LCC has 46 churches with over 1,600 members. He often returns to his native homeland to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with his fellow countrymen. O. S. Hawkins remarks,

Thus the church has continued to grow through the centuries by appealing to others through personal confrontation with the gospel. The most far-reaching results were achieved in that first generation, without the use of television, radio, cassette tapes, printed material, telephones, fax machines, computers, air travel, the internet or stadium crusades. The good news spread from lip to lip until it reached all the way to Rome itself.

Church Planting in Georgia

Beginning in 1979, during the busiest time of refugee resettlement, many churches began to do ministry among newly arrived Indochinese refugees. Columbia Drive Baptist Church of Decatur, Georgia, was among the first respondents to meet the need.

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86 Aaron Phangnivong, telephone interview by author, March 23, 2013. Phangnivong is the former president of Lao Southern Baptist East Fellowship.

87 Chanthavongsouk, interview.

needs of the refugees. Joshua Vang was called to pastor these newly arrived refugees at Columbia Drive Baptist Church. He worked with the Home Mission Board during the week and preached for the new mission on Sundays.

The church provided a physical space and all refugees were invited to hear the gospel. Among regular visitors were Laotians, Lao-Hmong, Laotian-Chinese, Cambodians, Cambodian-Chinese, Khmu, Vietnamese-Laotians, and Miens, a Laotian tribal minority. Even though Hmong were considered Laotians, the majority of the people did not understand each other culturally and linguistically. Other ethnic groups in the room face the same dilemma. One gave an opinion this way: “Even though they were nice to each other; however, their cultural backgrounds were different. The best one can say, ‘it is a nice try.’”

**Hmong Baptist Church.** Three Hmong Southern Baptist Churches have grown out of the ministry at Columbia Drive Baptist Church. Most of the Lao-Hmong population has moved from the busy streets of Atlanta to Winder, a northern suburb. In order to make it possible for church members to continue attending church services and be involved in church ministry, these churches decided to relocate where the people are. All of these churches are doing well in their ministry.

**Laotian Baptist Church.** Although Laotians came into Atlanta as early as 1976, a Laotian Mission did not start until June 1988. During the same period, Upper Riverdale Baptist Church in Riverdale and First Baptist Church of Jonesboro, Georgia, began their Laotian ministries. These churches called Laotian bi-lingual pastors to serve in their Laotian ministries. A Laotian Mission began at First Baptist Church of Red Oak

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89 John Doe 5, interview by author, Fayetteville, GA, March 18, 2013. The interview with John Doe was confidential; the real name of the interviewee is withheld by mutual agreement.

(FBCRO), College Park, Georgia, with the cooperation of the Fairburn Baptist Association and the Georgia Baptist Convention. The mission remained under the ministry of the sponsoring church until May 1995. The Laotian Mission constituted into a church in June 1995 and became Oliver Grove Laotian Baptist Church.\textsuperscript{91}

**Laotian Mission in Savannah, Georgia.** As soon as the Laotian Mission at First Baptist Church of Red Oak had leaders who could carry on the work of ministry, the student pastor reached out to other Laotian communities. He began mission work in Savannah, Georgia reaching out to lost Laotians in Chatham County, Brunswick, and a few Laotian families who lived in Hilton Head, South Carolina. Laotian families of Savannah were won to Christ in record numbers. Bounthone Vongsaona says,  

> Because we move out and live away from Savannah, we are so far apart from one another. We, however, continue fellowshipping with one another occasionally. Each of our families joins local Baptist churches which are closer to wherever we live. This way we have all children with us when we go to church.\textsuperscript{92}

**Laotian Mission in Marietta, Georgia.** Due to a large Laotian population who resettled in Marietta, Georgia, in 1991, the First Baptist Church started a Laotian Mission to reach out to the new residents. The church called a Laotian bi-lingual pastor who also preached the gospel to the Laotians in College Park. During the first few years of the Laotian ministry, the mission won many families and young people to Christ. In the 1990s, the mission reached 50 to 75 middle and high-school age children in their summer camps. The work is still active and continues to reach lost Laotians in the community. Sarah Newsome, a key leader in the church plant of First Baptist Church of Marietta, says, “It is important to plant churches because that is what we are called to do. We are to give our call our best, our all, our first, and our last. It is the priority of our

\textsuperscript{91}Church Council meeting minute of the Oliver Grove Laotian Baptist Church, May 26, 1995.

\textsuperscript{92}Bounthone Vongsaona, telephone interview by author, March 16, 2013.
lives. Without doing it, our time while we remain on earth means very little.”

Laotian Mission in Forest Park, Georgia. In 2009, with help from Oliver Grove Laotian Baptist church, another Laotian Mission was planted in the city of Forest Park, Georgia, which has a high concentration of Laotian families. Though new to the community, the Mission is slowly, but surely growing. The average attendance of the mission is 25 to 45 weekly. The Mission shares the student pastor with the main congregation, Oliver Grove Baptist Church. One of the leaders at Forest Park says, “We are so glad that we can share him, our pastor, with other people. As long as he can take it, we will continually pray for him and for the people that he works with.”

Laotian Mission in Cornelia, Georgia. Even though Cornelia is a small city in North Georgia, it has employment opportunities that attract many Laotian families. With financial assistance and administrative help from Level Grove Baptist Church, Habersham County Baptist Association, and the Georgia State Convention, Laotian Baptist Mission was planted in March 2012. Within a few months 12 new converts were baptized. Before the year ended over 20 had come to Jesus Christ. The student pastor divides his time working with the Mission at Level Grove Baptist Church and two other churches.

Conclusion

Opportunities for spreading the gospel remain open for servants of God who are willing to do his work. However Laotians, like other people, have their reasons not to trust others easily. To evangelize a Laotian, a person must first work to develop trust. Laotians are reasonable people but they can be easily upset. Trust is an important issue

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in Laotian culture. Often, the only way to develop the trust of Laotians is through friendship, which may require significant time. Once a person is trusted he may comfortably share the gospel. This sharing can result in one becoming a Christian, which is a rich reward for the person telling them about Jesus. Nelson Price points out,

Wendell Willkie, candidate for president in 1940, once asked the president Franklin Roosevelt, “Why do you keep that frail, sickly Harry Hopkins at your elbow?” President Roosevelt answered, “Hundreds come through that door daily who want something from me. Harry Hopkins wants only to serve me. That is why he is so near to me.”

Service brings followers closer to the Lord.

Taking the gospel to every person within one’s ability to reach is the service that Jesus Christ has called each of his followers to do. The Great Commission will be fulfilled when every lost person has had a reasonable opportunity to hear the good news in his or her own language.

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CHAPTER 4
IMPLEMENTATION OF EVANGELISM AND CHURCH GROWTH PROJECT

The implementation of this project occurred from June 19, 2011 to September 25, 2011. The project was designed for multiple parts with different phases and activities. All phases and activities of the project are discussed on the following pages as it happened at the Oliver Grove Laotian Baptist Church. This chapter will provide a recapitulation of the crucial components of the project.

Situation Prior to the Project

Prior to the project, Oliver Grove Laotian Baptist Church scheduled a revival conference at least once a year. In June 2005, the church invited Homphanh Vongsurith from Dallas, Texas, to lead the revival conference. During the event he provided a one day witnessing training using the Good News biblical tract. Approximately 25 people participated in the training, which was a combination of classroom time and actual witnessing in the homes of lost Laotians.

In April 2006, I led a One-Day Witnessing Workshop for members of the congregation. In this workshop, 20 attendees learned to share their testimony in presenting the gospel. Later, Sidney Kahn, a leading Laotian pastor from Texas, came to the church to lead witness training and revival services. About 12 church members took part in the training. Recently, 20 or more members of the Oliver Grove Baptist Church took part in the training opportunities at First Baptist Church of Jonesboro, Georgia. In addition to these training experiences, some of the church leaders took the evangelism training in their Laotian Baptist Fellowship Conference, which is offered to them annually.
Challenge of Cultural Complexity

From these past experiences, it should be clear that evangelism is a major focus of this church. These trainings, however, were not translating into the kind of growth I had hoped to see. I talked to people who were part of these previous trainings experiences and also to people whom they visited. Those who were visited indicated that when they saw a Christian group from Oliver Grove Laotian Baptist Church coming to visit them, they immediately knew what their visitors were going to talk about. People did not want to hear the same story they had already heard, so they did not want to welcome visitors from this church into their homes.

Laotians are superstitious people; a bad start to a conversation could terminate a relationship, or worse, it could turn a once friend into a foe. From conversations I had with unchurched Laotians who had been visited, I learned that they withdrew from these church folks because of they perceived a lack of real concern. There was such a negative attitude about the church among unchurched people that barriers were high, making it difficult for witnesses to reach the Laotian community.

The stories from witnesses were not any different. As soon as these folks felt that they were not being welcomed by prospects, they ceased evangelistic effort. They did not handle the rejection and oppositions well because they did not want to be alienated by their Laotian community or labeled as a betrayer to their own culture and traditions. They felt a need for other options. The problem could be traced to a lack of tools, persistence, and patience.

Another problem of the church’s evangelism training was a lack of interest among her young people. The church discovered that youth are the fastest growing segment of the Laotian population. The church was barely retaining its own young members much less recruiting them to do the work of evangelism. The opportunity however, remained open. The church still had a good group of youth and college students to work with. The church had to find a way to instill the love for evangelism
into the lives of these young witnesses.

Culturally, Laotians categorize people and divide them into four main groups: close friend, friend, acquaintance, and other people. A close friend is someone whom a person loves and shares everything with. They have almost nothing to hide from each other. They trust each other and watch out for and depend on each other. A friend is someone who knows another and often associates with him, but is outside a close friend circle. An acquaintance is someone generally known by another, but there is no particular fondness. Other people are those whom one may meet from time to time, but often cannot remember their names or faces. This is how Laotians generally perceive and treat each other.

When planning to share the gospel with a lost person, the witness should always consider how close their relationship is. A sensitive witness could share the gospel and if the message was rejected, the relationship would remain intact. Another result could be that after sharing the gospel, the message and witness would be rejected altogether. Not only is another opportunity impeded, but the friendship has been damaged. Barriers to the gospel become more entrenched.

When a lost person receives an invitation to follow Christ, he is asked to reject any traditional teaching from another religion in which he may have been reared. Even though he would really like to accept Christ, he will consider his decision against his native culture, his family, and the social norm of his environment. He will weigh his decision on whether it is worth possible family rejection and community persecution. This is why relationships and friendships of the witness play a significant role.

Laotians are relational people. In order to become a trusted friend, one might have to make more casual visits. Additionally, addressing spiritual needs might not be the best first step in developing a friendship; in fact, it may be that such conversation may come after a friendship has been firmly established.

The most successful personal evangelism model in recent years is Evangelism
Explosion III which has been used by churches in 211 countries.¹ The model is based on four phases: friendship, evangelism, discipleship, and healthy growth. This project is not a copycat of Evangelism Explosion, but what a marvelous idea to bring healthy and balanced growth to the kingdom through this simple concept. Developing friendships may provide a bridge for an effective witness of the gospel. This model provides a comprehensive approach to equip others to do the work of evangelism. The principle of friendship will work in a Laotian context.

**Design and Critical Elements of the Project**

The implementation of the evangelism and church growth project was proposed to the council of the Oliver Grove Laotian Baptist Church on May 1, 2010. The project was developed to meet the needs of the church to prepare and train leaders to reach the lost for Christ. The church council accepted the project in principle.

**Congregation Participation and Project Development**

I met with the church council multiple times so that they would gain a better understanding of the project and its process. After a discussion at the church business meeting on April 17, 2011, the church council approved the project and agreed to present it to the church the following Sunday. On April 24 2011, the church council presented the project for implementation and the church approved it unanimously. The church agreed to include the project in the printed announcements in the worship service bulletins from May 29 to June 12, 2011.

The church provided an invitation for members to participate. Willing

participants were divided into small groups, and each group had a leader and an assistant. Selected leaders agreed to lead their respective groups in implementing the project under my supervision. The church printed the names of participants and their group leaders in the Sunday bulletin and posted their names on the church bulletin board for three consecutive weeks. In addition, the chairman of the church council and I gave weekly updates of the project to the congregation. I worked with group leaders and encouraged them to meet with their respective groups after the worship service for several consecutive Sundays. The meetings provided opportunities for the teams to become organized and prepare for the training and implementation of the project.

**Pre-Project Evaluation**

To understand the attitude of the participants toward evangelism, a pre-project questionnaire was given on Sunday June 19, 2011, during the first week of the project orientation (see Appendix 20). The questionnaires were given to those who signed up to participate in the project. The participants were asked to commit 15 weeks to the project. At the completion of the project, the participants would again complete the same questionnaire to measure whether or not they had made any progress in their understanding of evangelism and church growth.

**Participants in the Project**

Twenty-six church members signed up for the training project. They were divided into 6 teams. Four teams had 4 members each including team leaders. Two teams had 5 members. One team had some individual members who were unable to commit to all 15 weeks of training due to prior commitments. The participants were all members of Oliver Grove Laotian Baptist Church. Six participants were age 17 to 24, six were age 25 to 34, seven were age 35 to 44; and seven were age 45 to 55. Among these teams, 7 were women and 19 were men. Each team was a mixture of different ages and genders. Five men and 1 woman served as team leaders.
Qualifications of team leaders. Team leaders were spiritually mature persons who could lead others to complete assigned tasks. They had the respect of the team members and of people in the community. Team leaders also had a love for God and a willingness to bring others to him. They had experience serving in some capacity in the church and were willing to cooperate with the student and other team members. Lastly, they made a fifteen week commitment for the implementation of the project, which included classroom training, small group meetings, and completing weekly assignments.

Qualifications of team members. Team members were people who had experienced genuine regeneration and had a love for God and for lost people. They were willing to learn and cooperate with other team members and their team leaders. In addition, they agree to commit to the fifteen-week time frame of the project.

Educational Training Process
of the Project

The project was divided into three major parts, the first part being two orientation sessions. The first orientation was for leaders and their assistants. The second orientation session was for team members. The second part of the project was classroom training. The classroom training was divided into 2 major divisions. The first half of the classroom training was 6 sessions that dealt with evangelism. The second half of classroom training was 6 sessions dealing with discipleship. Every training session had 2 or 3 components. In the first part, participants received instruction from me. A second part was small group discussion about the instruction given. In the third part, participants put their training into real life practice. The last week of the project was devoted to the celebration worship service and wrap-up (see Appendix 15).

Small Group Meetings

Small group discussion was an important part of every training session. Using guided questions, participants discussed and shared each other’s ideas and skills to help
gain a better understanding of the work of evangelism and church growth. Some teams chose to meet at church after each classroom instructional session. Other teams chose to meet somewhere closer to their homes during the week. Team members discussed the issues they might face in evangelism and discipleship and how to respond to certain circumstances in carrying out the assignments.

Through small group discussion, participants came to better understanding of what was taught in each session. They learned different ways to approach the lost and how they could respond appropriately in any situation. They discussed questions relative to religious beliefs and cultures. The small group was the place where new personal habits began and character was developed in participants’ lives. They had opportunities to pray together and encourage and support each other in carrying out their assigned tasks.

The small group meeting was also a place where the participants helped each other practice their evangelism and discipleship skills. The participants developed their plans together in their small groups before beginning their witnessing visitation.

I had opportunities to sit in on a few of these small group discussions. I learned new insights from the participants on how they could better fit into the culture and beliefs of Laotian people. I saw and heard the struggles through first hand reports from participants who shared their personal experiences. Many participants, with tears in their eyes, brought exciting reports to their small groups. They told about how they won their friends and families to Christ. During the fifteen week of the project, participants and I won eleven new converts. There were eight rededications, and one cult believer returned to Christ. This brought much joy and excitement to all church families.

**Evangelism Assignments**

At the end of every training session, participants received witnessing assignments. This was the crux of the project. The scope of the project was not only to enable the participants to understand and practice evangelism during the training time,
but to put their developing skills and knowledge into real life practice. The goal was to lead them into a life-long commitment to grow in their spiritual walk and become avid soul winners.

**Orientation to the Project**

The project required two orientation sessions. The first orientation session was for team leaders and their assistants. The second orientation session was for team members or participants.

**Session 1: Leaders’ Orientation.**

The leader orientation session was held on June 19, 2011. The session included (1) an opening celebration in worship service (see Appendix 18); (2) a celebration in the Word, sermon outline (see Appendix 19); (3) Leader’s orientation (see Appendix 1); and (4) presentation of questionnaire (see Appendix 20). The discussion centered on 5 issues. The first issue dealt with the rationale proposed and stated in chapter 1, which concerned five reasons why the church should implement the project.

The second topic of discussion was about the responsibilities of team leaders and members. I further stressed the importance of team leaders. They would be a model for attendance, understand the overall purpose of the project, have a strong commitment to the project’s implementation, and help their team members.

The third topic concerned the schedule of the project training. Participants and I agreed that to insure better attendance, the training would be held on Sunday afternoons instead of Saturdays as originally planned. Training sessions would include presentation of material and small group discussion using guided questions. Because of time restraint on Sunday, participants might choose do their group discussion at another time and place of their group’s choosing. I planned to communicate with each leader either by telephone or by personal meeting during the week prior to the next session.

The fourth topic of discussion covered the content of the training sessions,
which were divided into two major parts (see Appendix 17). The first part of the actual training dealt with 6 sessions on personal evangelism. The second 6 sessions focused on discipleship and church growth. After two weeks of orientation and twelve weeks of training, a fifteenth session would be a concluding wrap-up session and celebration worship service.

The last topic of discussion was about the questionnaire (see Appendix 20). I explained the importance of the questionnaire and how it would help measure the effectiveness of the project. I addressed some questions and concerns at the end of the meeting. I requested that the team leaders and assistants remind their respective team members of their orientation meeting the following Sunday.

**Session 2: Team Members’ Orientation**

The second orientation session, for team members, was held on June 26, 2011 (see Appendix 2). The first topic discussed was the five reasons to implement the project. Next, I talked about the schedule of training and the subject lessons to be studied.

I briefly discussed the different methods of evangelism that would be studied. I further explained they would have the freedom to select the method of evangelism they preferred to use. I emphasized the practical aspects of the training. All participants would have the opportunity to present the gospel with their respective groups and members from other teams. During the week, participants in pairs would do actual evangelism by going to Laotian homes assigned to them weekly.

A question and answer session followed with further discussion. Some participants asked that if they could be a part of classroom training for educational purposes only. Others asked if they could be a part of the training without committing to all fifteen weeks. I reassured them that one of the purposes of the training was to help them overcome a fear of witnessing and at the same time better understand what evangelism really is. I reminded the participants they would be teamed with other people
who already had witnessing experience. Finally, I told them that they first would share the gospel with people with whom they were already comfortable, such as family members, relatives, or friends. Twenty-six participants completed the questionnaire.

**Personal Evangelism and Church Growth**

**Instructional Classroom Training Sessions**

From July 3, 2011, to September 25, 2011, the participants received a weekly lecture from me (see Appendixes 1 to 15). Weekly sessions dealt with the different aspects of personal evangelism and church growth. I interacted with participants to better communicate the importance of each session. Each training session dealt with the *what, why, and how* of the topic so participants would get a clearer picture of evangelism and church growth. The training sessions took an average of 3 hours and 15 minutes. Each week, participants received an assignment packet, which included street maps, a prospect list and addresses, and visitation reports.

**Session 3: Introduction to Personal Evangelism**

The first training session was held on July 3, 2011 (see Appendix 3). I explained to the participants the meaning of evangelism. The second part of the lesson dealt with the seven principles of an evangelistic life. The third part of the lesson covered the motives of evangelism. Conducting the work of evangelism is both a privilege and joyfully intoxicating. It is the real business of life that lives in obedience to the “Great Commission.” It is a supreme challenge of this Christian generation to pursue the lost.

**Session 4: A Basic Requirement for Personal Evangelism**

The second training session occurred on Sunday afternoon July 10, 2011 (see Appendix 4). This training session was divided into three sections: spiritual preparation, personal preparation, and formal preparation. First, spiritual preparation is necessary
because the work of evangelism is constant spiritual warfare. Satan will do everything he can to disarm Christians from sharing the gospel. Christians must rely on the power of the Holy Spirit to do his work. During the second part of the session, I focused his teaching on what a personal spiritual birth means. A witness must have had a personal experience with Christ to have a Christian testimony. I discussed basic beliefs of the Christian faith: regeneration, salvation assurance, the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and compassion and concern for the lost. The third topic of discussion focused on the formal preparation needed to share the gospel effectively.

**Session 5: Strategies of Personal Evangelism**

The third training session was held on Sunday afternoon on July 17, 2011 (see Appendix 5). The first topic of the session dealt with the strategies of evangelism. Strategies are the means by which the gospel can be shared effectively. The second topic of the session focused on lifestyle witnessing, which means that every believer could be a witness with their everyday life.

The third topic covered five ways to pray for witnessing: (1) pray for the lost by name daily, (2) pray for opportunities, (3) ask God for a way to approach the lost, (4)

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pray for boldness, and (5) pray for the leadership of the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{8}

The fourth topic of the session was about developing a strategy of relational evangelism. The strategy explained that one must develop friendships with the lost in order to gain their trust and have an opportunity to share the gospel with them.\textsuperscript{9}

During the fifth topic, I explained ways to help participants use icebreakers to start conversations.\textsuperscript{10}

The sixth topic dealt with incorporating one’s personal testimony into a witnessing situation. Each participant was asked to write his or her personal testimony. At the end of the session, I showed a power point presentation of servant and relational evangelism.\textsuperscript{11}

**Session 6: The Practice of Personal Evangelism**

This session took place on Sunday afternoon, July 24, 2011 (see Appendix 6). The session focused on helping participants become knowledgeable and effective witnesses. The session was divided in three major parts: writing a personal testimony, using a testimony in personal evangelism, and personal evangelism methods.

The second topic of training focused on developing relationships. Personal evangelism would yield more positive results when a witness and the lost have a good relationship. Another strategy I introduced was how to begin a conversation in a non-threatening manner.


\textsuperscript{9}“GBC Servant Evangelism Power Point” (Duluth, GA: Georgia Baptist Convention, n.d).


\textsuperscript{11}“Servant Evangelism Power Point” (Duluth, GA: Evangelism Ministry of Georgia Baptist Convention, n.d.).
The third topic of the session was about different methods of evangelism. The methods discussed were Witnessing Card Evangelism, The Good News Evangelism, and One-Verse Evangelism.\(^\text{12}\)

**Session 7: Sharing the Gospel with Believers of Different Religions, Part 1**

This session was held on Sunday afternoon, July 31, 2011 (see Appendix 7). It was divided into three major sections: Catholicism, Mormonism, and Jehovah’s Witness. Every section was further divided into two categories: barriers and bridges.\(^\text{13}\) Barriers are natural or erected difficulties in sharing the gospel with another faith. Bridges are conversation entry points for talking about one’s faith.

**Session 8: Sharing the Gospel with Believers of Different Religions, Part 2**

This session was held on Sunday afternoon, August 7, 2011 (see Appendix 8). The first topic of the training dealt with witnessing to Hindus. The second topic of the session discussed sharing faith with Buddhists, and the third topic discussed the evangelism among Spiritists or Ancestor Worshippers.

**Church Ministry and Church Growth**

Jesus Christ called men to follow him. When he met Peter and Andrew, he said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matt 4:18). These two brothers and ten others followed him and became his disciples. Jesus spent time with them to teach them. He gradually unveiled himself and his purpose. These men were

\(^{12}\)“One-Verse Video Clips Presentation of One-Verse Evangelism” [on-line]; accessed May 25, 2011; available from www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wca3BiW3gro; Internet.

transformed into men who love and obey him. They became wholly committed to him and his purpose to build his church.

Building the church of Jesus is the business of his disciples. Jesus taught his disciples and sent them out to build his church. Jesus calls people to *come* to him and then to *go* for him. Church growth is neither evangelism nor discipleship, it is both. Thom S. Rainer reiterated on McGavran’s concept of evangelism: “He [McGavran] saw evangelism as more than just proclaiming the gospel; he insisted that evangelization is incomplete until the person becomes a responsible disciple of Christ.”

This project designated 6 discipleship training sessions: (1) discipleship and church growth, (2) discipleship in following the call, (3) discipleship in fellowship, (4) discipleship in worship, (5) discipleship in mentoring, and (6) discipleship in transforming followers to leaders. Participants will learn how disciples are made from these sessions.

**Session 9: Discipleship and Church Growth**

The training session was conducted on Sunday afternoon August 14, 2011 (see Appendix 9). The first topic of this session covered the definition of discipleship and what it meant to be a follower of Christ. In the second topic, I discussed biblical clues of discipleship.

**Session 10: Ministry and Church growth**

This session occurred on Sunday afternoon, August 21, 2011 (see Appendix 10). The first topic of the session was “Committed to Grow: The Call to Follow.” I explained that making disciples is a process. A second topic of the session was the desire

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of those called by Christ to live a new life. They need a Bible-believing church home. In the third topic of the session, I talked about being productive in the work of the kingdom.

Session 11: Fellowship and Church Growth

This training session was held on Sunday afternoon of August 28, 2011 (see Appendix 11). In the first topic of the session I talked about the definition of fellowship. Fellowship simply meant togetherness. In Laotian culture, fellowship means more than just being together. The second topic dealt with biblical basis of fellowship. Believers can fellowship together because they believe in the same God. The third topic was about the early believers’ fellowship. Scripture says that the early believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and committed to pray for one another. They worshipped together. Above all, they mutually committed to reach others for Christ. The fourth topic covered functions of fellowship in the early church. When they fellowshipped they did ministry together. They were part of one body: the body of Christ. In the fifth topic I talked about the character of genuine fellowship. Genuine fellowship is a result of a mutual experience.

Session 12: Worship and Church Growth

The training session occurred on Sunday afternoon of September 4, 2011 (see Appendix 12). In this session, I talked about the definition of worship and how through the preaching of the Word, the people of God are edified, nurtured, equipped, and encouraged to be salt and light in their world.

Session 13: Mentoring and Church Growth

The session was held on September 11, 2011 (see Appendix 13). The first topic of this session dealt with making disciple through mentoring. I also explained the definition of coaching which has a similar meaning to the word mentoring.
The second topic of the session was about a ministry of multiplication. Church growth is realized through the ministries of evangelism and discipleship. According to the apostle Paul, to bring growth to a church, followers of Jesus Christ should realize that it started from him (Col 2:6-7).

Lastly, the ministry of multiplication is biblical and essential to bring about significant growth in a church. A look at Barnabas might be a good place to start this endeavor that he gave opportunities to others as he did with the Apostle Paul (Acts 11:25).

**Session 14: Developing Leaders and Church Growth**

This training session occurred on September 18, 2011 (see Appendix 14). I talked about the need for leadership, which was the first topic of the session. The church grew because it had many spirit-led leaders who led it to grow. The more leaders a church produces means the church can reach out to more people and more people will be saved.

The second topic of the session, I focused on transforming followers into leaders. The discussion centered on emerging leaders who were most fruitful when they realized needs and what they could do. These emerging leaders learned best in the context of doing. They might need someone to hold their hands, walk with them, and give them support and guidance.

In the third topic, I presented a discussion on multiplying or investing in others. The model is exemplified by the apostle Paul and his relationship with Timothy and Titus. I also talked about practical parts of the apostle model which he worked with Timothy and Titus.

**Session 15: Celebration in Worship Service**

Upon the completion of the project, the celebration session was held in the
morning worship service on Sunday September 25, 2011 (see Appendix 15). In the afternoon, the pre and post-project questionnaire was administered (see Appendix 20). This was the same questionnaire used in the pre-project training. The instrument was used to measure the growth of knowledge and understanding about evangelism and discipleship made by the participants who took part in the project. This concluded the instructional classroom part of the project. Some of the details of results and analyses will be discussed later on this chapter.

**Post-Project Test and Analyses**

Twenty-three of the 26 participants did not miss any session during the fifteen-week project. Team leaders helped the 3 who missed time to stay on course with their work. After the completion of the project, all 26 participants received the same questionnaire that they had completed during the pre-project testing.

The questionnaire contained three categories of questions. Seven questions, numbers 1, 2, 3, 11, 12, 13, and 14, were for evaluating the participants’ knowledge and skills of evangelism (see Appendix 20). Eight questions, numbers 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 15, were for evaluating the participants’ understanding of evangelism and theology. Ten questions, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, and 25, were used for evaluating the willingness and commitment to do evangelism. Participants, however, did not answer all the questions especially those asking about their commitment and willingness to volunteer in some capacity of church ministry. The post-project questionnaire, however, showed a significant increase in all three categories (see Appendix 22).

**Conclusion**

The project design was to meet the needs of the evangelism and church growth ministries of Oliver Grove Laotian Baptist Church. The pretext of this project was traced to Jesus who set an example his followers. Christ has a great burden for all lost people who live in spiritual darkness. He wept over Jerusalem because they were not willing to come to him, and he continues to mourn today for those who live apart from him. The
challenge was, is, and always will be that evangelism and discipleship produce faithful witnesses who obey the Great Commission.

While the participants of this project shared the gospel with Laotians, the methods are relevant to all. The methods are important, but prayer is the key for success to those who seek to reach others for the kingdom. This project was developed to equip witnesses to reach lost people and disciple them for spiritual growth. It is relational and transferable. Developing relationships with people who do not know Christ is always the best way to share the gospel effectively.
CHAPTER 5
EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION
OF THE PROJECT

The growth of the Laotian population in the United States and specifically in Atlanta, Georgia, challenged me as the student to complete the project. The following evaluation reflects the strengths and weaknesses of the project on evangelism and church growth at Oliver Grove Laotian Baptist Church in College Park, Georgia.

Evaluation of the Purpose

The purpose of this project was to develop a comprehensive contextual evangelism and church growth strategy for the Oliver Grove Baptist Church in College Park, Georgia. The participants learned about the importance of the work of evangelism, what it means, what it requires, and the different ways of doing it. The participants were better able to communicate the gospel using different evangelism approaches. Participants grew in evangelism skills through practice in their small groups resulting in evangelism becoming a lifestyle. Project participants were divided into small teams of 5 or 6 for their weekly meeting and discussion. These teams were further divided into 2 or 3 when evangelistically visiting. The interaction between participants sharpened their skills, which went beyond the scope of this project. In their small groups they discussed issues that prepared them to share the gospel with their relatives, lost friends, and neighbors. Each participant had at least one opportunity to share the gospel before his teammates and one time in a witnessing situation while others watched. They learned how to present the gospel with people of different religions and faiths. After the project was completed, participants were more skilled to communicate their faith in various situations. The participants are now able to better transfer their knowledge and skills to
Project participants learned about the biblical teaching on discipleship and church growth, and the importance of the local church as followers of Christ. Participants learned to minister by serving others, as well as being willing to be ministered to by the body of Christ. In fellowshipping with other believers they learned to use their gifts in serving God.

Before each Sunday afternoon training session, team leaders or designated spokesmen of the teams reported their group activities and progress made during the week. The sharing of these personal experiences in small groups helped participants to overcome shyness and brought them joy and encouragement. They were encouraged to meet regularly for prayer and sharing. Group members were asked to take advantage of any evangelism training that might be available to them. Such experiences could help sharpen their skills so they could be more effective in their evangelistic efforts. The scope of the project was only fifteen weeks, but hopefully the experience will last for a lifetime.

**Evaluation of Project Goals**

Five goals were established for the project: (1) promoted better understanding of the importance of evangelism among church leaders and project participants of the Oliver Grove Baptist Church, (2) motivated the participants to be personal evangelists, (3) trained the participants in the skills necessary for personal evangelism, (4) mobilized participants to go into the Laotian community to reach the lost, and (5) encouraged my personal growth. I wanted my own personal growth to include improving my skills in recruiting and training leaders, and to continually grow spiritually along with church members.

The teaching to promote a better understanding of evangelism was completed through a series of seminars that began on July 3, 2013. These seminars were interconnected, especially the first three sessions (see Appendixes 1, 2, 3). I talked about
the different definitions of evangelism and the principles of an evangelistic life. These sessions became building blocks for the participants to understand the centrality of evangelism in the Christian’s life.

The third goal was to train participants in the skills necessary for personal evangelism. Obedient followers of Christ are all responsible for the work of evangelism. The teaching was completed on July 24, 2011, and included a discussion of strategies that could be used to reach their families, friends, and neighbors for Christ. Such strategies included prayer, personal witness, servant and relational evangelism, and practical approaches of sharing the Good News. Evangelism is best demonstrated by God’s love for his people. The witness should live his life in such a way that he is salt and light in his world.

The fourth goal was to organize the participant to go into the Laotian community to reach the lost. The participants’ small group meetings addressed this goal. These groups met weekly and organized themselves to go into the Laotian community to prayer walk and establish relationships through servant and relational evangelism. These witness teams shared the gospel with lost Laotians on a weekly basis. During the fifteen week project, participants won 11 new converts, 8 rededications, and 1 cult member came to Christ. At the completion and celebration of the project, many of these new converts brought their families and friends with them for their baptismal celebration. Many have continued to come and be a part of the church. New people are being added to the church family on a regular basis.

The fifth and the final goal spoke to my personal growth. I wanted my own personal growth to include improving my skills in recruiting and training leaders. I wanted to grow along with church members as they progress as soul winners and disciple makers.

I have been the pastor of this church for twenty-two years. As I began my ministry, I put much of my attention, time, and effort in discipling believers with a hope
and an assumption that well-trained disciples would produce better and long-lasting personal evangelists. I felt the most important job I could do was to nurture believers. These disciples, while being taught, were trained to do the task of evangelism. However, as soon as their discipleship training was over, their passion for reaching others gradually waned and finally the practice was abandoned. The knowledge learned in the discipleship training program had become obsolete. This cycle had occurred repeatedly throughout the course of my ministry. It was frustrating for such effort to be exerted, and not have the fire of evangelism ever catch on. As a result, the church did not reach the lost and complacency resulted.

Through the D.Min. program at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, I was afforded the opportunity to research and implement this project. This experience taught me that evangelism with knowledge and skills, but without means to sustain it, is only head knowledge and bears little lasting fruit. A ministry of evangelism, however, as seen in the small group functions in this project, can provide encouragement, support, and produce a fruitful ministry for years to come.

The first goal of the project sought to promote better understanding of the importance of evangelism and discipleship among the members of Oliver Grove Baptist Church, and this goal was met. The second goal of motivating participants to be personal evangelists who rely on the Holy Spirit to overcome their fear in witnessing, was also met. The third goal, to train project participants in the skills necessary for personal evangelism and church growth was met as well. The fourth goal was to organize participants to go into the Laotian community to reach the lost. This goal was partially met because the original intent was to organize church members to go into the Laotian community for evangelism. In reality, only those members who participated in the project could avail themselves to reaching others. The fifth goal involving my personal growth was also successfully met. Even though many team members indicated that they would miss some training sessions; however, only three absences occurred during the
fifteen week project.

**Strengths of the Project**

The first strength of project was the instrument. All questions were simply asking participants for their understanding, knowledge, and commitment to the work of evangelism. The answers to these questions provided a clearer picture of the participants’ understanding and practice and how I might best help them progress. The response to question ten revealed that most of the participants were not aware of the importance of the evangelism ministry of their church. Because of their lack of understanding, participants lacked involvement in the ministry.

The second strength of the project was some church members who were unable to commit to the fifteen week time, joined in as observers and providers. They were, in some cases, providing car pools for team members as they visited. They joined in prayer walks and volunteered in servant and relational evangelism projects. These church members also sat in on small group meetings while the participants met for discussion and planning. They observed while the participants practiced their evangelism methods. They too, gained knowledge and skills in evangelism. One even helped win a lost person to Christ.

**Weaknesses of the Project**

The project had many weaknesses. The first weakness of the project was that the instrument was written in English. Even though I provided sufficient translation, many who lacked functional literacy in English may have had difficulty responding correctly. This instrument might not have been clearly understood by all participants due to the cultural difference. It did, however, show a significant difference from pre-training to the post-training evaluation. Many of the questions were left unanswered in both questionnaires in spite of repeated instruction to answer every question. Due to many questions left unanswered, the result of the evaluation might not be as accurate as it
could be.

The second weakness was that the training sessions were held early in the afternoon, not an ideal time after a full Sunday lunch. The third weakness was the training was too long. Each session took three hours or more. Group meetings including prayer walks and witness visitation were as lengthy as the training itself.

**Pre-Test and Post-Test Evaluation**

The methodology of this project was designed to bring about a better understanding of the holistic nature of evangelism and increase the participants’ knowledge and skill for the task of reaching the lost for Christ. Growth in the participants’ skills and level of understanding were measured by a questionnaire, which was used in both pre-training and post-training. The questionnaire consisted of 25 questions. The first section contained 10 statements on which each participant indicated his agreement or disagreement based on a 5 point Likert scale. The statements were designed to measure the participants’ attitude and action related to the work of evangelism. The post-training test indicated an increased affirmation of each of the 10 statements.

A series of “yes” and “no” questions asked the participants what type, if any, evangelism training they had received in the past. More than half of them indicated that they had received some evangelism training before the project. Two questions measured the understanding and knowledge of the participants about the work of evangelism. The post-training test indicated a positive difference between the pre-training and the post-training tests. Six questions sought to measure the level of commitment to the work of evangelism. Lastly, four questions evaluated the participants’ perception of their personal skills for the work of evangelism and their knowledge about their church.

The pre-project questionnaire clearly showed that the participants had very little understanding about evangelism. To bring about a positive change of attitude
toward evangelism, the project had to be implemented in such a way that participants would understand my teaching. This resulted in an increased knowledge by the participants as shown in the post-project evaluation.

People often do not do what they should because they do not understand how. Post-test questionnaire indicated the participants had better understanding theologically the purpose of evangelism and why they should be involved. Once they understood their obligation, they were more likely to make a stronger commitment to reach others for Christ.

Training sessions 3, 4, 5, and 6 were designed to teach and train participants how to share the gospel with the lost. Training sessions 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 dealt with understanding and implementing discipleship practices in the life of the church. These sessions helped to galvanize the participants with a love for Christ and his work and to do what they had been called to do.

**Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the Project**

During the project, many participants continued to struggle to overcome their fear of witnessing before their own team members. After session 4 on July 24, 2011, every team member worked to practice one of the evangelism approaches. Members took turns practicing methods of their choice with their own team members. They practiced until they were comfortable sharing the gospel with others. It took some participants longer to reach a comfortable level of sharing. They practiced with family members, close relatives, friends, and neighbors.

During a small group meeting at a participant’s house on August 17, 2011, a team member reported that after he had practiced his chosen method with his team partner on Tuesday, he was eager to try the newly learned skill with his young niece and her husband. He went by her house and asked if he could speak to them after dinner the following day. He spent the evening with them sharing the gospel. He reported that he
used the One-Verse evangelism method. After sharing his faith, his nephew-in-law made a profession of faith and asked God to come into his life. His niece was happy for her husband, but said she needed time to learn more about the Christian faith.

On the same day, another team member reported that he too wanted to try his developing skill with his neighbor, who was also his aunt. She had been diagnosed with a terminal illness. After he shared the gospel with her and her husband, his uncle told him that he had been waiting for this moment for a long time. His uncle expressed that due to his wife’s illness, the family felt lonely and had very little interaction with others. Both of them prayed to receive Christ into their lives. He reported that he used the Good News evangelism approach. The living room was filled with joy and excitement to hear the wonderful news. It ignited a spark of energy and became the talk of the whole church for weeks. I told the small group that for the remainder of the project they would hear from two witnesses every Sunday during the morning worship service.

On August 20, 2011, I spent time with a small group while they discussed issues they faced when they were witnessing. The team leader asked team members what question they might likely hear when they visit Laotian homes. A team member asked how they should respond when people say that “every religion is equally good because it teaches people to do good.” This was a golden opportunity. Participants were reminded that winning an argument is not the goal. Their response should be polite in conversation, and they should always act with love. A suggested response was, “Yes, every religion teaches people to do good, but Jesus Christ offers a gift of eternal life. Even Gautama pointed to Jesus for salvation.”

A team leader shared that after praying to the Lord for courage, God led him to share the gospel with his friend, a Jehovah’s Witness believer. He was afraid that his sharing would turn into a faith contest. Because of his strong relationship with the man, the leader was able to share the gospel with relative peace. His friend responded that he had the same God, and he did not see the need to pray to receive Jesus Christ again.
However, the friend agreed to worship with the leader at Lao Community Church at Forest Park, and the man has been coming to the church ever since.

A female team member reported she had a longtime friend who was always teasing her about her Christian faith. After hearing the testimony of a fellow participant, she knew she needed to confront her friend with the gospel. After sharing her faith with her friend, the member asked the friend what she thought. In response, her friend told her that one of the reasons she never went to church with her was because the member had never been open with her about her faith. The member apologized to the friend, and they both cried to the Lord asking for forgiveness. Then, her friend made a profession of faith and asked Jesus to come into her life. The participants were filled with joy, which greatly encouraged other shy witnesses.

During a discussion of previous lessons, two team members came forward to share with the class. The first team member reported to the class that this training was not the only training he received, but he never had the courage to bring himself to share the gospel with anyone. This time, because of support from fellow members and inspiration from a few participants who had shared earlier with the class, he was able to share Christ with his uncle. His uncle was quite impressed with him, but stopped short of making a profession of faith. His uncle liked what he heard and his uncle promised to go to church with him to learn more about Christ.

The second team member told the class that he shared his personal testimony with a co-worker friend. He said that he met his friend while he was out for dinner and invited the friend and his wife to sit with him. During dinner he shared the gospel with the couple. Before the dinner was over, his friend and wife told him that they too were Christians; however, they had never been to church since they arrived in this country. His friend told the member that he and his family would return to God and go to church with him. The class once again was revived by the Holy Spirit.

At another gathering of participants on September 11, 2011, I called for two
volunteers to share their evangelism experiences. A young female team member shared that she intentionally went to see her friend with whom she had wanted to share Christ. They talked about their similar experiences in adjusting to life in a new land. The team member told about how she found the Lord and felt his presence every day. Her friend shared that she had lived a life of misery. The team member loved her friend and told her that she had prayed for her daily. After taking this training the team member could no longer keep silent. The team member shared the gospel with her friend and her husband and they both made professions of faith. They have been actively involved in church ever since.

Another volunteer testified that he had shared the gospel with a Thai friend who had been in the United States for long time, but she was not really settled. The volunteer and his friend went to see her at her home. Because his Thai friend was a devoted Buddhist, the volunteer asked for a permission to share his personal testimony. He briefly shared his personal story how God worked in his life; and then, he shared the gospel with her. Because she had been through so much she cried out and asked him whether her life was worthy of such love and mercy from God. She finally made a profession of faith and asked God for mercy. She prayed to receive Christ into her life. She also brought a friend and her son to worship with her. While these results were presenting successes; however, long-term implications are not yet known.

The Implications of the Project

Participation of this project involved only a small percentage of church members. Yet, about two thirds of the most influential members the congregation needed to be equipped for evangelism so they might be in agreement with project participants on the issues of evangelism and church growth. Even though the project brought much information about evangelism to the participants, it remains to be seen how it is going to play out in the life of the congregation in future days. Normally, most of Laotians do not want to volunteer to be leaders and do not feel comfortable in that position. They would
rather take an assignment than assign someone else to the task.

In spite of an extra effort to evangelize teenagers and youth during the fifteen week project, none of 1.5 and second generation were won to Christ. Because of the participation of both Laotian and Cambodian youth in the project, time and effort to reaching youth in both communities were given. Through this effort, five Cambodian youth who were Christians, but had been absent from the church for long time, returned to their youth group.

**What the Student Would Do differently**

In future implementation of the project by a church, leaders and participants should be given an important role in recruiting participants. The involvement and commitment expectations should be clearly spelled out. Perhaps, the use of a covenant might be helpful before entering the training. The team leader’s role model is a critical factor in the success of the training. Leaders need to be mindful of their modeling of personal evangelism throughout the process. Their involvement is not only intentional, but they are also accountable to others on their team.

Special attention should be made after a careful review of the strategy for reaching Buddhist believers. This was important because of the closeness of the Lao-Buddhist community. Witnesses should be strongly cautioned to act or say wisely in speaking about Buddha, his teaching, Buddhist faith, and the way of life of the believers. If witnesses were not careful, they would create barriers even before they had began sharing the gospel.

**Theological and Personal Reflections**

The work of evangelism was, is, and will continue to be a vital part of this church. The work requires all Christians to be involved, not just pastors and leaders. Pastors and leaders of the church cannot do this work alone. God’s people together with
his anointing can develop and execute plans to advance the kingdom of Christ.

Theological Reflection

As I began planning this project, my first concern was whether it would produce any positive results. For many years I had tried sufficient training to promote evangelism in this church. Each time the training failed to ignite a spirit of evangelism. Trying something new that would require long hours of training and a fifteen-week commitment seemed too much to ask. The people, however, welcomed the opportunity, even though I did a poor job recruiting leaders and church members to be a part of the project.

A second concern was the difficulty communicating thoughts into English, which was not my heart language, so Laotians could understand them. However, God was still in control. He worked through my faculty supervisor, professors, and friends in the Georgia Baptist Convention, especially Dennis Rogers, who spent countless hours providing invaluable support.

As the training went into the seventh week, God began manifesting himself in the lives of the participants and in the lives of lost men and women. A shy witness began to gain confidence as he practiced sharing the gospel with a relative. Even though it was intended only as a practice, it turned out that he won his relative to Christ. This experience gave this humble witness a contagious zeal and it quickly spread to all the participants, as well as others in the church. Similar stories shared in Sunday morning worship services and in small group meetings fueled the excitement. God was really working in people’s lives.

Personal Reflection

In this fifteen week project of leading participants through the process of improving the evangelism ministry in the church, I came to understand that my leadership skills need improvement. The church is in need of long-range evangelism planning.
which might be achieved through frequent smaller group training. During this fifteen week training, the most frequent comment heard from the participants was that “we did need training but not this long training.” For this kind of training in the future, I need ample consultation with other church leaders who will share their thoughts and ideas so that they might become partnership in the endeavor.

I realized that I needed to make extra effort personally approach and recruit team leaders and participants as they made themselves available. Delegating responsibility is a part of the planning process. The long project training time made me realize that I needed help to closely oversee the work being done in the small groups. This help was in addition to the team leaders. I learned a great deal, especially in the area of leadership. I realized that others in the church also wanted to be part of an evangelistic team. I also learned that vision and planning need to be shared with others in order to receive better cooperation and support. Struggles are manageable if they are shared by all and victories are sweeter if achieved together.

**Conclusion**

Although the design for the training was quite long, the people pleasantly remained faithful. The training was completed with the support and blessing of the church. I believe every goal of the project was sufficiently met. All enlisted members had participated in the training fully and wholeheartedly.

Long-term results are not yet known due the scope of the project. The results within the period of the training can account for 11 new converts, 8 rededications, and 5 Cambodian youth and 1 cult member returned to God’s family. Everyone is happy and celebrates when the lost are won to Christ.

Through my study at Southern Seminary and other experiences, the Holy Spirit has related to me to drop my evangelism net on the other side of the boat. The plan is for those won, to win. The effort will prayerfully grow and be multiplied by God’s grace so that no one will be able to stop it. I have also learned to be dependent on the Holy Spirit
for the results of the training. As a witness, one does not need to worry about the results but totally depend on him. In evangelism, no one is a lone ranger.

I believe that through the training participants acquired basic knowledge and necessary skills, and they could use it for the glory of God. Everyone who humbly recognized he had a need for a basic skill to work for God obtained it through the training. God prepares and uses people for his work. No amount of training, however, can compare to a passionate love for God and his people. Jesus said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it, you shall love your neighbor like yourself” (Matt 22:37-39). The apostle Paul said, “Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.” (1 Cor 13:7-8). If all Christians would be who God called them to be, they would do what God has equipped them to do.
APPENDIX 1
SESSION 1: LEADERS’S ORIENTATION,
JUNE 19, 2011

The Leaders’ Orientation

A. Opening Remarks
   A word of appreciation for all who committed their time and their energy for
   the training. In doing so, they have been away from their families to
   participate in this project.

B. Discussion of the Rationale of the Project
   The Project will:
   1. Help members to evangelize their community
   2. Help members to become life style evangelists
   3. Help members to not treat evangelism training as simply a theoretical and
      educational activity
   4. Create a radical change by helping to reverse the declining trend of
      evangelism in the congregation

C. Explanation of the Responsibilities of the Leaders
   1. Set an example of good attendance
   2. Be familiar with the project
   3. Be committed to the implementation of the project
   4. Conduct weekly small group meeting
   5. Assist respective group members
   6. Lead your group in practical evangelism

D. Clarification of the Schedule of the Seminar
   1. There will be fifteen sessions, including two orientations.
   2. The seminar will be conducted every Sunday afternoon for fifteen
      consecutive weeks.
   3. The last session will be a celebration worship service.

E. Overview of the Lesson Outlines: (Appendix 17)

F. Presentation of the Questionnaire Form
   1. The forms are to be filled out before and after the implementation of the
      project.
   2. The purpose is to measure change in the participants through the training
      and implementation of the project.
   3. The results of the surveys will guide the pastor and leaders to understand the
strengths and weaknesses of the project.
4. Their feedbacks will help the pastor evaluate his pastoral leadership and strategy of evangelism and church growth.
5. The leaders will use the results of the surveys to improve the church ministry strategy.
A. OPENING REMARKS:
A word of thanks for those who are taking part in the training and involvement in the implementation of the project.

B. Discussion of the rationale of the project (as discussed in the Leaders’ Orientation)

C. Clarification of the schedule of the training sessions (as discussed in the Leaders’ Orientation)

D. Overview of the lessons (as discussed in the Leaders’ Orientation)

E. Suggestions to overcome fear in doing evangelism

1. Undergo the training seminar
2. Group leaders will assist members.
3. Team up with another participant
4. Share the gospel first with relatives and friends

F. Presentation of the Questionnaire Form: (as discussed in the Leaders’ Orientation).
APPENDIX 3

SESSION 3: INTRODUCTION TO PERSONAL EVANGELISM, JULY 3, 2011

This training will prepare the participants to understand the importance of the ministry of evangelism. It will bring the scope of the work of evangelism into clearer focus and closer to their hearts. Evangelism is a concept which is subject to much discussion, but not much action.

A. Biblical Clues of the Meaning of Evangelism
   1. Proclamation of the gospel
   2. Making disciples
   3. Bearing witness to Jesus Christ
   4. Fishing for men
   5. Being the salt of the earth
   6. Being the light of the world
   7. Bearing fruit that remains
   8. Being the aroma of Christ
   9. The ministry of reconciliation
   10. Advertising the acts of God

B. Definition of Evangelism
   1. 1918 Anglican definition
   “To evangelize is to present Christ Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit, that men can come to put their trust in God through Him, to accept Him as their Saviour, and serve Him as their King in the fellowship of His church.”

   2. D. T. Niles’s 1951 Definition
   “Evangelism is witness. It is one beggar telling another beggar where to get food. The Christian does not offer out of his bounty. He has no bounty. He is simply guest at his Master’s table, and as evangelist, he calls others too. The evangelistic relation is to be ‘alongside of’ not ‘over against.’ The Christian stands alongside of the non-Christian and points to the Gospel,

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2Ibid., 35-44.
the holy action of God. It is not his knowledge of God that he shares, it is to God Himself that he points. The Gospel is the Word becomes flesh. This is more than the Word becomes speech.”

3. A 1977 Church Growth Definition
“A church growth definition of evangelism is “to proclaim Jesus Christ as God and Savior, to persuade people to become his disciples and responsible members of his church.”

4. The 1974 Lausanne Covenant Definition
“To evangelize is to spread the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead according to the Scriptures and that as the reigning Lord he now offers the forgiveness of sins and the liberating gift of the Spirit to all who repent and believe…. But evangelism itself is the proclamation of the historic biblical Christ as Savior and Lord, with a view to persuading people to come to him personally and to be reconciled to God.”

5. George Hunter’s 1979 Definitions
George Hunter’s three definitions
a) “Evangelism is what WE do to help make the Christian faith, life, and mission a life option to undisciplined people, both outside and inside the congregation”

b) “Evangelism is also what JESUS CHRIST does through the church’s kerygma (message), koinonia (fellowship), and diaconia (service) to set people free.” (Capital, Italic, and parenthesis original)

c) “Evangelism happens when the RECEIVER (receptor, respondent, (1) turns to Christ, (2) to the Christian message and ethic, (3) to a Christian congregation, and (4) to the world, in love and mission—in any order.” (Capital, parenthesis, and italic original)

C. The Principles of an Evangelistic Life
1. Keep your priorities straight
2. Develop consistent process
3. Make the gospel clear
4. Rely on the Holy Spirit’ power
5. Cultivate the heart for the lost people
6. Immerse yourself in the ministry
7. Nurture and assimilate new believers into the body

D. What Satan do?¹
   1. Satan would keep us distracted.
   2. He would keep us divided.
   3. He would keep us deceived.
   4. He would keep us discouraged.

E. Motive for Evangelism⁵
   6. Joyfully intoxicating
   7. The real business of life
   8. Obedience to the Great Commission
   9. The supreme challenge of this generation
  10. Pursuing lost people
  11. Shaking and shining

F. Group Discussion
   Use the following questions as a guide for group discussion
   1. According to these definitions of evangelism, which tasks are mentioned
      most often and most clearly spelled out?
   2. To consider evangelism successful what should be the outcome?

**Conclusion:** This session is not only for head knowledge, but also for the participants to
be fully prepared to do evangelism.

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APPENDIX 4

SESSION 4: BASIC REQUIREMENTS FOR PERSONAL EVANGELISM, JULY 10, 2011

In preparation for personal evangelism, one must be sure of his/her own personal salvation. One should be constantly living in close relationship with the Lord seeking his guidance and living in obedience to his will.

A. Requirement on Spiritual Level
   1. Evangelism is spiritual warfare.¹
      a) We were the battle ground.
      b) The defeat of the devil
   2. Assurance of Salvation²
      a) Regeneration experience
      b) Knowing who we are³
   3. Living a life under the lordship of Jesus Christ⁴
      a) A call to follow Christ
      b) Living a holy life (Abide in Christ)

B. Requirement on Personal Level⁵
   1. Mental, Emotional, and Physical requirement
      a) Who should evangelize?
      b) What Jesus led his disciples to do?
      c) Consequences of “severe suffering” (1 Thess 1:6)
   2. Time and work requirements

¹Dave Earley and David Wheeler, Evangelism Is ... How to Share Jesus with Passion and Confidence (Nashville: B and H Academic Publishing Group, 2010), 156-64.


a) What is the gospel?6  
   b) Study and memorize Scriptures  
   c) Compassion for the lost  

C. Formal Preparation7  
   1. Supervised preparation  
   2. Simultaneous preparation  
   3. Continuing Preparation  

D. Group Discussion8  
   1. Why are regeneration and assurance of salvation necessary for preparation?  
   2. Why living a life under the Lordship of Jesus Christ has a greater impact on personal evangelism?  
   3. How the lost senses your compassion for them?  

Conclusion: This session will revisit the new birth experience and assurance of salvation. In the processes, one may reaffirm the relationship that he or she has with the Lord and that he or she is living under his Lordship. 

6Ibid., 31-44.  
8Ibid.
APPENDIX 5

SESSION 5: STRATEGIES OF PERSONAL EVANGELISM, JULY 17, 2011

A strategy for evangelism is a tactical plan which will afford the opportunity for sharing the gospel. The strategy is a bridge for discussion so that the gospel may be shared. This training will enable participants to “open the door” to opportunities of sharing the gospel with confidence. They can trust the guidance of the Holy Spirit to work in the prospect’s heart and call him to follow Christ.

A. Different Strategies of Evangelism
   1. Proclamation evangelism
   2. Aggressive evangelism
   3. Relational evangelism
   4. Being a witness

B. Everyday Illustration: Sharing the Gospel Right Where You Are
   1. Everyday places
   2. Everyday objects
   3. Everyday situations
   4. Everyday people
   5. Everyday evangelism

C. Purposefully Praying for the Lost by Name
   1. Praying for the lost by name daily
   2. Praying for opportunities to share the gospel
   3. Asking God for a way to approach the lost
   4. Praying for boldness

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5. Praying the leadership of the Holy Spirit

D. Servant and Relational Evangelism
   1. Servant approach evangelism
   2. Relational evangelism
   3. Befriending with the unbeliever
   4. Meeting needs
   5. Declaring the gospel
   6. Encouraging the response

E. The FIRE Strategy
   1. Family
   2. Interest
   3. Religion
   4. Exploratory question transition

F. Assignment: Write your personal testimony according to following outline
   1. My Life before receiving Jesus Christ
   2. How I realized I need Jesus Christ.
   3. How I became a Christian.
   4. How Jesus Christ helps me in my daily life.

G. Planning Targeted Laotian Neighborhoods for Practical Evangelism.
   1. Make street maps available
   2. Prospect list
   3. Telephone numbers
   4. Basic information about prospects

**Conclusion:** One can be a Christian witness by simply living in a manner that others see the light, taste the salt, hear the Word, and are touched by deeds of kindness.

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APPENDIX 6

SESSION 6: THE PRACTICE OF PERSONAL EVANGELISM, JULY 24, 2011

In preparation for personal evangelism, one must be able to communicate the gospel truth. The objective of this training is to equip the participants with the following gospel presentation skills. Each participant may choose the presentation that best fits his so he can use it when the opportunity presents itself.

A. Suggested Guide Don’ts and Dos for Personal Testimony

1. List of don’ts
   a) Don’t tell more of your BC than your AD.
   b) Don’t exaggerate your testimony.
   c) Don’t focus too much on yourself or what is negative.

2. A list of dos
   a) Do seek the leadership of the Holy Spirit.
   b) Do dwell on the amazing grace of God and what he had done.
   c) Do make sure that their testimonies were brief, precise and straight to the point.

B. Leading to Personal Evangelism

1. Developing relationship
   a) Name and address
   b) Family status and personal preference
   c) Occupation or place of work

2. Removing unnecessary barriers
   a) Tearing down potential barriers (ego)
   b) Avoiding cold calls

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2Chuck Lawless, *Discipled Warriors: Growing Healthy Churches that Are Equipped for Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002), 96-98.

c) Proceeding with care

3. Witnessing with care and without fear\textsuperscript{4}
   a) Looking for an entrance
   b) Not playing Santa Claus
   c) Carrying on a conversation

C. Beginning a witnessing conversation
   1. A Window of opportunity
      a) Ask for permission
      b) Do not push for it
      c) Save the opportunity

   2. Sharing in a non-threatening way\textsuperscript{5}
      A conversation strategy F.I.R.M
      a) Family
      b) Interest
      c) Religious background
      d) Message/Personal testimony

D. Personal evangelism demonstration
   1. Witnessing card evangelism\textsuperscript{6}
      a) Everyone needs a change in life. Our sin separates us from God (Rom 3:23).
      b) The wonderful truth about God is God loves us even though we are sinners (John 3:16).
      c) God sent his Son, Jesus, to die for our sins (John 1:14; 1 Cor 15:34).
      d) Through Jesus, God offers us forgiveness and eternal life (Rom 6:23).
      e) God wants us to be part of His family (John 1:12).
      f) Would you like to receive God’s forgiveness and his gift of eternal life? “I have come that they may have life” (John 10:10).
      g) The Bible teaches us that we must repent (Acts 3:19).
      h) We must trust in Jesus (John 14:6).
      i) Would you like to invite Jesus into your life through a prayer?

\textsuperscript{4}Ibid., 84.


2. Good news evangelism
   a) I want to share good news of God (John 3:16).
   b) Mankind has a problem with sin (Rom 3:23).
   c) God loves us, “While we were still yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8).
   d) “But the gift of God is eternal life” (Rom 6:23).
   e) “To all who received … believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:12).
   f) Would you like to invite Jesus into your life today?

3. One verse evangelism
   Write the Scripture “For the wage of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus, our Lord” (Rom 6:23).
   a) Power point presentation
   b) Video clip presentation
   c) Encouragement and prayer

E. The task of follow up
   1. Immediate follow up
      a) Encouraging for decision
      b) Providing guidance to maturity
      c) Referring to a Bible believing church
   
   2. Continually pray for the lost by name
      a) Pray for the prospect daily
      b) Pray for another opportunity
      c) Mail a “thank-you” card

F. Assignment and Team Practice
   1. Evangelism is a team effort.
      a) Take turn practicing witnessing skill with team member or watch video clip with their own team or friends
      b) Practice it with team members or respective spouse.

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8“One-Verse Video Clips Presentation of One-Verse Evangelism” [on-line]; accessed on 25 May 2011; available from www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wca3BiW3gro; Internet.


10Bechtle, Evangelism for the Rest of Us, 59.
c) Practice with their team members or friends before the next session

2. Evangelism team assignment
   a) Specific job per team member
   b) Visitation form and instruction
   c) Street maps and prospect list

**Conclusion:** This session is to focus on developing skills for participants to witness about Jesus Christ. The participants will also have opportunities to practice their skills witnessing with a teammate and with other team members. After the training, participants may need to continue to practice on their own and with family members until they feel comfortable sharing the gospel with others.
APPENDIX 7
SESSION 7: SHARING THE GOSPEL WITH BELIEVERS OF DIFFERENT RELIGIONS PART 1,
JULY 31, 2011

One of the objectives of this seminar is to prepare the participants to confidently share the Good News with people with different belief systems or faiths. A small segment of the Laotian population is of Catholic. Other Laotians have been converted to Mormonism and Jehovah’s Witnesses when they arrived in the United States. To share the gospel effectively among believers of these faiths, evangelists need to know the basic beliefs of the people in order to be able to share the gospel with them.

I. Roman Catholicism (RC)¹

Even though most Laotian Roman Catholicism is not active, they have a strong tie to their churches and their faith by cultural heritage.

A. Barriers:
   1. Personal and family ties to the Roman Catholic Church
   2. Works, moral living, and observing sacraments are essential for salvation.
   3. The Roman Catholic church is the only true universal church.
   4. Mary, sinless mother of God.
   5. Many Roman Catholics do not hold their beliefs strongly.
   6. Roman Catholics believe evangelical churches are too rigid.
   7. Roman Catholics accept biblical authority but believe that pope and church tradition are as authoritative as the Bible.

B. Bridges:
   1. Most Roman Catholics believe in the essential doctrines of evangelical Christianity.
   2. Roman Catholic and evangelical churches share common concerns.
   3. They both focus on the need for relationship with God.
   4. Developing a relationship with Roman Catholic believers is a way to share your faith.
   5. Developing a witnessing strategy based on the gospel: salvation through grace by faith.

II. Mormonism (LDS)\(^2\)

Believers of Mormonism or Latter Day Saints (LDS) believe they are Christians. They have been baptized and are a member of a LDS church. They do not feel that they have a need to receive Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

A. Barriers:
1. LDSs consider themselves Christians.
2. They do not know that their beliefs are radically different than Scriptures.
3. LDSs consider their church is the only true church.
4. LDSs believe the Bible has been corrupted.
5. LDSs believe a high moral standard is necessary for salvation.

B. Bridges:
1. LDSs and evangelicals share common moral and family values.
2. LDSs are active in the social and political arena.
3. Most LDSs do not see a difference between LDS teaching and fundamental Christian beliefs.
4. LDSs often go door to door witnessing. This is an opportunity to share the gospel with them.
5. An evangelist should be sensitive and follow the Holy Spirit’s guidance.

III. Jehovah’s Witnesses (JW)\(^3\)

Jehovah’s Witnesses are somewhat isolated. They tend to interact socially only with people within their faith. They normally do not accept any other materials to read and study.

A. Barriers:
1. JWs believers have been indoctrinated in the beliefs of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society.
2. JWs regard their Bible (New World Translation) as the only valid one.
3. JWs will not accept reading or studying non-JW materials.
4. JWs tend to avoid social interaction with non-JW people.
5. JWs deny the Christian doctrine of truth holy trinity and deity of Jesus Christ.
6. JWs do not celebrate patriotic and religious holidays.

B. Bridges:
1. JWs acknowledge the authority of the Bible (good starting point).

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\(^2\)Ibid.

\(^3\)Ibid.
2. Building relationships with JWs is difficult, but possible.
3. Do not ridicule JWs because they do not salute the flag or celebrate national holidays. Use it as an opportunity.
4. JWs come to an evangelical’s house, Christian has the
5. Opportunity to share biblical truth with them. Be adequately prepared.

IV. Break Out for Group Discussion with the Guided questions

1. What will be the most appropriate way for bridging a relationship with one from another faith?
2. With an understanding of the barriers and bridges learned from the training, how can one best bridge a friendship to open the way for sharing the gospel with non-Christian?
3. Which methods may offend the prospect and end a conversation unduly? How can we avoid such experiences?

Conclusion: Winning a person to Christ may take time with many visits to the prospects’ home. The evangelist should always remain calm and avoid any argumentative conversation to be able to show love and concern with them. The evangelist needs to continually seek God’s leadership. He should be aware of the presence of the Holy Spirit and listen to his voice. He will guide in the appropriate steps to take to reach lost friends.
APPENDIX 8

SESSION 8: SHARING THE GOSPEL WITH BELIEVERS
OF DIFFERENT RELIGIONS PART 2,
AUGUST 7, 2011

One of the objectives of this training is for participants to clearly understand Hinduism, Buddhism and Spiritism and to be able to lead adherents to Christ. The majority of Buddha’s teaching is not contradictory to Christianity; rather, it points the way to Christ. This lesson will teach differences and show similarities between the teachings of Buddha and Christ that evangelists can use for effective witnessing.

I. Hinduism

A. Hinduism is a form of pantheism (many gods religion) 3000 B. C.
   1. Sacred writings of Hinduism: the Vedas, the Upanishads, and the Bhagavad Gita
   2. Hinduism is a sect of tradition and culture.
   3. Hinduism practices in daily life.

B. The Gods of Hinduism
   1. Brahman is the chief among many others gods.
   2. Brahma Hindu gods include Vishnu, Shiva, and Krishna.
   3. A Brahmin is a Hindu priest.
   4. A Hindu god is in everything.
   5. A Hindu believes in the law of karma, the law of sin.

C. Salvation in Hinduism
   1. Salvation is never mentioned in Hinduism.
   2. Hinduism teaches there are many souls in a human life.
   3. The worship of Hindu gods is the Hindu’s hope to find prosperity, happiness, and fame in this life only.
   4. The hope to reincarnate into Brahman is to be born into a better state of life.\(^2\)

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II. Buddhism

A. Origin of Buddhism 560 B.C.
1. Gautama in search for a way out of suffering
2. Enlightenment of four noble truths and an eight fold path
3. Know the source of Tuk, suffering
4. The origin of Tuk, suffering
5. Find a way to escape from Tuk, suffering

B. General beliefs of Buddhist
1. Heaven and hell
2. Barb or Kam, sin or result of sin, cycle of suffering
3. Reincarnation, main part of the suffering cycle
4. Rules and Good works by man
5. Attain Niravana, a state of nothingness, a way out of suffering

C. Barriers
1. Buddhism is a good religion.
2. It provides a path to escape from suffering.
3. Self-practicing is the way out of suffering.
4. One focuses on the end, Nirvana.
5. Buddhism is a set of practice not a set of answers.
6. To obtain the goal is man’s effort.

D. Bridges
1. Mankind is part of the cause of suffering because of sin.
2. Buddha was enlightened with four noble truths and an eight fold path for life.
   a) Tuk or tukka, suffering
   b) Samuthai or samuthaya
      i) Karm or gum, origin of suffering which is karm or Gum, he Bible calls it sin (Rom 6:23; 7:14-17).
      ii) Kilead tanha “I cannot do good what I wish to do. I do what I do not want to do because the evil is in me. I am slave to sin,” known as lop, krod, long (Rom 7:18-23).
      iii) Sin is a trap (Rom 7:24-25).

3 Braswell, Jr. Understanding World Religions, 45.
4 Cioccolanti, From Buddha to Jesus, 36.
5 Ibid., 49.
c) Nirod or nirodha, the end of suffering is attainable. The goal of life is to escape the law of karm or karma, sin. But Jesus says, “Come to me” (Matt 11:28).

d) Mak or moksa (The way to escape)

3. Buddha developed rules to curb karma, sin of the human flesh:
   a) Five basic rules, sin ha, for general Buddhist believers
   b) Eight basic rules for special occasions
   c) Ten basic rules for novices
   d) Two hundred twenty seven rules for Buddhist monks and three hundred eleven for bhikuni, Buddhist women monks or yellow rope nuns.
   e) Buddhism has similar commandments to those Moses gave to the Jews.

D. The Purpose of Gautama
1. Buddhist believers work for Niravana (the state of nothingness).  
2. In nothingness there is no pain and suffering; neither hope nor life.
3. To achieve Nirvana one needs to be a Buddhist monk. Not everyone can be a Buddhist monk.
4. The way of Gautama crossing over the cycle of karma, sin, to Nirvana.
5. The teaching of incarnation of Buddha “a story of Asoka Maharaj”

E. The Purpose of God
1. To save man from death to life through Jesus
2. To give joy and hope to every man
3. To give man the gift of eternal life (John 3:16) because Jesus said “I am the way, the truth and the life” (John 14:6).

III. Spiritism or Ancestor’s Worshiper
A. Barriers
1. The spiritism teaches that the spirits of ancestors are alive and well.
2. To stop the worship of spirits is an act of disobedience against parents and grand-parents which could lead to a death in the family.
3. Spirit worship was a part of culture and heritage practiced long before

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6Ibid., 117-18. The explanation for the word Nirvana means go out of existence which is found on notes 89, or the word Nippan means cessation of existence found on note 91 of the book.

7Ibid., 137.

8Ibid., 130-34.

9Ibid., 119.
the existence of Buddhism.
4. Well being of the family and richness of life are reward from ancestors.

B. Bridges
1. No teaching of tomorrow
2. No salvation
3. All rites of spirit worship are for today’s living.
4. Spirit power is subordinate of the Holy Spirit.¹⁰

IV. Group Discussion
Form small groups for discussion of the following questions.
1. What appropriate approach can one use to discuss the similarities and differences between Buddhist and Christian beliefs?
2. What are some suggestions of ways to communicate truth without undue tension?
3. How can one respectfully share the gospel with love?

Conclusion: Participants will understand more clearly the teaching of Buddha which can point the way to Christ. They can use this teaching to lead their Buddhist friends to Christ. However, the evangelist should always avoid being argumentative. They should always seek to nurture relationship and earn a right to talk another time.

¹⁰Helen Sawyer, telephone interview by author, May 22, 2012.
APPENDIX 9

SESSION 9: DISCIPLESHIP AND CHURCH GROWTH, AUGUST 14, 2011

The Lord's mandates to his church ring loud and clear: "Make Disciples." What is a disciple? What is the process by which one becomes a disciple? What are the characteristics of a disciple?1

A. Definitions of Discipleship

1. Discipleship a way of life2
"Christian discipleship is developing a personal, life long, obedient relationship with Jesus Christ in which he transform your character into Christlikeness; changes your values into Kingdom values; and involves you in his mission in the home, the church, and the world."

2. A disciple is a follower of Jesus.3
"A disciple of Jesus is one who has come to Jesus for eternal life, has claimed Jesus as Savior and God, and has embarked upon the life of following Jesus."

3. A disciple is a student who learns from his teacher.4
"The word disciple refers to a student or apprentice. Disciples in Jesus’ day would follow their rabbi (which means teacher) wherever he went, learning from the rabbi’s teaching and being trained to do as the rabbi did."

4. A disciple is...5


3Michael J. Wilkins, Following the Master (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 40.


5Arn and Arn, The Master's Plan, 27.
a) A disciple is a believer. How does one become a believer? (John 11:25-26; Acts 16:30-31).

b) A disciple is a follower. How does one become a follower? (Matt 16:24; John 13:15).

c) A disciple is a learner. What are the marks of a learner? (John 8:31-32; 2 Tim 2:15).

d) A disciple is a witness. To what does she or he witness? (Mark 5:18-19; 1 Peter 3:15).


f) A disciple is a reproducer. What is a disciple to reproduce? (Matt 28:19; John 15:8).

B. Standards of Jesus’ Discipleship

1. Remain obediently faithful and fruitful
"If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples" (John 15:7-8).

2. Commit to Jesus’ teaching
To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples" (John 13:34).

3. Love one another
"A new commandment I give you: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another" (John 13:34-35).

4. Christ first before his ownself and family
"If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and his children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26).

5. Self-denial and cross-bearing daily
"If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matt 16:24).

6. Leaving all things behind
"So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions" (Luke 14:33).

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7. Steadfastness
"If you continue in my Word, then you are truly disciples of Mine" (John 8:31).

C. Guided Question for Discussion
1. According to these definitions of discipleship, which action words are mentioned most often and most clearly spelled out?
2. According to these biblical clues, what does the disciple do and become?
3. To consider a discipleship successful, what should the outcome be?

**Conclusion:** “Having come to some understanding of what it means, and thus ‘having counted the cost,’ the disciples of Christ desire above all else to be like him. Thus, ‘It is enough for the disciple that he become [SIC] like his teacher’ (Matt 6:40). The disciple is one who, intent upon becoming Christlike and so dwelling in his ‘faith and practices,’ systematically and progressively rearranges his affairs to that end.”

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Discipleship is learning to follower Jesus Christ. The new pupil will learn to please to the Master. “Take my yoke upon you and learn from Me” (Matt 11:29). "Discipleship is not a program, but the process of becoming Christlike as we follow him.”

A. Committed to Grow: The Call to Follow Christ

1. Basic salvation assurance
   a) Chosen by Christ
   b) The message of forgiveness
   c) Redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ
   d) Saved by grace of God and by faith
   e) The new nature
   f) No longer “I live but Christ lives in me.”

2. Six disciplines for Living a new life
   a) Abide in Christ
   b) Live in the Word
   c) Pray in faith
   d) Fellowship with believers
   e) Witness to the world
   f) Minister to others

B. Evangelism and Discipleship “Both/And,” Not “Either/Or”

Committed to Know: The Ministry of Assimilation in a local Church

1. Becoming a part of a Bible teaching body of Christ
2. Taking part in a ministering team in a local church
3. Experiencing fellowship
4. Serving with God's gifts

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1Dennis Rogers, *Healthy Kingdom Discipleship* (Duluth, GA: Georgia Baptist Convention, 2004), 20.


5. Witnessing to the world

C. Committed to Glow: Ministry of a Local Church

1. Principles of making disciples
   a) “Take my yoke upon you and learn from Me” (Matt 11:29).
   b) Focusing on networks of relationships
   c) Becoming a vessel of love and caring
   d) Responding to each and everyone
   e) Keeping the church as the center for evangelism and discipleship.
   f) Accepting one another as they are

2. Church partners in the discipleship making process
   a) Church-centered discipleship making
   b) The church instills and equips members for "Great Commission conscience."
   c) The church helps members reach their extended families.
   d) The church provides motivation, encouragement, and accountability.
   e) The church meets extended family members' needs.
   f) The church administers the disciple-making process.
   g) The church's "potential congregation"

D. Guided Questions for Small Groups
   1. What was the original place of the called and what he was called into?
   2. What were the parts in the church’s ministry the called can be a part of? Are those parts functioning like they suppose to according the scope and purpose of the Master?
   3. What should the called do to cooperate with God for his purpose?

Conclusion: “Evangelism that results in ‘free floating converts’ with no visible commitment to a local church is ineffective evangelism. Effective evangelism is the Great Commission evangelism of Matthew 28:19, evangelism that makes disciples. And disciples are clearly committed followers of Jesus Christ, followers whose commitments are always manifest through the ministry of a local church.”

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5 Ibid., 121.

6 Rainer, Effective Evangelistic Churches, 169.
APPENDIX 11
SESSION 11: FELLOWSHIP AND CHURCH GROWTH, AUGUST 28, 2011

The entire presentation was taken from Sam Reyes Evangelista, “D.Min Project”1

The informality experienced in genuine fellowship creates an environment conducive for an effective and productive discipleship ministry. In such a culture people are more comfortable and transparent with one another. They more easily share their respective challenges and struggles of life.

A. Fellowship Defined

“Fellowship means ‘sharing in, partaking in, something or someone.’ In this context we should understand the implied object to be God. God was present, and the whole community shared in his Spirit. Despite their differences and difficulties (cf Acts 5:1-11; 6:1-7; 11:1-18; 15:1-21), this common bond held them together.’ This is the beginning of the kind of fellowship that eliminate social barriers, provide practical togetherness in building up the church, demonstrate immediate concern for the needs of the community, illustrate to the world the kind of compassion and deliverance that God offers for humanity and exercise those ‘one anothers’ that became the heart of the functional church.”2

B. The Biblical Basis of Fellowship (1 John 1:1-7)

1. Believe in the same God.

“That which was from beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our lives, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the word of life” (v. 1).

2. Proclaim the same message.

“We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us” (v. 3a).

3. Walk in the light.


2Micheal J. Wilkins, Following the Master, A Biblical Theology of Discipleship (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 275-76.
“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship in one another…” (v. 7a).

4. Purified by his blood.
   “And the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies from all sin” (v. 7b).

C. The Early Believers’ Fellowship
   1. They were committed to the Scriptures.
      “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching …” (Acts 2:42a).

   2. They were committed to one another.
      “All the believers were together and had everything in common…. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple court” (Acts 2:44, 46).

   3. They were committed to prayer.
      “They devoted themselves to … prayer” (Acts 2:42c).

   4. They were committed to praise and worship.
      “Every day they continue to meet together in the temple courts… praising God and enjoying the favor of all people” (Acts 2:46, 47).

   5. They were committed to outreach (Acts 2:45-47).
      “And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47b).

D. The Functions of Fellowship in the Early Church
   1. Opportunity for mutual ministry
      “From him the whole body, joined and held together by every ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does it works” (Eph 4:16).

   2. Practiced unity and cooperation in spite of diversity
      “All the believers were one in hearts and mind. No one claimed that any of his possession was his own, but they share everything they had” (Acts 2:32).

   3. Exercised church discipline and accountability
      “When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened” (Acts 5:5).

   4. Availability for mutual support and assistance (Acts 2:44)
      “All believers were together and had everything in common” (Acts 2:44).

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5. A venue for discipleship and worship (Acts 2:42)  
“They devoted themselves for the apostles teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (Acts 2:42).

E. Characteristics of Genuine Fellowship
   1. Members’ relationship is authentic.
   2. Members experience mutuality.
   3. Members share genuine sympathy.
   4. Members readily grant mercy.

F. Group discussion
   1. How does discipleship occur in fellowship?
   2. Discuss the biblical basis for fellowship that generates discipleship?
   3. What can you contribute to a fellowship that leads to discipleship?

Conclusion: “Disciple-makers will do well to avail themselves of the effectiveness of discipleship in fellowship when people tend to be more receptive to admonition, correction, and instruction of the Word of God.”

5Rick Warren, The Purpose Driven Life (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 139-43.
Discipleship in worship brings spiritual and numerical growth to a church that practices it. Discipleship charges new converts into faithful and obedient believers. These believers will love the Lord and live their lives worshipping him.

A. New Testament Gathering: A Definition of Worship

“The Gathering (the church assembled): a time for God’s people to pray, worship, fellowship with one another, to be edified, nurtured (fed and strengthened in their faith through the preaching and teaching of the Scripture), and equipped (instructed in the way of being light and salt in the world) to live in the world while not conformed to it (not to being pressed into its mold, not being changed by it while effecting change in it).”¹ (Parenthesis original)

B. Accept the Biblical Mandate²

1. Essential nature of God
   a) God is graceful and forgiving.
   b) “Come” divine invitation of God to the lost
2. Grow the church from outside in, rather than from inside out³
   a) Move the unchurched to the crowd (for worship Service)
   b) Move them from the crowd into the congregation (for fellowship)
   c) Move them from the congregation into the committed (for discipleship)
   d) Move them from the committed into the core (for ministry)
   e) Move the core back out into the community (for evangelism)
3. Design seeker sensitive Service⁴
   a) Increase the size of your church and get more people to visit

¹Ron Owens and Jan McMurray, _Return to Worship: A God-Center for Worship_ (Nashville: B & H, 1999), 86.

²John Mark Terry, _Church Evangelism: Creating a Culture for Growth in your Congregation_ (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1997), 1.

³Rick Warren, _The Purpose Driven Life_ (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 138, emphasis original.

⁴Ibid., 251-77.
b) Plan service with target in mind
c) Make it easy to attend
d) Improve the pace and flow of service
e) Make visitors comfortable
f) Create attractive atmosphere

4. Call to worship in the sanctuary
   a) God is good and upright (Ps 25:8).
   b) He loves righteousness and justice (Ps 34:8).
   c) He is the Alpha and the Omega (Rev 1:8).
   d) He is majestic and holy (Exod 15:11; Ps 99:9; Isa 6:3).

C. The Supremacy of God in Mission through Worship
   “Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth, everyone who is called my by name, whom I created for my glory” (Isaiah 43:6-7).
   1. God’s zeal for his own glory
      a) He chose his people for his glory (Eph 1:4-6, 12, 14).
      b) He created us for his glory (Isa 43:67).
      c) He called Israel for his glory (Isa 49:3).
   2. It is possible to be distracted from God in trying to serve God.
      a) The crucial issue of the centrality of God in the church
      b) Worship is God ultimate goal (worship is the fuel and goal of mission).
      c) The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

D. Gathering of God’s People
   1. To worship
      a) Because they are people of common faith.
      b) They gather to praise one common God.
      c) They fellowship with one another.
      d) They are edified and nurtured by the Word.
   2. To prepare for the tasks
      a) Being light and salt to the world
      b) Being equipped physically, mentally, and spiritually
      c) Strengthening each other through the Word

E. Gathering to Worship through Prayer (Acts 4:23-31)
   1. They worship through prayer.
      a) They pray by adoration and praise.
      b) They pray for the common good.
      c) They pray for the Lord’s vision and purpose.
      d) They pray for boldness.

---


2. The Church after gathering in worship
   a) They are refilled.
   b) They are equipped.
   c) They are empowered by the Holy Spirit.
   d) They go back into the world.

F. The Essence of Worship
   1. The pursuit in God is not optional. It is our highest duty.
   2. Worship becomes radically God centered.
   3. Worship is an end in itself.
   4. Paul considered all of life an expression of worship.

G. God’s Plumb Line for Worship
   “The only standard or plumb line that stretches unchanged throughout history is
   the standard of God’s Word. In it we have a revelation of God’s character, who he
   is, and what he requires. There is no other goodness and righteous apart from
   him.”
   1. God’s plumb line between his people and him
      a) Their relationship to God (Love God with all your hearts)
      b) Their faith in God
      c) Their commitment to God
      d) Their love for God
   2. God’s plumb line between his people (Love your neighbor)
      a) Their relationship with one another
      b) In loving each other
      c) In their behavior with other
      d) In their commitment to each other

Conclusion: Worship that pleases God requires the consecration of our total being to His
blessed will. ‘Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your
bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of
worship’ (Rom 12:2). Worship is continuous out pouring of all that I am and all that I do
and all that I can become in light of a chosen or choosing God.”
   “Worship is not first an outward act; it is an inner spiritual treasuring of the
color of the character and the way of God in Christ. It is a cherishing of Christ, a being satisfied with
all that God is for us in Christ. When these things are missing, there is no worship, no
matter what forms or expression are present.”

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7 Piper, Let Nations Be Glad, 226-30.

8 Owens and McMurray, Return to Worship, 11.

9 Harold M. Best, Unceasing Worship: Biblical Perspectives on Worship and
   the Arts (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 18.

10 Owens and McMurray, Return to Worship, 226 - 27.
Discipleship through mentoring becomes necessary for the church to help new converts become spiritually mature and productivity. The church needs new generations of committed leaders for the work of bringing people to Christ. The more committed leaders the church produces the more people are evangelized and more people are brought into the kingdom of God.

A. Definition of Mentoring from a Biblical Perspective
1. “Mentoring God given relationship in which one growing Christian encourages and equip another believer to reach his/her potential as a disciple of Christ.”

2. “Coaching is the process of coming alongside a person or team to help them discover God’s agenda for their life and ministry, and then cooperating with the Holy Spirit to see that agenda become a reality.”

3. “Coaches come alongside to help—like Barnabas. By encouraging and challenging others, Barnabas empowered them for ministry. He may not have been in starring role, but without him many others would not have been able to accomplish the great things that they did for God.”

4. “The goal of coaching is to help someone succeed.”

B. The Ministry of Self-Multiplication
1. Realizing the need for self-multiplication
   a) Evangelizing (Mark 16:15)
   b) Establishing (Col 2:6-7)

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2 Robert E. Logan and Tara Miller, *From Followers to Leaders* (St. Charles, IL: Church Smart, 2007), 207.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

c) Equipping (Eph 4:11-12)
d) Jesus’ pattern of in depth personal training (Mark 3:14)

C. Investing in Coaching

1. Barnabas factor
   a) Realizing where I am.
   b) Where do I want to go?

2. What coaching is not
   a) Telling others what to do
   b) About authority
   c) About being an expert

3. What coaching is
   a) About relationship
   b) The Challenge of success
   c) Listening to God and responding
   d) Helping others succeed

4. Power of Relating
   a) Listening as a foundation for relationship
   b) The gift of listening
   c) Principles of asking questions
   d) Expectations

5. Power of Reflecting
   a) Where are you now? Positive and negative things
   b) Role playing
   c) What really is important?
   d) The power of questions
   e) Avoid the expert syndrome

6. Power of Refocusing
   a) Resourcing
   b) Reviewing
   c) Refocusing

Conclusion: “At the last meal with his closest friends Jesus taught them and comforted them about his going away by saying ‘The one who obeys me is the one who loves me; and because he loves me, my father will love him, and I will too, and I will reveal myself to him’ (John 14:21). Obedience would be the sign of love as love was the sign of discipleship”

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6Robert E. Logan and Sherilyn Carlton, Coaching 101: Discover the Power of Coaching (St. Charles, IL: Church Smart, 2003), 14.

APPENDIX 14
SESSION 14: DEVELOPING LEADERS AND CHURCH GROWTH, SEPTEMBER 18, 2011

A. The Need for Leadership¹
   1. The importance of selection
   2. Developing depth in life the follower
   3. Discovering vocation
   4. Building strength
   5. Training

B. Transforming Followers to Leaders²
   1. Emerging leaders are most fruitful when they realize needs.
   2. They learn best in the context of doing.
   3. Realizing what they can do.
   4. Walking along the trail
   5. Path of leading: support and guidance
   6. Replacing ourselves is the ultimate humility

C. The Path of Multiplying: Investment in Others
   1. The model of the Apostle Paul
   2. Replace yourself
   3. Multiply yourself
   4. Equip others and help them walk the trail

D. Mentoring: Beginning the Path toward Leadership
   1. Empower and develop others
   2. Listen well and ask insightful question
   3. Encourage and care for others
   4. Think clearly and strategically
   5. Continue to learn and grow


²Robert E. Logan and Tara Miller, *From Followers to Leaders* (St. Charles, IL: Church Smart, 2007), 129.
E. Where Do I Go from Here?
1. The early church capitalized on what they had, relationship.
2. Each developed a few.
3. Intentional relationship
   a) Through conversation and reflection
   b) Trusting others like a coach and teammates
4. Options for moving forward
   a) Get a guide
   b) Design your own plan
   c) Find out how to be a guide
   d) Fruit that lasts

Conclusion: “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remained in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing your selves to be my disciple…”

“You did not choose me, but I choose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. This is my command: Love each other” (John 15: 1-8, 16-17 TINV).
APPENDIX 15

SESSION 15: A CELEBRATION WORSHIP SERVICE, SEPTEMBER 25, 2011

Worship Leader: Khamsing Thammavong
Music Team Leader: Lamphay Xayavong

Prelude
Scripture Reading: John 4:35

Praise and Worship
Choruses: Shower of Blessing
Hymn: To God Be the Glory

Opening Prayer

Welcome Remarks and Announcements

Special Music
Lord, I Do Not Have but My Life To You.

Worship in Giving

Sermon:
The Power of Soul Winning
(See Appendix 16)

Invitation
Hymn: I Gave My Life for Thee

A Word of Appreciation for all Participants and Supports of the Church

Doxology

Closing Prayer and Benediction

Celebration in Fellowship
APPENDIX 16

SERMON OUTLINE, SEPTEMBER 25, 2011

The Power of Soul Winning

Biblical Text: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

   1. God’s power can change people.
      Many people have changed because of God’s power in their lives: Saul of Tarsus, Kheng, more recently Dadid Robkhob, and Bounleut Phalong.
   2. We cannot overestimate the power of God.
      a) The Day of Pentecost
      b) The reformation of Martin Luther
      c) The message of Martin Luther King Jr
      d) The Leipzig Prayer meetings of 1990’s

B. You Shall Be my Witnesses.
   1. Witnessing is showing others who you really are. That is what God’s power has made you. The gospel Matthew says, “You are salt and the light of the world” (Matt 4:13-16).
   2. According to John 15:6, “You are the branches that remained in him and will bear much fruit.” You have power to live productively because he is in you, and you are in him, Jesus. Apart from him you cannot do anything.
   3. The apostle Paul said “You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody” (2 Co 3:2). Everyday you live, every place you go, everything that you do, and every movement of your life, people see your new life. They see Christ in you. You have God’s power that enables you to live as his witness.
   4. The Apostle Paul said “We are Christ’s ambassadors” (2 Co 5:20). We are taking the message of reconciliation to the world.
   5. Lastly, we are to obediently live as called, “to be fishers of men” (Matt 4:19).
C. “You Will Be My Witnesses in Jerusalem”

1. Where is our Jerusalem? We are to be witnesses where we live – to our families, friends, co-workers, and neighbors.

2. Where is our Judea and Samaria? We are also to be witness to people who are strangers to us in communities, our cities, state, and country.

3. Where are the ends of the earth? The ends of the earth are the countries of the World and all the people groups of the earth.

Conclusion: We have the greatest power in the world. We can overcome any obstacle or barrier whether geographical, social, cultural, or personal differences. We have the power to overcome hostility. We have the power to overcome ridicule. We have the power to overcome fear.

The World Needs to Know Jesus. The world lives in darkness. If Christ is in you then you have the power to be the light in the darkness. Jesus said to all people, “Come to Me, all who are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt 11:28).

If one is fellow workers, God’s field, and God’s building. One must take the message of reconciliation to the world. The world needs to know the name of Jesus. If one is God’s field, one needs to continue producing fruit. If one is the building in which God dwells, one’s life should reflect God’s caring love for the world.
APPENDIX 17

OUTLINE OF TRAINING SESSIONS

A. Orientation to the Implementation of the Project

SESSION 1: Team Leaders’ Orientation, June 19, 2011

AM Celebration Worship Service
Celebration Worship Sermon

SESSION 2: Participants’ Orientation, June 26, 2011

B. Personal Evangelism and Church Growth Training

SESSION 3: Introduction to Personal Evangelism, July 3, 2011
SESSION 4: Basic Requirements for Personal Evangelism, July 10, 2011
SESSION 5: Strategy for Personal Evangelism, July 17, 2011
SESSION 6: Practical of Personal Evangelism, July 24, 2011
SESSION 7: Sharing the Gospel with Believers of different Religions Part 1, July 31, 2011
SESSION 8: Sharing the Gospel with Believers of Different Religions Part 2, August 7, 2011

C. Church Ministry and Church Growth

SESSION 9: Discipleship and Church Growth, August 14, 2011
SESSION 10: Ministry and Church Growth, August 21, 2011
SESSION 11: Fellowship and Church Growth, August 28, 2011
SESSION 12: Worship and Church Growth, September 4, 2011
SESSION 13: Mentoring and Church Growth, September 11, 2011
SESSION 14: Developing Leaders and Church Growth, September 18, 2011
SESSION 15: Celebration of the Completion of the Project
Worship Service, September 25, 2011
APPENDIX 18

A CELEBRATION IN WORSHIP,
JUNE 19, 2011

Worship Leader: Saly Soulack
Music Team Leader: Lamphay Xayavong

Prelude
Scripture Reading: John 4:35

Praise and Worship
cxChoruses: The Little Panther
Hymn: How Great Thou Art

Opening Prayer

Welcoming Remarks and Announcements

Special Music
Lord, I Am Listening

Worship in Giving

Sermon:
“The Field Are White for Harvest” (John 4:35).

Invitation
Hymn: I Have Overcome

Doxology

Closing Prayer and Benediction

Celebration in Fellowship
APPENDIX 19

SERMON OUTLINE, JUNE 19, 2011

The Call for the Great Harvest

Biblical Text: “Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, then comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, and that they are white for harvest” (John 4:35).

Introduction: Evangelism is our response to the critical needs of the human spiritual condition. The fields are ready as Jesus pointed out. The only thing we have to do is look.

I. The Call to See the Need for the Harvest
   A. The call to lift up your eyes
      1. We see what we want to see.
         With untrained eyes, we see things we would like to see.
      2. Training enables us to see what we need to see.
         With training, we will be able to see in a way that Jesus wants us to see.
      3. Sensitive eyes see what blind and untrained eyes cannot see.
   B. Looking Around Will Surprise You
      1. The fields were ready for the harvest.
      2. The grain of unharvested field will perish.
      3. The one who harvests will gain the reward.

II. The Urgency of the Harvest (Matt 9:35-36)
   A. Jesus saw the multitudes with compassion.
      1. The multitudes were distressed and downcast.
      2. They were like sheep without a shepherd.
      3. The field is ready for harvest.
   B. The harvest is plentiful (Matt 9:37-38).
      1. He saw the need for more workers.
      2. He asked for us to pray.
      3. We need to ask the Lord for more workers.

III. Marching Order for the Harvest (Matt 10:1, 7)
   A. Instruction order
1. Jesus summoned his disciples.
2. He empowered them with authority.

B. Marching order
1. Go to the lost sheep of Israel
2. Preach the Kingdom

**Conclusion:** To live an obedient life to the Lord Jesus we need to have passion for the lost and dying world. Jesus saw a world full of disease and sickness. The people of the world are distressed and downcast because they do not know the shepherd, Jesus. They live their lives full of frustration and hopelessness. Jesus was and is in need of workers. He calls you and me to work with him to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom of heaven.
APPENDIX 20

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS QUESTIONNAIRE
PRE AND POST-PROJECT EVALUATION,
JUNE 19 AND SEPTEMBER 25, 2011

Agreement to participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to assist the pastor of Oliver Grove Laotian Baptist Church in developing a strategy that will help our congregation understand the necessity for evangelism and growth of the church. Pastor Oudone Thirakoune is conducting this research for the purpose of fulfilling the required Doctor of Ministry research project at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. This research will also equip him and the congregation to have a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the project, and to strategize and implement an evangelism and church growth ministry.

Any information you give will be strictly confidential. At no time will your name be disclosed, or your name be associated with your responses. *Your participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time.* By your completion of this interview process, and signing your name below, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Name: _________________________________________________

Signature: ________________________________________________

Date: _____________________________

Please provide the last four digits of your telephone number. This number is used for questionnaire identification only so that you may answer questions with complete anonymity. The last four digits of your telephone number: ____________.

In this questionnaire you will be asked about your beliefs and your understanding of evangelism and church growth. Please read each question carefully and respond according to your conviction by circling your choice. There is no “right” or “wrong” answer for each question.

SA = Strongly Agree  A = Agree  U = Undecided  D = Disagree  SD = Strongly Disagree

1. I believe in evangelism and that every Christian should be involved.

   SA   A   U   D   SD
2. I feel uncomfortable telling other people about Jesus.

SA    A    U    D    SD

3. The reason I do not go out and share the gospel is because:

a. I am afraid of what others might think of me.    SA    A    U    D    SD
b. I do not know where to begin or how to share.    SA    A    U    D    SD
c. I am too busy to share the Lord with others.    SA    A    U    D    SD
d. I believe it is not my responsibility.    SA    A    U    D    SD
e. I believe that I need to leave people alone.    SA    A    U    D    SD

4. I believe that people who do not know Jesus Christ will spend eternity in hell.

SA    A    U    D    SD

5. I believe that the Bible is completely accurate and the true Word of God.

SA    A    U    D    SD

6. I believe that salvation is available only through Jesus Christ.

SA    A    U    D    SD

7. I believe hell is a real place of eternal death with absolutely no hope for life.

SA    A    U    D    SD

8. As a Christian, I am concerned for the destiny of those who are lost in a dying world.

SA    A    U    D    SD

9. Jesus loves me and he calls me and my church for a commitment to evangelize.

SA    A    U    D    SD

10. I believe that the primary function of my church, Oliver Grove Laotian Baptist Church is:

a. To evangelize the local community especially the Laotians for Jesus Christ.

SA    A    U    D    SD

b. To only provide ministry service to those believers who come to church.

SA    A    U    D    SD

c. To cooperate with a body of believers in advancing the cause of Jesus Christ in “witnessing to the ends of the world.”

SA    A    U    D    SD

In the following questions, please circle the answer that is true to you and your circumstance.
11. Have you ever gone through an evangelism training before, such as:
   A. One Day Soul Winning Training   Yes     No
   B. Continuing Witness Training    Yes     No
   C. Marked Bible Evangelism Training Yes     No
   D. Other Evangelism Training      Yes     No

12. Do you think most people do not go out to evangelize because they do not understand:
   A. the Biblical mandate    Yes     No
   B. lack of self confidence  Yes     No

13. Do you think evangelism training can help equip you with a skill for evangelism?
    Yes     No

14. What do you understand exactly about evangelism? Please circle only one answer.
    Evangelism is:
    A. telling about the Bible story to people and asking the people whether it is true.
    B. sharing the Good News of Jesus and inviting the hearer to response to the message.
    C. telling people about Christianity and asking them to become one of us.
    D. telling people about the miracles Jesus did and asking them to believe in them.

15. According to you, what does it really means to be saved? Please circle only one.
    To be saved is:
    A. to believe in Christianity.
    B. to go to church every Sunday and pray to God.
    C. to believe and receive Jesus as Lord and Savior of my life.
    D. to believe that baptism is washing away your sins.

The following statements, please circle a number which represents your true understanding on each particular issue (1 weakest to 10 strongest).

16. I believe that I can be part of my church witnessing team in an effort to assist the church in fulfilling God’s calling.
   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

17. I believe that, with my ability, I can help other church members to become effective witnesses for the Lord Jesus Christ.
   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10
18. I believe that my church should prioritize its obligation to evangelize its community.

1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

19. I believe that all of church members of all age levels should support and be involved in the church evangelistic programs.

1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

20. I rate my level of commitment in personal witnessing and evangelizing the world.

1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

21. I rate my personal skill of witnessing and evangelizing the world to Jesus Christ.

1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

22. Do you know the historical background of your church, Oliver Grove Laotian Baptist Church?
   Yes           No

23. Do you know the biblical and theological rational for your church work?
   Yes           No

24. Do you personally participate in your church work?
   Yes           No

A. If you answer “Yes,” circle the ministry that interests you the most.

1) Teaching ministry  4) Prayer ministry  7) Children’s ministry
2) Youth ministry   5) Mission ministry  8) Building and grounds
3) Visitation ministry  6) Committee member  9) WMU ministry

B. If No, any reason why are you not involved? (Circle one)

1) I am not aware of the opportunity.  2) I am not available.

3) I am not interested.  4) Other, please specify __________

25. According to your understanding, please list one to three things you would like to see your church become and briefly state the reason.

A. ___________________________ Reason ___________________________

B. ___________________________ Reason ___________________________

C. ___________________________ Reason ___________________________
How to Share Christ’s Love Conversationally and Visually

The entire presentation was taken from Randy D. Raybrook, *One Verse Evangelism*.

Many people feel that to be effective in evangelism they must memorize a complex illustration and a multitude of verses. But the Gospel is most powerful when shared with love, clarity, and simplicity. One-Verse Evangelism(r) is a simple, interactive way to share Christ's love conversationally and visually. It is based on asking questions and sharing. It's easy to learn because it uses just one verse. One-Verse Evangelism(r) is also sensitive to peoples' busy schedules because it can be shared in just 10 or 15 minutes.

Here's a brief look at how it works. Let's say God's leading you to share the Gospel with your neighbor, Jeff. Write out Romans 6:23 on a piece of paper or a napkin: "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (NIV). Then put your Bible away. Ask Jeff if he would like to see a simple picture based on this verse that will explain God's relationship with people.

**Wages**

Circle this word and ask, "How would you feel if your boss refused to pay you the wages that were due to you?" Deep down, we all know that it is only right that we get what we deserve. Similarly, we earn wages from God for how we have lived our lives.

**Sin**

Draw a circle around "sin," asking your friend what he thinks when he hears this word. You might explain that sin is more an attitude than an action. It can be either actively fighting God or merely excluding Him from our lives. You can ask, "Has God ever seemed far away?" If he says "Yes," add that that's one of the things sin does—it makes God seem far away. Now draw two opposing cliffs with a gap in between.

**Death**

Circle this word and ask what thoughts come to mind. Explain that death in the Bible always means some kind of separation.

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While circling this word, mention that it is important because it means that a sharp contrast in thought is coming. What we have just looked at is bad news; what follows is good news.

Draw a circle around this word. Ask, "If wages are what a person earns, then what is a gift?" Remind your friend that someone must purchase every gift.

Circle this and explain that the gift you are talking about is free. It is from God Himself. It's so special that no one else can give it. Ask, "How do you feel when someone gives you a special gift?"

Circle these two words next, and then ask, "How would you define these words?" Contrast one side of the cliff, death, with the other side, eternal life. Ask, "What is the opposite of separation from God?"

Draw these words so they create a bridge between the two cliffs. Help your friend to consider that every gift has a giver, and only Jesus Christ can give the gift of eternal life.

Write this word over the bridge you just drew. Explain that friends trust each other, and tell your friend that Jesus wants a trusting friendship with him. All he has to do is admit that he is responsible for the "sin" of either fighting or excluding God from his life. That is what trust means—trusting that Jesus wants to forgive us for rejecting Him from our lives. At this point, you can ask him if he wants to start a relationship with God that will last forever. If he says "Yes," invite him to pray a short prayer in his own words, asking Jesus to forgive him.

Close by reminding him that this simple illustration shows what God is like: Someone who really cares about people, especially him. Invite him to read all about it in the Bible, perhaps beginning in the gospel of John.
APPENDIX 22

PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST EVALUATION,
JUNE 19 AND SEPTEMBER 25, 2011

Data from Post-Test and Pre-Test

In this questionnaire you will be asked about your beliefs and your understanding of evangelism and church growth. Please read each question carefully and respond according to your conviction by circling your choice. There is no “right” or “wrong” answer for each question.

SA = Strongly Agree  A = Agree  U = Undecided  D = Disagree  SD = Strongly Disagree

1. I believe in evangelism and that every Christian should be involved.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRE-TEST</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A = 3</td>
<td>U = 8</td>
<td>D = 5</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POST-TEST</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A = 8</td>
<td>U = 4</td>
<td>D = 2</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. I feel uncomfortable telling other people about Jesus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRE-TEST</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
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<td>A = 7</td>
<td>U = 9</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. The reason I do not go out and share the gospel is because:

   a. I am afraid of what others might think of me.

      | PRE-TEST | SA | A | U | D | SD |
      |----------|----|---|---|---|----|
      |          | A = 8 | U = 7 | D | SD |
      | POST-TEST| SA | A = 2 | U = 5 | D = 5 | SD |

   b. I do not know where to begin or how to share.

      | PRE-TEST | SA | A | U | D | SD |
      |----------|----|---|---|---|----|
      |          | A = 14 | U = 12 | D | SD |
      | POST-TEST| SA | A = 4 | U = 9 | D | SD |

   c. I am too busy to share the Lord with others?

      | PRE-TEST | SA | A | U | D | SD |
      |----------|----|---|---|---|----|
      |          | A = 15 | U = 9 | D | SD |
      | POST-TEST| SA | A = 4 | U = 2 | D = 10 | SD |

   d. I believe it is not my responsibility.

      | PRE-TEST | SA | A | U | D | SD |
      |----------|----|---|---|---|----|
      |          | A = 7 | U = 11 | D = 5 | SD |
      | POST-TEST| SA | A | U = 6 | D = 16 | SD |

   e. I believe that I need to leave people alone.
4. I believe that people who do not know Jesus Christ will spend eternity in hell.

PRE-TEST    SA    A=12    U=9    D    SD
POST-TEST    SA    A    U=7    D=9    SD

5. I believe that the Bible is completely accurate and the true Word of God.

PRE-TEST    SA    A=5    U=12    D=6    SD
POST-TEST    SA    A=17    U=6    D    SD

6. I believe that salvation is available only through Jesus Christ.

PRE-TEST    SA    A=13    U=9    D    SD
POST-TEST    SA    A=16    U=4    D    SD

7. I believe hell is a real place of eternal death with absolutely no hope for life.

PRE-TEST    SA    A=7    U=6    D    SD
POST-TEST    SA    A=14    U=2    D    SD

8. As a Christian, I am concerned for the destiny of those who are lost in a dying world.

PRE-TEST    SA    A=6    U=8    D    SD
POST-TEST    SA    A=15    U=4    D    SD

9. Jesus loves me and he calls me and my church for a commitment to evangelize.

PRE-TEST    SA    A=9    U=12    D    SD
POST-TEST    SA    A=15    U=4    D    SD

10. I believe that the primary function of my church, Oliver Grove Laotian Baptist Church is:

   a. To evangelize the local community especially the Laotians for Jesus Christ.

       PRETEST    SA    A=6    U=11    D    SD
       POSTTEST   SA    A=15    U=3    D    SD

   b. To only provide ministry service to those believers who come to church.

       PRETEST    SA    A=15    U=9    D    SD
       POSTTEST   SA    A=2    U=6    D12    SD

   c. To cooperate with a body of believers in advancing the cause of Jesus Christ in “witnessing to the ends of the world.”

       PRETEST    SA    A=3    U=8    D=5    SD
In the following questions, please circle the answer that is true to you and your circumstance.

11. Have you ever gone through an evangelism training before, such as:
   A. One Day Soul Winning Training         Yes =5   No=9
   B. Continuing Witness Training           Yes =4   No=12
   C. Marked Bible Evangelism Training      Yes   No
   D. Other Evangelism Training             Yes =12  No=7

12. Do you think most people do not go out to evangelize because they do not understand:

   A. the Biblical mandate                   Yes=6   No=9   Yes=12  No=4
   B. lack of self confidence                Yes=3   No=8   Yes=17  No=4

13. Do you think evangelism training can help equip you with a skill for evangelism?

   Pre-Project                               Post-Project
   Yes=6  No=14  Yes=19  No=2

14. What do you understand exactly about evangelism? Please circle only one answer.

   Evangelism is:

   A. telling about the Bible story to people and asking the people whether it is true.
      PRE-TEST  6
      POST-TEST 1

   B. sharing the Good News of Jesus and inviting the hearer to response to the message.
      PRE-TEST  6
      POST-TEST 16

   C. telling people about Christianity and asking them to become one of us.
      PRE-TEST  10
      POST-TEST  2

   D. telling people about the miracles Jesus did and asking them to believe in them.
      PRE-TEST  14
      POST-TEST  2

15. According to you, what does it really mean to be saved? Please circle only one.

   To be saved is:
A. to believe in Christianity. 15 1
B. to go to church every Sunday and pray to God. 10 2
C. to believe and receive Jesus as Lord and Savior of my life. 9 17
D. to believe that baptism is washing away your sins. 4 0

The following statements, please circle a number which represents your true understanding on each particular issue (1 weakest to 10 strongest).

16. I believe that I can be part of my church witnessing team in an effort to assist the church in fulfilling God’s calling.
   PRE-TEST 4=3 5=6 6=5
   POST-TEST 7=7 8=7 9=3

17. I believe that, with my ability, I can help other church members to become effective witnesses for the Lord Jesus Christ.
   PRE-TEST 3=3 4=4
   POST-TEST 3=3 4=4 No change

18. I believe that my church should prioritize its obligation to evangelize its community.
   PRE-TEST 2=6 3=3
   POST-TEST 6=8 7=7 8=4

19. I believe that all of church members of all age levels should support and be involved in the church evangelistic programs.
   PRE-TEST 5=4 6=5
   POST-TEST 6=5 7=8 8=6

20. I rate my level of commitment in personal witnessing and evangelizing the world.
   PRE-TEST 3=3 4=6 5=3
   POST-TEST 6=4 7=6 8=7

21. I rate my personal skill of witnessing and evangelizing the world to Jesus Christ.
   PRE-TEST 3=14 5=4
   POST-TEST 6=12 7=8

22. Do you know the historical background of your church, Oliver Grove Laotian Baptist Church?
   Yes
   No
   PRE-TEST 4 12
23. Do you know the biblical and theological rational for your church work?

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<th>Yes</th>
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<tr>
<td>PRE-TEST</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>POST-TEST</td>
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24. Do you personally participate in your church work?

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<tr>
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<td>POST-TEST</td>
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A. If you answer “Yes,” circle the ministry that interests you the most.

1) Teaching ministry  4) Prayer ministry  7) Children’s ministry
2) Youth ministry  5) Mission ministry  8) Building and grounds
3) Visitation ministry  6) Committee member  9) WMU ministry

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<td>4=6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POST-TEST</td>
<td>3=6</td>
<td>4=12</td>
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B. If No, any reason why are you not involved? (Circle one)

1) I am not aware of the opportunity.  2) I am not available.
3) I am not interested.  4) Other, please specify

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<tr>
<td>PRE-TEST</td>
<td>2=5</td>
<td>3=7</td>
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<td>POST-TEST</td>
<td>1=2</td>
<td>2=3</td>
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25. According to your understanding, please list one to three things you would like to see your church become and briefly state the reason.

A. ____________________  Reason ____________________
B. ____________________  Reason ____________________
C. ____________________  Reason ____________________

Almost all people left this question blank on both, pre and post-test.

PRE-TEST  POST-T
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**Articles**


1997.


Projects


**Electronic Resources**


ABSTRACT

IMPLEMENTING EVANGELISM AND CHURCH GROWTH AT
THE OLIVER GROVE LAOTIAN BAPTIST CHURCH,
COLLEGE PARK, GEORGIA

Oudone Thirakoune, D.Min.
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. An Van Pham

This dissertation designed an implementation of evangelism and church growth. Chapter 1 provides the ministry context of the Oliver Grove Laotian Baptist Church. It includes the purpose, goals, rationale, definitions, limitations, and research methodology.

Chapter 2 presents the biblical and theological basis for doing evangelism and church growth. The chapter presents individuals in Old and New Testaments who were involved in the work of evangelism and church growth.

Chapter 3 provides historical, cultural, and sociological foundation of the Laotian people. It underscores the importance of understanding the cultural, historical, and religious backgrounds of the Laotian people.

Chapter 4 describes the implementation of the project. The seminar covers two major topics: (1) evangelism and church growth and (2) discipleship and church growth.

Chapter 5 presents evaluation and modifications of the project for future implementation. This project affirms the increasing necessity and urgency to be equipped for evangelism in response to the deteriorating trend of the congregation evangelism.
VITA

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