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IMPLEMENTING BIBLICAL EVANGELISM METHODOLOGIES

AT FORT WORTH HARVEST CHURCH

FORT WORTH, TEXAS

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IMPLEMENTING BIBLICAL EVANGELISM METHODOLOGIES

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To my mother, Maria Ramirez,
and to my family and friends
and all those who desire to carry out faithfully
the Great Commission

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PREFACE

This project could not have been accomplished without the love, support, and prayers of godly people that the Lord has graciously placed in my life. I first wish to thank my mother, Maria Ramirez, who has covered me in prayer throughout this entire project. She has been my support, cheerleader, encourager, inspiration, and number one fan. She has always encouraged me to shoot for the stars and to remember that we serve a big and awesome God. I am eternally grateful for having the Lord give me such a wonderful and godly woman to shape me into becoming the man I am today. You truly are a Proverbs 31 woman, and I rise and call you blessed (v. 28). I love you, Mom!

I also wish to express my love and appreciation to my immediate family: Carleen, Carl, Giles, and Erica. You have such a deep place in my heart. I thank the Lord every day for each and every one of you. You all bless me in ways you do not know. Words cannot express what you mean to me. I thank you for supporting me throughout this chapter of my life and in all my ministerial endeavors. Your thoughts, insights, and points of view had a big impact on this project.

This project could not have been done without the inspiration of my late father, Alfredo Ramirez, and late sister, Renee. Dad, I am so grateful you took me along with you as a child and allowed me to see you do personal evangelism. Your love for Jesus and desire to fulfill the Great Commission has inspired me to do the same. I will never forget our talks about theology and your challenge to me to filter all my thoughts and

opinions through the Bible. Renee, thank you for being a second mother to me and raising me to show respect to all people. Your love for people has challenged me to treat everyone with respect and dignity. I look forward to one day seeing the two of you in heaven, rejoicing before our Beloved Savior and Lord.

I wish to express my gratitude to the following people: Dr. Jeff Wickwire and the late Dr. Tommy Teague, who inspired me to do the work of an evangelist while serving as a pastor and pursue a doctoral degree. I'd also like to thank Dr. Tom Law, who has taken the time to challenge me when it comes to doing evangelism, discipleship, and ministry in general. Thank you, Dr. Law, for pouring into me and helping me to think outside of the box. To the great people of Fort Worth Harvest Church who have such a dear place in my heart, thank you. This project could not have been done without your participation, love, support, and prayers.

Finally, I end this preface giving all honor, glory, and praise to Jesus, my Lord and Savior. He graciously saved me while I was still a child, and I have never known a day without his involvement in my life. I look on my life, and I can see how the Lord wonderfully directed my path. It was his grace and mercy that allowed me to complete this project, and I know he will continue to lead my path as I continue carrying out the Great Commission to the world.

Bonifacio "Barney" Ramirez

Fort Worth, Texas

December 2013

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Implementing biblical evangelism methodologies at Fort Worth Harvest Church.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to discover the evangelistic methods employed by Jesus and the New Testament church as found in the Gospels and the book of Acts and implement those principles among the laypersons of Fort Worth Harvest Church.

Goals

This project attempted to accomplish five goals. The first goal was to discover the evangelism principles utilized by Jesus and the New Testament church within the Gospels and the book of Acts. It was the thesis of this project that one of the reasons churches do not see conversions is that they are not engaging in biblical evangelism. Surveying the Gospels and the book of Acts helped the congregation to discover the evangelistic principles utilized by Jesus, the disciples, and the early church.

The second goal was that the laypersons avoid or unlearn any modern evangelistic methods or principles not employed in the New Testament. This project attempted to show how un-biblical our modern methods of evangelism have become and how they have produced man-made results rather than disciples. It will also cause those engaging in evangelism to determine whether their methodology of evangelism is biblical in nature.

The third goal was to teach the laypeople how to present the gospel, according to the New Testament, when they evangelize. In other words, they were taught not to coerce people into making a decision without understanding the content of the gospel message or watering down the gospel in order to get a person to say a prayer. Superficial techniques have no lasting effect on the person being evangelized, and they leave him or her in a state of confusion and despair. The hope is that the members of the church will be able to give a clear presentation of the gospel when evangelizing the lost.

The fourth goal was to impress upon the members that evangelism as done in the New Testament was the priority of the church, and it was done on a regular basis in hopes that the members would start engaging in evangelism consistently. Christians can get comfortable and preoccupied with everyday life and forget their purpose on this earth, which is to go and make disciples. Some Christians do not engage in evangelism because they are fearful of what to say, being rejected, or failing to lead a person to make a decision. The accomplishing of this goal helped to show that it is the work of the Holy Spirit to bring people to Christ and that a Christian's job is only to present the gospel and be obedient to the Lord's command and example. It is hoped that the project encouraged members of Fort Worth Harvest Church to make evangelism an everyday part of their lives. It set out to train a group of people who will make evangelism an everyday part of their lives because of their love for Christ and the examples seen in the New Testament.

The fifth and final goal was personal. I set a goal to become a better pastor, one who is able to present the gospel from the pulpit effectively. It was my personal objective to engage in evangelism outside of the pulpit more than any one else in the church. Discovering the principles of evangelism utilized by Jesus and the New Testament church encouraged me to be more effective in personal evangelism and to see my everyday interactions with people as an opportunity to share the good news of Jesus Christ with a lost and dying world.

Ministry Context

Fort Worth Harvest Church (FWHC) was planted in 1999, three months after I graduated from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Its focus was to reach college-age students from Texas Christian University. The identity of the church changed due to several moves during the first years of its existence, but it has maintained the fulfilling of the Great Commission as its main focus. FWHC eventually made its home, in 2004, in a neighborhood that was once primarily Anglo and upper/middle class but has recently diversified into a multi-cultural area. The church building was set in the middle of a neighborhood that was changing. The membership of the previous church, moreover, had declined from 750 members to 30 people attending on a good Sunday over the course of several decades and several pastoral changes. FWHC leased the building from the dying church, and, after two years, the church deeded over the property to FWHC. FWHC has been able to win many people to Christ, and many of the converts have been won through the members inviting lost people to the Sunday morning worship services where they the gospel and respond to it.

FWHC has had significant growth over the last five years. Most of the growth comes from people who have converted to Christ. Over 90 percent of the converts are former Catholics of Hispanic descent whose primary language is English. Many of the Hispanic members within our church are not fluent in Spanish. Many of them have reached an age where they became disenfranchised with the Catholic religion and also felt as if they had become a subculture within the Hispanic community. Specifically, many feel that they are not accepted into the Spanish-speaking sector. But they still want to hold on to some of their Hispanic traditions. The Hispanic converts feel as though they are caught in between two worlds. In reality, they are bi-cultural and are in danger of becoming a segment of society that is being overlooked when it comes to the area of evangelism.

The baptismal rate at FWHC for the last five years has contributed to about 75 to 80 percent of our growth as a church. Transfer growth has only contributed to about 10 to 15 percent of the total growth. Many of those who have been baptized are singles and married couples in their 20s and 30s who are starting families. Many came to a decision that they needed to have their children grow up in a Christian church. The strength of this kind of growth pattern is that there is a lot of excitement, zeal, and enthusiasm. The young converts join with a lot of hope and promise, and they are faithful members.

This type of growth gives the church an advantage because many of the new converts are excited to share their faith with family and friends. The new converts are not afraid to reach out to those with whom they have known for years, presenting them a gospel that offers newness and hope. The new Christians within the church might not be able to share many Bible verses, but they can share their testimonies. Within the Hispanic community, if a church is able to lead one family member to Christ, the entire family often comes to Christ, which could consist of 4 to 20 people. Prospects are provided for churches if they are able to gather and organize information and intentionally follow up with their contacts.

The weakness with growth that comes primarily from people visiting on Sunday morning is that the members do not feel the need to share the gospel on their own. The church is growing, but it is not producing members who are faithfully evangelizing. The church does not have a training seminar or class to demonstrate to the members how to do evangelism.

Most of the people who attend FWHC are driving in from outside of the community. Again, most of them are Hispanics in their 20s and 30s whose primary language is English. They have come to a place in life where they want their children to receive a solid education; so, many have moved out to the suburbs where their children can get a quality education. In the last few months, FWHC has also had an influx of

African Americans coming in from outside our community. Some are driving in from other large cities to attend our church. Most of them are blue collar and just trying to get to a better place in life. The African American segment in our church is usually in their 40s and 50s, which helps our church become more diverse in age and racial composition. Many of the African Americans have some type of Christian background. This influx of established Christians should be able to help in the discipleship of new converts.

The church is striving to reach out to the different races within the community. There are an estimated 29,277 residents within the zip code of the church as of 2010.¹ FWHC is located in a diverse community, both in terms of race and age. The ethnic breakdown in the same zip code is as follows: Hispanics consists of 17,753; Anglos 7,479; African Americans 3,880; and Asians 2,458.² The houses immediately surrounding the church are rental properties with Spanish-speaking tenants who are most likely illegal immigrants. The church has had no success in making inroads into the Spanish-speaking community even though the building has the appearance of a Spanish mission. This lack of Spanish-speaking members could be due to the church signage, which is in English.

Outside of a two-block perimeter of the church, the community changes to people who are buying houses or whose house is already paid off. It is mostly blue collar workers with a few small business owners. A majority of those who live within a two mile radius of the church are married. Our church is doing a good job of reaching both Hispanics and African Americans. In the last few months, the church has seen an influx of older Anglos. No Asians have joined the church. FWHC is striving to change this fact statistic within the next two to three years.

FWHC does not have an organized plan for doing evangelism within its community. A majority of its evangelism is done through relationships between church

¹“76111 Zip Code Detailed Profile,” <http://www.city-data.com/zips/76111.html> (accessed January 28, 2012).

²Ibid.

members and their family and friends. The Sunday morning worship services have been the main tool for evangelism. Any time a baptismal service or a major event occurs such as Easter or Mother's Day, our people do an incredible job of inviting family members and friends. We utilize those special days to reach out to the lost.

Our second widely-used method of doing evangelism has been the follow-up of those who attend our worship services. When our church members invite family members or friends it gives us prospects to visit for the purpose of sharing the gospel. The pastoral team conducts these visitations. When someone visits FWHC we have him or her fill out a registration card. We then give those cards to a pastor who sets up a time to go visit the prospect the same week he or she visits the church. These visitations, though effective, only allow us to reach a small fraction of people. If the members of the church were actively engaged in evangelism on an ongoing basis, we could reach more people. The leadership of FWHC recognizes that it will need to be intentional in equipping the members to share their faith.

According to the department of development and planning for the city of Fort Worth, several major changes are coming to our community. The first major change is that the name of the area around the church will be known as Six Points Urban Village.³ One mile south of the church, the downtown is being renovated. Condominiums and penthouses are being constructed as Fort Worth is reaching out to companies across the country inviting them to make their headquarters in the downtown area. Pier One, Radio Shack, and a few others have already made the move to the downtown area. A revival of the downtown area and all surrounding neighborhoods leading into downtown has begun. Within the next few years, the city of Ft. Worth has made plans to use a trolley in order to transport people from downtown to a stop located in front of the church where people can dine, shop, and walk the river walk. The entire community around the church is about to

³“Six Points Master Plan,” http://fortworthtexas.gov/uploadedFiles/PlanningandDevelopment/My_Urband_Village/Final_SixPoints_MasterPlan_05-06-2008.pdf (accessed January 28, 2012).

experience a facelift that will change the demographics of the area as well. This tells us that there is a need to adapt to the change that is coming and that there is a greater opportunity for our church to become more diversified.

In order for us to reach out to our community and to those who will be moving into the downtown area, several things must happen. First, I believe that we have to work on the reputation of the church. Over the years, there have been charismatics that have crept into the church with an agenda. They have caused confusion concerning the gifts of the Spirit. Charismatics emphasize an encounter with the Spirit during worship services as opposed to having an encounter with the Lord through the preached Word of God. This shift in emphasis has caused a few of our church members to believe in a health and wealth gospel. For the last year, I have made a concerted effort to address these issues and let our church know that we are a church whose purpose is to be a Great Commission church that prioritizes the preached Word of God. We are starting to see a change for the better, but the preached Word is something that needs to be continually emphasized. Taking a strong stance against the charismatics has brought our church family closer and has cleared up much confusion. A hunger for the preached Word of God is increasing in our people, and they are starting to become rooted in the faith. The reputation of our church is becoming one where people know they will hear the Word of God preached and have an opportunity to receive Christ as their Lord and Savior. It is amazing to see how many people are hungry for biblical preaching.

One of the church's strengths is its love for each other and also for guests. The people of FWHC make an effort to reach out to guests and get them into meaningful relationships with other believers. The people of the church understand how daunting it can be to walk into a church for the first time. This strength helps us in our evangelistic growth because the people of the church realize that a person will listen to the gospel if he or she is comfortable. Ft. Worth, moreover, is known for being a friendly place. The

warmth, love, and acceptance shown by the members at FWHC breaks down any prejudices that the visiting person may have.

One other strength of the church is its emphasis on the preached Word of God. FWHC has just made this a priority, and it is showing in our attempts to reach out to different groups. People are beginning to attend FWHC because they know they will hear the truth. They are also beginning to invite family members and friends who just want to hear the truth without having to sit through a performance. People are no longer attending with a hidden agenda. If they do come, they are starting to understand what the church is about. This makes for a church where people who come to Christ can know they will be taught the Bible.

One of the weaknesses of FWHC is that it currently does not have a strong discipleship program for new converts. This prevents the church from being able to fulfill the Great Commission. We do have small groups that act more like fellowship groups that are inward focused, but there are no small groups for new converts to learn and grow in the Christian faith. These new converts are unable to ask questions that they may have or develop deep and godly relationships with mature saints. It is at this point that we see many of the new converts fall through the cracks. This too is something that needs to be addressed in order for FWHC to preserve the fruit of its labor.

FWHC has done several evangelistic events over the years. In 2003, the church cooperated with other area churches across Fort Worth in an event called “Convoy of Hope” where the churches gathered together and gave away several thousand pounds of food to people in a particular area who were in need of food, haircuts, medical help, and other basic human needs. Before the people left the park, they had to pass a prayer tent where they were asked if they had prayer requests. Then, in 2004, FWHC conducted an evangelistic crusade at Billy Bob’s Honky Tonk, the world’s largest honky tonk. Over 3000 people attended and over 70 people responded to the gospel message. In 2010,

FWHC joined forces with Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary to provide free food to 500 people on Thanksgiving Day. The gospel was presented and 10 people responded to the call, wanting to accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior. FWHC has had a long history of being evangelistic but most of its outreaches have consisted of special events and were initiated by either the pastor or a guest minister. The goal of this research will be to change the way the church engages in evangelism; instead of just one person sharing the gospel, the entire congregation will be encouraged to evangelize.

Rationale

Acts 8:4 reads, “Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word” (ESV). This passage illuminates a major weakness among the members of Fort Worth Harvest Church. The Christians found in the New Testament Church were actively engaged in evangelizing those with whom they came in to contact. The New Testament believers took the time to share the gospel with everyone—they saw it as their duty. This is how the church was able to grow at such a fast rate. Implementing the principles and methods of evangelism demonstrated by Jesus and the New Testament Church will equip our people to be witnesses to the world and to be faithful in fulfilling the Great Commission.

Many of the members of our church think that evangelism is inviting an un-churched family member or friend to church. While it is good to have people invite lost people to church, it does not help the local church fulfill the Great Commission. The verse stated above demonstrates that it was believers who were engaged in spreading the word of God everywhere they went. The early church believers were intentional in developing relationships and sharing the good news of Jesus on a regular basis. My goal is to demonstrate from Acts 8:4 that it is the duty of every member to evangelize his or her part of the world.

Another weakness in our church is that many do not know how to share the gospel with a person because they do not know the content of the gospel message. Some have been told that it is their testimony. Others were told to memorize an outline and present it to each person. Still others have been told that you must go to the street corners and preach. Some of have been told that it is nothing more than presenting the four spiritual laws and getting a person to say a prayer. Much confusion exists over what the gospel is. Articulating what the gospel is enabled members to share their faith. It also emboldened them to do so without fear because they were sure that what they were speaking was accurate.

This project helped members of FWHC identify different ways of implementing New Testament principles taken from how Jesus and the New Testament church evangelized. Jesus and the early church believers used different ways of reaching people with the gospel. Jesus, for example, would engage in evangelism one-on-one; he never dealt with each person the same. He also would go where sinners were and would talk to them at a level they could understand and feel comfortable.

Definitions and Limitations

The purpose of this project was to discover and implement the evangelistic methods and principles employed by Jesus and the New Testament church in order to equip the members of FWHC to fulfill the Great Commission. The Lausanne Movement defines the nature of evangelism as follows:

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 gifts of the Spirit to all who repent and believe. Our Christian presence in the world is indispensable to evangelism, and so is that kind of dialogue whose purpose is to listen sensitively in order to understand. But evangelism itself is the proclamation of the historical, biblical Christ as Saviour and Lord, with a view to persuading people to come to him personally and so be reconciled to God. In issuing the gospel invitation we have no liberty to conceal the cost of discipleship. Jesus still calls all who would follow him to deny themselves, take up their cross, and identify themselves with his new

community. The results of evangelism include obedience to Christ, incorporation into his Church and responsible service in the world.⁴

The Gospel. Mark Dever's definition of the gospel was used in the project.

Dever defines the gospel as

the good news that the one and only God, who is holy, made us in his image. But we sinned and cut ourselves off from him. In his great love, God became man in Jesus, lived a perfect life, and died on the cross, thus fulfilling the law himself and taking on himself the punishment for the sins of all those who would ever turn and trust him. He rose again from the dead, showing that God accepted Christ's sacrifice and that God's wrath against us has been exhausted. He now calls us to repent of our sins and to trust in Christ alone for our forgiveness. If we repent of our sins and trust in Christ, we are born again into new life, an eternal life with God.⁵

When the church rediscovers the true gospel it will produce New Testament disciples who have an understanding of what is involved before accepting the gospel. Discovering the ways that Jesus and the New Testament church did evangelism will enable the members at FWHC to be biblical when evangelizing.

This project had one major limitation—its length. The length of this project was only fifteen weeks. This time limit did not allow one to determine if the long-term effects of this project would increase biblical evangelism participation among church members or if the members were continuing to implement biblical evangelism in their evangelistic encounters. Two weeks were given to research about attitudes towards evangelism, what the average church member understands to be the gospel, and what preferred method they may have when engaging someone in evangelism. Following the two-week research survey, an eight-week class identifying the major principles practiced by Jesus and the New Testament church was conducted with particular attention given to the Gospels and the book of Acts. The enrollees had two weeks to engage lost people with two different principles discovered from the class and two weeks to evaluate the

⁴“The Lausanne Covenant,” <http://www.lausanne.org/en/documents/lausanne-covenant.html> (accessed 22 February, 2012).

⁵Mark Dever, *The Gospel & Personal Evangelism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 43.

effectiveness of these methods in the form of an evangelism report. The final week concluded with a post-training questionnaire.

This project included one delimitation. The number of participants had to be limited. Those who were allowed to participate in this project were baptized, tithe-paying, confirmed church members. Participants were expected to attend each class and take notes on the ways they felt they were most comfortable in sharing their faith.

Research Methodology

The first goal of this project was to discover the evangelism principles utilized by Jesus and the New Testament church found in the Gospels and the book of Acts. The project began with interested members of the church completing a survey that measured their knowledge of what principles of evangelism were employed by Jesus and the early church. Once the project was complete, this same survey was given again and the results of the two surveys was compared.

The second goal was for the layperson, when evangelizing, to avoid and unlearn any modern evangelistic methods or principles not employed in the New Testament. Each participant went out for a two-week period to engage in evangelism where they were asked what was said and where they could find New Testament examples of how they currently engaged in evangelism. The aim was to identify what was biblical and to do away with what had been learned. This was touched upon during the sermon series.

The third goal was to teach laypersons how to present the gospel. The sermon series showed the message of salvation presented by Jesus and his disciples. Many people had never presented the fact that Jesus was the only way to make it to heaven and that following him came at a cost. The goal was to show what needed to be included when encouraging someone to come to Christ.

The fourth goal was to impress upon the members that evangelism in the New Testament was the priority of the church and that it was done on a regular basis in hopes that the members would start engaging in evangelism consistently. I had participants do two evangelistic reports at the end of the sermon series.

The fifth and final goal was personal. I had hoped to become a better pastor, one who was able to present the gospel from the pulpit effectively. It was my personal objective to evangelize outside of the pulpit more than any one else in the church. Discovering the principles of evangelism utilized by Jesus and the New Testament church encouraged me to be more effective in personal evangelism and to see my everyday interactions with people as opportunities to share the good news of Jesus Christ with a lost and dying world.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASES FOR IMPLEMENTING EVANGELISM METHODOLOGIES

If the local church is to win disciples and engage in biblical evangelism, then it is imperative for the church to study the principles and methods of Jesus and the New Testament church. Herschel H. Hobbs writes, “The New Testament is the final authority for the faith and practice of the New Testament church [and] the primary theme of the New Testament is evangelism.”¹ Jesus states it best when he says, “A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master” (Matt 10:24).² One of the theories of this project is the belief that the church is not making disciples because it is not following the methods and principles of evangelism prescribed in the New Testament. The purpose of this chapter is to look at the principles and methods laid out by Jesus and the New Testament church. Specific attention will be given to the Gospels and the book of Acts. The Scripture passages that will be exegeted for this chapter include Matthew 4:23-25, Matthew 7:28-29, Mark 1:35-39, Luke 6:17-19, and John 20:20-21. Each passage will highlight a specific method of evangelism employed by Jesus, with supporting passages demonstrating the practice continuing with the New Testament church. These methods include preaching, teaching, healing, and sending.

¹Herschel H. Hobbs, *New Testament Evangelism* (Nashville: Convention, 1960), 1.

²Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the English Standard Version (ESV) of the Bible.

Evangelistic Principles of Jesus

Jesus' evangelistic method was *personal*. He could have let others do the work, but he made it a point to engage people personally whenever possible.³ There are 35 examples of Jesus doing personal evangelism in the Gospels.⁴ Jesus spent the majority of his three years in ministry going to where the people were. He did not build a monastery or headquarters and have the people come to him, but he went to where the people were. This is a key principle that the church needs to re-learn and put into practice when engaging in biblical evangelism. Jesus put the “go” in “gospel,” and it is a trait that is sadly absent in many local churches. Many Christians have the mentality of “come and hear our preacher,” which is in direct contrast to the principle employed by Jesus.⁵ The way Jesus reached people was one person at a time. Jesus was effective because he dealt with individuals differently, meeting them at their levels of understanding.⁶

Five examples that demonstrate how Jesus treated each person differently are found in Matthew 4:18-19. In this passage, Jesus walks by the Sea of Galilee and sees two brothers fishing, Simon Peter and Andrew. He then walks up to them and says, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” He did not go into a theological discourse or say anything else to them because he understood that was enough to peak their spiritual curiosities. They were men of few words, but they were men of action.

³John Mark Terry, *Evangelism: A Concise History* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1997), 6.

⁴Leighton Ford, *The Christian Persuader* (New York: Harper, 1966), 63.

⁵Rick Warren, *Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 234-35.

⁶Terry, *Evangelism*, 6.

The second example is found in Matthew 19:16-30. Here, the rich young man comes to Jesus and asks him how a person can have eternal life. Jesus does not give him a simple and direct answer like he does with Simon Peter and Andrew. Instead, he answers the young man's question with a question of his own. Jerram Barrs, in his book *Learning Evangelism from Jesus*, suggests the reason that Jesus did this was to get the young man to see that no one is good except for God and God alone. Jesus may also have done this to demonstrate "the vast gap between his own 'goodness' and the true goodness of God."⁷ Jesus then tells the young man to keep God's commandments, to which the young man then asks, "Which ones?" (v. 18). Jesus then goes on to list several of the commandments and the young man enthusiastically responds that he has kept them all, and he desired to know what else he needed to do. Jesus surmised from his response that the young man probably had a deep theological background; he then challenged the young man to sell all that he had and follow him. Verse 22 reads, "When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions" (v. 22). Again, Jesus treated the young man differently than he had Simon Peter and Andrew, knowing that this man was at a different place theologically, spiritually, and socially. He met the young man where he was and then challenged him to become a disciple.⁸

Jesus did not run after the young man to make concessions with him by lowering the bar of what it means to be a disciple. Again, Jesus approached this young man differently than others because he understood that each person is at a different place spiritually and each person responds to the gospel differently.

⁷Jerram Barrs, *Learning Evangelism from Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 72.

⁸Ibid.

The third example of Jesus being personal is found in John 3:1-21. Here, Nicodemus, the Pharisee, comes to see Jesus at night. Scripture says that he was a ruler of the Jews (v. 1). A “ruler of the Jews” implies that Nicodemus was part of the Sanhedrin, the main ruling body of the Jews of Palestine. In essence, Nicodemus was a well-respected man among the Jewish people and one who was very familiar with the Old Testament. The Bible says that he came to Jesus at night (v. 2), which he may have done because he was concerned with risking his reputation of being associated with Jesus.⁹ Nicodemus recognized that Jesus’ miracles confirmed that he was from God. Jesus told him what it meant to be born from above and a child of God. He took this approach because he was meeting Nicodemus at his level of understanding. Jesus did not compromise his message just to get a person of recognition on his team, but he showed Nicodemus what it meant to be born again, and he did not back away from his message.

The fourth example of how Jesus dealt with people individually is found in John 4:1-42. Jesus made it a point to travel through Samaria. Jesus was tired from his travels and stopped at a well. The Bible does not mention where his disciples were. A Samaritan woman approached the well to draw water, and Jesus told the woman to give him a drink. The woman reminded Jesus that he was a Jewish man asking a Samaritan woman for a drink. The Jews had nothing to do with the Samaritans and men had no associations with women.¹⁰ Jesus destroyed two cultural norms of that day in order to evangelize this woman, who would later become a successful evangelist. Jesus turns the conversation into a spiritual one by telling the woman that he knew where she could

⁹Ibid, 205.

¹⁰Ibid., 41-42.

drink living water. The Samaritan woman did not understand how he could do this because he had nothing to draw water. She realized that Jesus had turned the conversation into a spiritual one when he explained that no one would thirst from the water he gave. Jesus once more demonstrates that each person must be dealt with differently. With the Samaritan woman, he started the conversation with a demand and then proceeded to make it a spiritual conversation.¹¹

John 8:1-11¹² records how the Pharisees brought a woman to Jesus who they had caught in adultery. The religious crowd reminded Jesus that such an action was punishable by death. Jesus seizes this opportunity to show both the woman caught in adultery and the Pharisees that God is more concerned with the salvation of a lost person than condemning him or her to death. Jesus challenges the Pharisees to throw a stone if they have never sinned, and they each dropped their stones and left. After everyone had left, Jesus spoke to this woman and let her know that he did not condemn her, and he challenged her to sin no more. Jesus' type of evangelism was personal because he turned around a bad situation and treated the woman caught in adultery with dignity and respect.¹³ This was very different from the response of the Pharisees.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²This section in John is not found in many of the older manuscripts. However, Jerram Barrs states that this section is “generally accepted by the church as being part of God’s Word—which is why we find it in all of our bibles” (Barrs, *Learning Evangelism from Jesus*, 22). He goes on to make the argument that “Jesus did many other things; and that not everything he did was written down (John 21:24)” and that “there is very substantial manuscript evidence for its authenticity, and it has many elements in it that are similar to other encounters between Jesus and ‘sinners’” (23). It should also be pointed that there is nothing in this passage that contradicts other passages in the Bible.

¹³Ibid., 43.

There are lessons to be learned from Jesus being personal when it comes to evangelism. First, Jesus never treated any two people the same.¹⁴ He understood that each person was uniquely created by God. Second, he dealt with people at the level of their theological understanding and drew them deeper. He did not speak over their heads but at a level where they could understand everything that he was asking them. Third, Jesus spoke to people with dignity and respect. Although Jesus confronted people with their sin, he never condemned them or made them feel unworthy. People were drawn to Jesus because he treated them as human beings with stories to tell. In addition, Jesus was not afraid to deal with all types of people. Jesus interacted with religious people, working men, and people of different religions, races, cultures, or those from questionable backgrounds.

For Christians today to be effective as Jesus in evangelism, they too must learn to put these principles into practice. They must learn to treat people as individuals and to learn to treat them with dignity and respect. Christians must learn to speak at a level where people can understand the message of the gospel in a practical way. Finally, Christians must be accessible and learn to get out of their comfort zones if they are serious about reaching the lost at any cost. They must go to them and not expect them to come to them. One reason why many believers do not win people to Christ is because after their conversions they forget about all of their lost family and friends and only hang out with church people.¹⁵ In order for believers to be effective in evangelizing the lost, they must learn to be personal.

¹⁴Terry, *Evangelism*, 6.

¹⁵Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 189.

Jesus was *principled*. He did not hide the fact that salvation came at a high price.¹⁶ His message included such things as “sacrifice and service.” Jesus did not hide the cost of discipleship. On the contrary, he offered people a cross to bear and a cup to drink (Mark 8:34-38; 10:38-39).¹⁷ While Jesus did allow a crowd to follow, there was always a point where he confronted the crowd and asked for total commitment to him. In John 6, Jesus feeds a crowd of five thousand men, yet later on he points out that to be one of his true disciples, one needs to eat of his body and drink of his blood (John 6:53-59). John 6:66 reads, “After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.” Jesus never backed away from presenting the entire gospel, which included repentance from sin, self-denial, and a change in the way one lives that brings honor and glory to God. Jesus wanted his disciples to know that salvation requires a total abandonment to God.¹⁸

Many times in the modern presentation of the gospel there is no commitment asked of the sinner or discussion of the true meaning of repentance—a complete turning away from one’s old way of living. Repentance can also be defined as “a change of mind relating to one’s actions or attitudes, rather than a change of character or nature. It may be characterized by sorrow or remorse.”¹⁹ Yet another definition of repentance is “a change

¹⁶Terry, *Evangelism*, 6.

¹⁷John Mark Terry, *Evangelism: A Concise History* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1994), 6.

¹⁸David E. Garland, “Evangelism in the New Testament,” *Review and Expositor* 77 (Fall 1980): 462-63.

¹⁹Elmer L. Towns, ed., *Evangelism and Church Growth: A Practical Encyclopedia* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1996), 340.

of the whole soul – the judgment, the will, and the life.”²⁰ The reasons vary from not wanting to scare off the sinner to the Christian not knowing that asking a sinner to commit is part of the gospel message. The result often ends with people becoming disillusioned with the Christian faith once hard times hit or when they are confronted with the subject of sin in a Bible study or sermon. The modern practice of evangelism has taken the form of selling a person a car with all the amenities he or she likes as opposed to pressing upon him or her the reality that although salvation is a free gift, it calls for total allegiance to Christ.

Jesus was *prayerful*. It was a common practice of Jesus to have seasons of prayer where he would either engage early in the morning or take blocks of time out to pray (Mark 1:35-39; Luke 5:15-16). Jesus understood that prayer was necessary in order to be an effective evangelist. Prayer and evangelism go hand-in-hand. In fact, Ed Silviso states that prayer-filled evangelism is “talking to God about our neighbors before we talk to our neighbors about our God.”²¹ Jesus understood, moreover, that spiritual power came from being in fellowship with the Father. Ken Hemphill writes, “Jesus spent time in prayer not only to experience the full empowering of His Father, but also to have the clear direction of His Father.”²²

Jesus prayed because he understood that prayer is a weapon to be used against the enemy. One reason it is a weapon is because our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against powers and the spiritual forces of darkness (Eph 6:12). That is where the real

²⁰Timothy K. Beougher, *Richard Baxter and Conversion* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2007), 90.

²¹Ed Silviso, *Prayer Evangelism* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2000), 35.

²²Ken Hemphill, *The Antioch Effect* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1994), 65.

battle is, in the spiritual realm. Prayer is one of God's ordained means for believers to engage in spiritual warfare, in the sharing the gospel. Jesus said that believers should ask the Lord of the harvest to send more laborers into the field (Matt 9:35-38). He also demonstrates that prayer enables one to submit his or her will to that of the Father (Matt 26:39-46). In order for the church to reach the world, it is imperative that she follow Jesus' principle of praying for more laborers to be sent into the field.²³ Prayer is also a way of crucifying one's selfish desires and allowing the Spirit to conquer the fear of sharing the gospel with a lost and dying world. These principles are still needed in the church in order for more people to be engaged in evangelism and to overcome fear.

Jesus was *powerful*. This principle of powerful evangelism found in the life of Jesus is another principle missing from many churches and individuals who wish to evangelize. To be engaged in evangelism is to be "engaged in constant spiritual warfare with the principalities and powers of evil, who are seeking to overthrow the church and frustrate its task of word evangelization."²⁴ In order to be effective against the forces of the evil one, Jesus sought to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Jesus was able to cast out demons by the power of the Holy Spirit (Matt 12:28). He sought to live a life where he was full of the Holy Spirit and could follow the leading of God's Spirit (Luke 4:1). Jesus remained endowed by the Spirit of God (John 1:32). Jesus was able to gain insight into the hearts of the men and women he evangelized because he was filled with the Holy

²³Ibid., 64.

²⁴"The Lausanne Covenant," in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Minneapolis: World Wide, 1975), 7.

Spirit. In order for local churches to have New Testament results, it is necessary that they be filled with the Spirit of God just like Christ.

Jesus was *passionate*. Jesus had a passion and love for people that inspired him to do evangelism.²⁵ This passion for evangelism is what caused him to travel from city to city and from village to village in order to preach, teach, and heal people (Matt 9:35-36). This passage shows that Jesus saw people as being harassed and helpless and he saw that it was his duty to go and take the message of salvation to them. It was this passion that caused Jesus to heal the sick even when he tried to get away to an isolated place after hearing about the death of John the Baptist (Matt 14:14). He understood that their spiritual sickness was of utmost importance. Jesus took it upon himself to feed four thousand men who had been with him for over three days because they had nothing to eat (Matt 15:32). It was out of a passionate heart that Jesus took the time to heal the eyes of two blind men who were sitting by the road to Jericho (Matt 20:29-34). This passion is what drove Jesus to share the gospel. He did much more than physically heal people; he did much more than feed the natural hunger of people; and he did much more than alleviate the torment of people. Each act of evangelism was done out of love, compassion, and pity for the human race. Jesus was passionate when sharing the gospel to a lost, hungry, and hurting world.²⁶

The passion that Jesus had for the world is not one that can be manufactured by human emotion. It is one that comes out of having a deep fellowship with the Father through Bible study, prayer, and understanding the Father's heart for the lost. Passion is a

²⁵Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 208.

²⁶Ibid.

key principle missing in many modern-day evangelism presentations.²⁷ While it is good to memorize Scripture, know one's testimony, and be polished in one's presentation, it will not cause one to be passionate or ignite passion in the one hearing the presentation. People can tell when something is mechanical or when a person is truly passionate about a subject or person. This type of passion needs to be instilled in today's Christian, who wants to share the gospel with lost family members, friends, and co-workers.

Jesus was *purposeful*. In order for Christians to understand the principles employed by Jesus for doing evangelism they must see that Jesus was purposeful. Jesus did not just aimlessly wander about hoping to reach people with the gospel; rather, he had a plan and did everything with a purpose.²⁸ When it came to doing evangelism Jesus had a clear picture of what he was to do. As Robert Coleman writes, "There was nothing haphazard about his life-no wasted energy, not an idle word. He was on business for God."²⁹ Jesus was purposeful in engaging sinners even at the expense of being judged by the religious establishment of his day. He was so purposeful in reaching out to the lost that his motives were questioned, and he had to remind people that his sole purpose for coming into the world was to call sinners to himself (Matt 9:11-13). Jesus did not allow the critique of the Pharisees or Sadducees to deter him in fulfilling his purpose nor did he allow the prejudices of people to keep him from reaching people with the gospel. Jesus was passing through Jericho and saw Zacchaeus sitting in a tree, and he made it a point to call Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector, down and stay at his house (Luke 19:1-10). Tax

²⁷Hemphill, *The Antioch Effect*, 16-17.

²⁸Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 97.

²⁹Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Revell, 1995),

collectors were seen as traitors by Jews and for Jesus to do such an act was to show that salvation can come to any man who is willing to accept him. Jesus purposely selected Zacchaeus, and, as a result, the heart of a hardened man was made soft because Jesus had purposely sought him out. Doing evangelism and seeking out the lost takes purpose and is a principle utilized by Jesus in doing evangelism. Jesus was even purposeful when it came to reaching out to people of different races and genders (John 4:1-15). The Bible states in John 4:4 that Jesus “had to pass through Samaria.” Barrs states that “if a Jew met a Samaritan walking along the road he should walk into the ditch to avoid contact even between the two shadows.”³⁰ Jesus made it a point to go through a region that was rejected by Jews and reach out to an outcast people. What is more, he reached out to a woman with a questionable background. Yet, he did this because it was his purpose to reach out to all who would accept him. Jesus doubtless took the risk of being rejected, judged, and shunned because he took his purpose of reaching the lost at any cost seriously.

Evangelistic Methods of Jesus

When looking at the methods that Jesus employed in evangelism it is important to note that he employed four main methods. The four common methods employed by Jesus, which would later be replicated by the New Testament church, include preaching, teaching, healing and exorcisms, and going. While these four methods were the most common it should also be noted that other methods were utilized as well. Jesus understood that in order to be effective in evangelism, one must be strategic and reach

³⁰Barrs, *Learning Evangelism from Jesus*, 36-37.

people who are most receptive.³¹ This next section looks at the different evangelistic methods employed by Jesus.

Matthew 4:23-25

Matthew 4:23-25 summarizes the evangelistic methods employed by Jesus while on earth, which include the following: teaching, preaching, healing and exorcisms, and going. By this account in Matthew 4, Jesus had successfully completed his time of being tempted by the devil in the wilderness (4:1-11); he had begun to preach a message of repentance (4:17); he had called his first disciples (4:18-22); and he had commenced his public ministry. The methods Jesus employs to garnish prospects to evangelize is important to note. He did not do evangelism from a temple or synagogue nor did he stay in one city or “holy” place and wait for the people to come. Verse 23 states that “he went throughout all Galilee.” In the Holman Christian Standard Bible it states that “Jesus was going around all Galilee.” Here, the verb περιηγεν is in the imperfect tense (i.e., “he was going”).³² Matthew puts this in the imperfect tense to show that this action by Jesus was something he did continuously. In other words, it was an ongoing action that he practiced throughout his three years of ministry on earth. Jesus was purposeful in going to where the people were instead of having the people come to him. Galilee at that time consisted of 204 cities or villages and it would have taken Jesus about three months to travel the entire area if he were visiting two to three villages a day.³³ He modeled the act of taking the gospel to those who needed it. This is the position and model that the disciples and

³¹Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 156.

³²Grant. R. Osborne, *Matthew: Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 155.

the converts of the New Testament church followed and used to spread the gospel to the world.

Teaching is another practice that Jesus employs in his evangelistic method. He expounded on the Old Testament and invited visiting rabbis to speak as well.³⁴ The third part of the passage consists of Jesus “proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom.” According to John Nolland, Matthew makes a sharp distinction between the act of teaching or proclaiming.³⁵ This instance is the only time the term “gospel” (εὐαγγέλιον) is found in the Gospel of Matthew.³⁶ The term “gospel” in classical Greek is the “reward given to a bearer of good news.”³⁷ It later simply came to mean “good news.”³⁸ Osborne observes, “The ‘gospel of the kingdom’ refers to the kingdom content that was essential to Jesus’ teaching.”³⁹

Verse 23 reads, “and healing every disease and every affliction among the people.” Twice the word “every” is mentioned in this passage to give emphasis. Jesus healed all who came to him.⁴⁰ It was a part of his ministry in reaching out to the lost. One commentator states, “This authority was passed to the disciples in 10:1. The church is to

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 182.

³⁶Osborne, *Matthew*, 155.

³⁷Samuel Rolles Driver, Alfred Plummer, Charles Augustus Briggs, J. A. Emerton, and C. E. B. Cranfield, eds., *The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments*, vol. 1 (Charleston, SC: Nabu, 2010), 37.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Osborne, *Matthew*, 155.

relieve the life and authority of Jesus.”⁴¹ The combination of teaching, preaching, and healing is something the church is to imitate. Those who were called to be fishers of men in verses 18-22 were able to see Jesus model evangelism.⁴²

The result of Jesus’ going, teaching, preaching, and healing is found in verse 24: “So his fame spread throughout all Syria.” Jesus did not do this to be famous, rather his name spread because he brought the gospel to common people whose lives were impacted. The people had both physical and spiritual needs, and Jesus demonstrated his love for them by opening doors for the gospel to be shared. The gospel brings life and hope to those who are bound in spiritual and physical torment. The same results are still guaranteed if the church follows the example of Jesus and makes an effort to reach out to the lost.

Verse 24 reads, “and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases, epileptics, and paralytics, and he healed them.” One commentator states that this list “moves from the comprehensive (the sick) to the general (disease and pain) to the specific (demon possession).”⁴³ While demon possession is not mentioned in the ESV it is understood. The remarkable thing about exorcism is that it “was quite rare in the first century and Jesus’ combination of teaching and exorcism was quite distinctive.”⁴⁴ Jesus’ miracles demonstrate that Jesus was the Son of God and had power over all diseases and

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 183.

⁴³Osborne, *Matthew*, 156.

⁴⁴Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 184.

sicknesses. The purpose of these healings and miracles were to demonstrate that Jesus is the only God who can heal and, therefore, he alone has the power to save people from their sins.

Verse 25 reads, “and great crowds followed him from Galilee, and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.” Again, the result of doing this type of evangelism is that it will attract those who are in need whether spiritually or physically and open doors for people to hear the gospel. Some have argued that this does not make disciples, but the word “followed” seems to suggest that the people were “headed in the direction of that following which would make true disciples of them.”⁴⁵

Matthew 7:28-29—Teaching

Matthew 7:28-29 highlights the teaching aspect of Jesus’ ministry and describes the effect of his teaching. Here, Jesus has just finished the Sermon on the Mount. The text makes it plain that Jesus utilized teaching as a method of doing evangelism. His teaching caused the people to be “astonished,” meaning they had “an ongoing feeling of wonder as they went home.”⁴⁶ They were astonished because he taught with authority. Matthew emphasizes Jesus’ authority because he wants it to be understood that his authority was “given by God.”⁴⁷ Some have suggested that one of the reasons the crowds were so astonished at his teaching is because he did not depend on

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Osborne, *Matthew*, 276.

⁴⁷Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 345.

tradition as the scribes did; rather, he taught from his own conviction.⁴⁸ The teaching of Jesus is also unique because it is not an exegesis from a passage or passages from the Torah, but it is “preeminently his own words.”⁴⁹ This is significant because it proves that Jesus is the one who takes precedence over even the Torah. Without Jesus Christ words have no meaning or power. Osborne puts it this way: “Jesus never interacted with previous teaching and did not depend on Torah. His was an authority never seen before (or since!). His teaching ‘fulfilled’ Torah and lifted it to a higher place.”⁵⁰ In order to follow the method of doing evangelism from a teaching standpoint it is imperative to present the gospel with teaching that is under his authority. This same effect will still occur and astonish regular people who hear the gospel.

Jesus evangelized people by teaching them about God. Hobbs makes it a point to share the fact that, for Jesus, “teaching was not merely the recitation of facts. He taught people, not things.”⁵¹ It is important to understand that Jesus’ teaching style was totally different from others of his day. People were amazed at the teaching of Jesus because he taught with such authority (Matt 7:28-29). He spoke in a way that related to the common man and told stories that people could easily understand and identify with (Matt 13:34). He taught in a way that captured the attention of the people and in a way that made people enjoy listening to him (Mark 12:37). Again, Jesus was more concerned with

⁴⁸Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 33a (Dallas: Word, 1993), 193.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Osborne, *Matthew*, 277.

⁵¹Hobbs, *New Testament Evangelism*, 65.

people understanding what he had to say than speaking over the heads of the people whom he was trying to reach.

Mark 1:35-39—Preaching

In this passage, Jesus is ministering in Capernaum and takes time out to find a solitary place to pray. In verse 37, it reads, “Everyone is looking for you.” Jesus then makes it clear that his purpose is not merely to perform miracles nor gain popularity. One commentator suggests that the disciples had mistaken the purpose of Jesus and wanted him to perform more miracles, but “Jesus’ primary mission was not to be a miracle-worker but a redeemer.”⁵² This passage demonstrates Jesus understood preaching to be his primary mission as the way to proclaim the kingdom of God. In this passage, Jesus is the one who acts as the herald.⁵³ This passage suggests that Jesus’ preaching is “always [done] with a suggestion of formality, gravity, and an authority which must be listened to and obeyed.”⁵⁴

The ministry Jesus had at Capernaum was bearing much fruit and his popularity was growing. Capernaum was considered to be the “most significant settlement of its area.”⁵⁵ However, even Jesus recognizes that he is to continue taking the gospel to other places not as prestigious so he can preach. *Kerrusso* (κηρούξω) is the “mission of John (1:4, 7) and of the disciples (3:14; 6:12, 13:10; 14:9), and even of those

⁵²James A. Brooks, *Mark*, The New American Commentary, vol. 23 (Nashville: Broadman, 1991), 51.

⁵³R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 113.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 112.

who spread the eyewitness accounts of Jesus' miracles (1:45; 5:20; 7:36).⁵⁶ Another commentator suggests that the reason Jesus left Capernaum was so that he could “preach there as well, for Capernaum [had] already heard the good news.”⁵⁷

Preaching was an important method of Jesus when he evangelized. The beginning of Jesus ministry started with preaching (Matt 4:17). His message differed from John the Baptist, whose entire ministry was to set the way for the Messiah to come. Jesus preached that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. He was, in essence, letting the people know that the kingdom of God was within him and that they could be heirs of that kingdom if they accepted what he had to say. Preaching was at the heart of all Jesus did; he saw it as his main reason for coming to earth (Mark 1:38). Preaching would become the common mode of reaching people with the gospel later on in the New Testament.

Luke 6:17-19—Healing

This is a parallel of Moses coming down from the mountain and demonstrates that just as the Israelites gathered to hear the word that Moses had for them, so too the disciples and the crowds gathered to hear Jesus.⁵⁸ Like when Moses came down from the mountain, Luke demonstrates how Jesus also came down “empowered for divine service.”⁵⁹ In this passage, the focus is on healing and “more particularly, on curing those

⁵⁶Ibid., 102.

⁵⁷Robert. H. Stein, *Mark*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 102.

⁵⁸Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 261.

⁵⁹Ibid., 262.

troubled with unclean spirits.”⁶⁰ This method of evangelism was used by Jesus to demonstrate to the people that sickness was a “foe of redemptive wholeness” and was of the devil.⁶¹ Luke wants his readers to know that “the diabolic is being overcome in Jesus’ ministry.”⁶² Even in this passage one can see how Jesus coupled preaching with healing; however, Luke places preaching before healing to “stress the importance of Jesus’ preaching ministry.”⁶³ There is little doubt that the audience was made up of people who were committed to Jesus and those who were not.⁶⁴ Healing is why some of the people came to see Jesus, but Jesus only used it as a door for the gospel to be presented to them. He knew that only the gospel could “heal their lives and those of others around them.”⁶⁵ Healing is “God’s grace” and demonstrates to the people that the Lord is not discriminatory. Luke writes in verse 19 that “power was with [Jesus], and he was healing everyone.” Luke wants to emphasize that “the power for healing came from God.”⁶⁶

Jesus understood that people wanted to know how much he cared before they wanted to hear what he had to say. He showed his love for people by meeting their physical. It was not uncommon for Jesus to heal the sick, the blind, the crippled, cast out

⁶⁰Ibid., 263.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Ibid., 263.

⁶³Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: B&H, 1993), 196.

⁶⁴Clinton E. Arnold, *Luke*, The Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 275.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶John T. Carroll, *Luke: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster, 2012), 147.

demons, and heal those with other ailments (Matt 15:30; Luke 6:17-18; John 6:2). These opportunities opened doors for him to bring the message of hope to a people who might not have taken the time to listen to his message. Jesus understood that healings and exorcisms provided an opportunity to show the love of God. He understood that meeting the physical needs of people was important to gain a hearing with them. Jesus spent a considerable amount of his time healing physical ailments so that people would be receptive to the gospel and give an ear to what he had to say.

John 20:20-21—Sending

The mission of Christ's disciples was "preach the Gospel, convert sinners."⁶⁷ The mission was to go into the entire world much like Jesus had done. Their authority was divine, and they were promised the same success as Jesus, but it will also come at a price of suffering the same rejection as Jesus had endured. The reason Jesus speaks peace over them is because they most likely are living as fugitives for being associated with Jesus. Before Jesus commissions them, he shows them his pierced hands and side. It is to show that he truly is alive and has fulfilled his mission and now commissions his disciples to go and take the message of salvation that can only be found in him to the world.⁶⁸ The commissioning of the disciples can only take place now that Jesus is alive and well. These men are, in essence, the last will and testament of Jesus. The Holy Spirit is given to Jesus' disciples to enable and empower them to do the same works as Jesus.⁶⁹

⁶⁷John Gill, *An Exposition of the Gospel According to John*, New Port Commentary Series (Springfield, MO: Baptist, 2003), 617.

⁶⁸Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 746.

⁶⁹F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 392.

Jesus' "sending" (*pempo*, present tense) of his followers was to be patterned on the fact that the Father "sent" (*apestalken*, perfect tense) him. The use of the perfect rather than the aorist in reference to the commission by Jesus should be understood to indicate that the mission of Jesus still continues and that the divine mission is not merely in mortal hands.⁷⁰ The term "disciple" should not confuse Christians into thinking that this is only for the apostles: "The words for follower of Jesus, believers and disciples, are not exclusive terms in John."⁷¹ This commissioning should not be confined to the eleven disciples who were left.⁷²

It has been said that Jesus does not anoint machinery but men and that has been his plan to reach the world with the gospel.⁷³ Throughout his ministry, Christ purposely called on men to follow him so that he could disciple them for the purpose of reproducing other disciples. Whether it was one man like Matthew the tax collector or just a few men like Simon and Andrew or his twelve disciples, he always purposely called upon men to carry out the Great Commission (Matt 9:9; Mark 1:17; Mark 3:14). Jesus modeled carrying out the Great Commission during his last three years of ministry here on earth. He also expected his disciples to imitate his example.

His purpose in calling men was to commission them to go and do what he did. In Luke 10:1-12, Jesus appoints seventy-two men and sends them into various towns by

⁷⁰Gerald L. Borchert, *John 1-11*, The New American Commentary, vol. 25b (Nashville: B&H, 1996), 306-07.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, 207.

⁷²*Ibid.*

⁷³Edward McKendree Bounds, *Preacher and Prayer* (Nashville: South Smith & Lamar, 1907), 7.

groups of two to heal the sick and preach his Word. Christ understood the daunting task of reaching the world with the gospel; he knew this task could not be accomplished by any one person.⁷⁴ After he had resurrected, Jesus appeared to the disciples and commissioned them to go out just like he had been sent out by his Father (John 20:21). Christ gave the Great Commission to his disciples not for them to fulfill the task of reaching the world alone but to invest in the lives of men and women who would also take what they had learned, touch the lives of others, and reproduce other disciple-making disciples (Matt 28:16-20).

Jesus did lifestyle evangelism. Lifestyle evangelism is defined as “evangelism that is done naturally in the daily activities of life.”⁷⁵ Jesus was going about his normal day when he came across blind Bartimaeus while leaving Jericho. Jesus took advantage of the situation when Bartimaeus could have been helped by someone else or at some other time. Jesus made it a custom to reach people on a regular daily basis. Jesus engaged in evangelism when he healed the demonized man from the Gerasenes (Luke 8:26-33). He did not wait for an evangelistic crusade or event; rather, he took charge of the situation and brought the deliverance they needed in their everyday lives. It was while Jesus was passing through towns and villages that he healed a blind man and brought hope to the Samaritan woman at the well (John 9:1; John 4:3). All of these instances happened because it was the practice of Jesus to reach people while living his life. He did not need a stadium, radio station, newspaper, blog, or anything else to reach people with the gospel. Jesus, moreover, lived in an atmosphere of prayer and in constant contact with

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Terry, *Evangelism*, 10.

his Father, and he asked his Father's will to be done in his life. Because of Jesus' desire to do his Father's will, Jesus believed that each person he encountered was part of God's will.

Evangelistic Methods of the New Testament Church

Mass Evangelism

The early church followed the Lord's methods and principles of not doing evangelism by only one method. One of the methods employed by the New Testament church was mass evangelism. Mass evangelism is defined as "the presentation of the Gospel to more than one person, or mass of people. Traditionally, mass evangelism refers to local church or area-wide campaigns and has the purpose of evangelizing the lost."⁷⁶ The New Testament Church was like Christ and utilized every moment and opportunity to reach out to as many people as possible. In Acts 2, Peter seized the opportunity to preach to a large audience of several thousand and, as a result, three thousand souls were added to the kingdom of God. Peter seizes another opportunity after a crippled man was healed on Solomon's porch—he preached to a crowd of several thousand and over five thousand people were added to the church (Acts 3:11-4:4). Further, Phillip was a deacon who went to Samaria to preach to the entire city after persecution had dispersed the Christians who resided in Jerusalem (Acts 8:4-8). In each case, these men experienced great results and thousands were saved and added to the kingdom of God.

⁷⁶Elmer L. Towns, ed., *Evangelism and Church Growth: A Practical Encyclopedia* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1996), 291.

House-to-House Witnessing

Another method employed by the New Testament Church of doing evangelism was taking the gospel from house to house (Acts 5:42). The gospel was able to spread so quickly due to every believer taking the opportunity to share it in his or her business deals, social circles, and family circles. When the gospel was presented to the head of a family he would often make it a point to invite his entire family to hear what was being presented (Acts 16:11-15, 31-33). If the head of the family accepted the message of the gospel, then it was not uncommon for the entire household to also become converted (Acts 10:30-48).⁷⁷ Cornelius and the Philippian Jailer are good examples of this type of evangelism (Acts 10:30-48; Acts 16:31-33).⁷⁸ The Apostle Paul also utilized this method of evangelism (Acts 20:20).

Public Preaching

The Apostles made it a practice to preach in the temples.⁷⁹ Peter and John preached at the gate of the temple when they healed the crippled man (Acts 3:1-10). When Paul entered a new city it was his custom to go to the temple and preach the gospel. After preaching for a time at the temples, he would then organize those who accepted his teachings into churches. Paul also preached publicly when he addressed Agrippa and other high officials in Rome (Acts 26 and 28). The Apostles would use any public forum as an opportunity to proclaim publicly the life, death, and resurrection of

⁷⁷David E. Garland, "Evangelism in the New Testament," *Review and Expositor* 77 (Fall 1980): 464.

⁷⁸Terry, *Evangelism*, 24.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*

Jesus Christ and appeal to men to accept him as Lord and Savior. Christ understood that any one person could not accomplish the daunting task of reaching the world with the gospel.

Personal Witnessing

The next common method of how the New Testament Church did evangelism was by personal witnessing. This method is seen when Philip was instructed by an angel of the Lord to go down to a deserted place. There, Philip encountered an Ethiopian eunuch who was sitting in a chariot reading the book of Isaiah (Acts 8:26-38).⁸⁰ Personal witnessing is sharing the gospel on a one-on-one basis with an individual. The end result of that meeting was that the Ethiopian accepted Christ and was immediately water baptized as an outward sign of what had taken place inwardly.

Another example of personal witnessing was when the Lord instructed an ordinary disciple by the name of Ananias to share the gospel with Saul of Tarsus. Saul was terrorizing the Christian churches and persecuting them when the Lord encountered him on the road to Damascus and left him blind. Ananias was instructed by the Lord to go to where Saul was and pray with him and present the gospel to him (Acts 9:10-18). Saul converts to Christianity and becomes the Apostle to the Gentiles and also helps bring structure and organization to the Christian church.

The last example that will be used is of the Christians who were scattered abroad due to the persecution that had occurred in Jerusalem. These Christians shared their testimonies one-on-one with the different people they came into contact with and

⁸⁰Ibid., 25.

many were saved (Acts 11:19-21). Personal witnessing was vital to the New Testament church and was an effective method of reaching people with the gospel of Jesus Christ.⁸¹

Public Debate

Public debate should be understood as going point-by-point to refute a person's argument of not accepting Jesus Christ as Lord. This was the case for Paul both in Thessalonica and Athens (Acts 17:1-4, 16-17). Paul's method of doing evangelism in these cases involved him explaining and proving from the Scriptures that Christ was the Messiah. In these two cases, Paul engaged people who had some spiritual interest and who were open to debating him. Paul had more converts in Thessalonica, but he did not allow that to deter him from presenting the gospel in Athens where he was ridiculed and scorned for bringing a new teaching.⁸² Yet, Paul knew that his mandate as a Christian was to present the gospel to all people knowing that only the Lord could bring a person to convert to Christ. He understood his job as a faithful witness.

Prayer

It is important to understand that at the heart of the New Testament Church was prayer. James Campbell writes, "As soon as it was born it began to pray; and it grew in strength and efficiency as its prayer-life developed. Through all its subsequent history, down to the present day, it has abounded in service for the Master when it abounded in prayer, and it has declined in the service of the Master when it has declined in prayer."⁸³

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³James. M. Campbell, *The Place of Prayer in the Christian Religion* (New York: The Methodist Book Concern, 1915), 137.

Throughout the book of Acts, one can find the believers gathering for prayer. In Acts 1:14, 120 believers were commissioned by Christ to wait for the promise of the Father to come upon them in Jerusalem. The promise was the infilling of the Holy Spirit so they could be effective witnesses in sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ (v. 8). The three thousand newly-converted Christians who had accepted Christ on the day of Pentecost gave themselves to prayer (Acts 2:42). Peter and John were heading to the temple at the hour of prayer when they encountered a lame man and healed him in the name of Jesus (3:1). This event led to thousands more being won for Christ. The New Testament church prayed for boldness and power in Acts 4:31. The church also prayed for the release of Peter from jail (12:5) and for the commissioning of Paul and Barnabas (13:3). The New Testament church was saturated in prayer, which led to its supernatural.

Power Encounters and Power Evangelism

The New Testament church also engaged in power encounters and power evangelism as a method of opening doors for the gospel to be heard and spread. It is important that the two terms be properly defined. A power encounter is a “visible, practical demonstration that Jesus Christ is more powerful than the spirits, powers or false gods worshiped or feared by the members of a given society or people group.”⁸⁴ Such examples of this type of evangelism would include Philip casting out demons in Samaria (Acts 8:7), Paul confronting Elymas (Acts 13:8-12), Paul casting out the demon in a fortune-telling girl and, as a result, the Philippian Jailer was converted (Acts 16:16-39), the sons of Sceva, who attempted to drive out a demon and were beaten up

⁸⁴Towns, *Evangelism and Church Growth*, 325.

by the residents of Ephesus, turning to the Lord and burning up their book on witchcraft (Acts 19:11-20), and Paul being bitten by a snake on the island of Malta and not dying (Acts 28:1-6). This was a common method of evangelism in the New Testament church.

Power evangelism is “spreading the gospel by using accompanying supernatural signs and wonders.”⁸⁵ The phrases “signs and wonders (*semia kai terata*),” “signs (*semeia*),” and “miracles (*dunameis*)” all denote healing and are also associated with, and may denote, the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The word “sign” does not always denote miraculous events (e.g., Matt 26:48; Luke 2:12; Rom 4:11; 2 Thess 3:17). The majority of the occurrences in the New Testament denote miraculous events of one sort or another.⁸⁶

The New Testament church also engaged in power evangelism in order to open doors for the gospel to be preached and confirmed. Power evangelism was employed by Peter to heal people (e.g., Acts 5:12-16; 9:32-35, 36-43). Power evangelism was employed by such laymen as Stephen, Phillip, and Ananias as well (e.g., Acts 6:8; 8:5-7, 13; 9:11, 12; 22:12,13).⁸⁷ This type of evangelism also included the gifts of the Holy Spirit working in and among regular members (e.g., Phillip's daughters, Acts 21:9).⁸⁸

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Ibid., 354.

⁸⁷Ibid.

⁸⁸Ibid.

Literary Evangelism

Literary evangelism is defined as the apostles simply putting pen and ink to what they witnessed.⁸⁹ Literary evangelism was employed by the apostles in order make sure people understood who Jesus was and what he did for humanity (Luke 1:1-4; John 20:31). It served a great purpose when the apostles wanted to get the gospel to a people group they could not reach. It was frequently employed by the Apostle Paul and allowed him the opportunity to disciple, give counsel, and instruct the churches and believers of Jesus Christ.⁹⁰

Conclusion

From the studied passages above, one can first see the principles that Jesus employed when engaging in evangelism. They are principles that can serve the local church if it desires to implement biblical strategies for doing evangelism. The lessons the church can learn from these principles are as follows: first, the church must be personal by making itself available to people, not treating any two alike, not talking over their heads in regards to spiritual matters, and speaking to people in a manner they can understand. Second, the church must be pointed in evangelism. It must not hide the fact that the message of the gospel requires both sacrifice and self-denial. Third, the church must be prayerful, asking the Lord to send laborers into the field so more of the harvest can be saved. The church must develop a prayer life in order to stay in constant fellowship with the Father for power and service. Fourth, the church must be powerful

⁸⁹Terry, *Evangelism*, 26.

⁹⁰Ibid.

when engaging in evangelism. In order for the church to follow the principles of Jesus, the church must discover the power in the person of the Holy Spirit. Jesus depended on the power and person of the Holy Spirit when performing miracles, healings, and exorcising demons. When the church operates in the power of the Holy Spirit it gives credence and testimony to a lost and dying world that Jesus is the Son of God. Fifth, the church must have a passion and consuming love for lost souls. This love will motivate Christians to share the gospel whenever possible and stay focused on this goal while here on the earth. Finally, the church must be purposeful when engaging in evangelism. Jesus was effective in evangelism because he was purposeful. This is a principle the church must learn in order not to see that their evangelistic labor is not in vain.

The members of the class should not only learn but also implement these principles, which will affect their method of doing evangelism in a biblical manner. While the methods of Jesus and the New Testament church include teaching, preaching, healing and exorcisms, fulfilling the Great Commission by sharing the gospel with family, friends, and those they came into contact with it is easy to see that all of this was driven by the principles of Jesus, which include being personable, pointed, passionate, prayerful, powerful, and purposeful. The members will be effective if they implement these principles and allow these principles to dictate their method of doing evangelism.

CHAPTER 3
PRACTICAL ISSUES AND MISCONCEPTIONS
OF MODERN EVANGELISM PRACTICES
AND METHODS

Chapter 3 addresses theoretical and practical issues of the principles and methods employed in modern-day evangelism, which will be compared to those of Jesus and the New Testament church. There are major differences between the principles and methods of today compared with those practiced by Christ and the New Testament church, which has resulted in faulty, if not false, conversions and has left the church fruitless when it comes to sharing the faith. This chapter discusses four major points: (1) a clear understanding of what the gospel is; (2) a clear understanding of what evangelism is; (3) common misunderstandings and confusion about modern day evangelism made by lay men (4) ways the local church hinders lay people from doing biblical evangelism.

Understanding What the Gospel Is

One issue that has caused much confusion and debate is understanding the gospel of Jesus Christ. Mark Dever writes, “[T]hat which passes for the gospel too often becomes a very thin veneer spread lightly over our culture’s values, becoming shaped and formed to its contours rather than to the truth about God. The real story, the real message, becomes lost.”¹ Over the years, different ministers have given different definitions of

¹Mark Dever, *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 32.

what the gospel is and have also given their own definitions of the word. These various definitions have been passed on to local congregations as truth and have not been sifted through the Bible. Since an understanding of what the Bible says about the gospel is no longer available, it has given the local church dismal results that do not line up with the word of God.²

In order for one to recover the meaning of the word "gospel" it important to see how the Bible defines "gospel." The Greek word for gospel is *euaggelion*, which is translated "good news." One definition of the gospel is "the content of what a person must believe for salvation-Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day, according to the scriptures (1 Cor. 15:1-5)."³ Another definition of the gospel is as follows:

It was the news of the incarnation, the atonement, and the kingdom-the cradle, the cross, and the crown-of the Son of God. It was the news of how God 'glorified his servant Jesus' by making Him Christ, the world's long-awaited Prince and Savior. It was the news of how God made His Son Man; and how, as Man, God made Him Priest, and Prophet, and King; and how, as Priest, God also made Him a sacrifice for sins; and how, as Prophet, God also made Him a lawgiver to His people; and how, as King, God made also made Him Judge of all the world, and given Him prerogatives which in the Old Testament are exclusively Jehovah's own.⁴

The Lausanne Movement provides another definition of the gospel: "The gospel is the good news of God's salvation from the power of evil, the establishment of his eternal kingdom and his final victory over everything which defies his purpose. In his

²John MacArthur, *Fool's Gold? Discerning Truth in an Age of Error* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 39.

³Elmer L. Towns, ed., *Evangelism and Church Growth: A Practical Encyclopedia* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1996), 248.

⁴J. I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1961), 47.

love God purposed to do this before the world began and effected his liberating plan over sin, death and judgment through the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is Christ who makes us free, and unites us in his redeemed fellowship."⁵ The final definition that will be given is one by Mark Dever, who defines the gospel as follows:

[T]he good news is that the one and only God, who is holy, made us in his image to know him. But we sinned and cut ourselves off from him. In his great love, God became a man in Jesus, lived a perfect life, and died on the cross, thus fulfilling the law himself and taking on himself the punishment for the sins of all those who would ever turn and trust in him. He rose again from the dead, showing that God accepted Christ's sacrifice and that God's wrath against us had been exhausted. He now calls us to repent of our sins and trust in Christ alone for our forgiveness. If we repent of our sins and trust in Christ, we are born again into a new life, an eternal life with God.⁶

If the local church is to give an accurate presentation of the gospel, then it cannot deviate from the message.⁷ Otherwise, it would cause people to believe in a false gospel and hope. This chapter will use Mark Dever's definition. Over the years the gospel has come under attack and has been redefined by well-meaning people who seek to appeal to a wider audience. This tactic will cause people to believe they are saved when in fact they are not, and will cause the local church to allow these unconverted people to become members. Churches that are concerned with presenting the gospel and having converted members admitted to their assemblies are congregations whose members "reflect the character of God."⁸ When Christians are not able to present the gospel clearly

⁵"The Lausanne Covenant," <http://www.lausanne.org/en/documents/manila-manifesto.html> (accessed September 3, 2013).

⁶Mark Dever, *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 43.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Mark Dever, *What Is a Healthy Church?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 94.

the testimony of the local church is damaged because its mission is compromised by the presence of unconverted members.

By the standard of Mark Dever's scriptural definition of the gospel, there are several elements missing from many modern gospel presentations. One is the fact that we are sinners and our sins have cut us off from God. In many presentations of the gospel the fact that we are sinners is omitted or is downplayed. Robert Schuller, considered by many a leading contributor to the church growth movement, made the following statement in a 1992 radio interview when asked by Michael Horton whether he would ever refer to members of his own congregation as sinners: "No, I don't think I need to do that. First of all, my congregation is a very mixed audience . . . and I don't want to draw them away further than what they are."⁹ This kind of thinking has taken root among many ministers, and it has produced a harvest of churches where there is little distinction between the life of a believer and the life of a sinner. The Bible states, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23); not to include this teaching in a gospel presentation is to allow a person to think he can remain in his sin and still be able to be saved. The gospel requires people to acknowledge that one is in sin, and it also calls on those being saved to repent of their sins.

Repentance is another element missing in many modern-day presentations of the gospel. Repentance is "a change of mind relating to one's actions or attitudes . . . it may be reflected in sorrow or remorse."¹⁰ The result of repentance is a change in behavior. When repentance is omitted from the gospel it too deceives a person into

⁹"A Conversation with Dr. Robert Schuller," <http://www.whitehorseinn.org/free-articles/interview-with-robert-schuller.html> (accessed September 3, 2013).

thinking he can continue in his old lifestyle and merely add salvation in order to escape the fury of hell. The objective of many ministers and lay people alike is simply to avoid such issues as sin, repentance, the fury of God, or turning from one's old lifestyle. Jesus said, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up the cross and follow Me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it" (Matt 16:24-25). There needs to be an understanding of what the gospel is not. This is another fight that is taking on the New Testament gospel.

First, the gospel is not a message of how to attain wealth. This is also known as a prosperity gospel. There are many Charismatic ministers who tell audiences via television that those who accept Jesus as Lord and Savior will be on their way to financial success. They make statements like the following: "You are kingdom kids and kingdom kids don't wear ragged clothing."¹¹ Some of these ministers include Joel Osteen, Benny Hinn, Creflo Dollar, Kenneth Copeland, Paul White, and Joyce Meyers. This modern-day presentation of the gospel promises to make millionaires out of people if they will accept Christ and give to the ministries who have brought them the message of hope and empowerment. Since this message is broadcast on television constantly, it is easy for people to think it must be true. Yet, there is no statement of Jesus, the apostles, or the New Testament church that promises to make people millionaires. The New Testament church was considered by many to be made up of people who were the downcast of society and yet they were able to touch the entire Roman world within a generation.¹²

¹⁰Towns, *Evangelism and Church Growth*, 340.

¹¹John Piper, *Why I Abominate the Prosperity Gospel*, accessed October 29, 2008, <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/interviews/why-i-abominate-the-prosperity-gospel>.

Second, the gospel is not a message of self-help. In other words, the gospel is not about a person discovering the champion from within or about finding happiness and fulfillment by being a better person, making daily confessionals, or daily visualizing a better life. This is a message that says those who add Jesus to their lives can expect bad days to go away along with any pressure or trial. Those who advocate such a position promise only happy days with no struggles of any kind. Jesus and the New Testament church were misunderstood, criticized, and persecuted for being radical about their message and wanting to share that message with a hostile environment. The self-help gospel is void of self-denial or the anticipation of persecution from a world that is at odds with a holy God. John MacArthur writes, “Being a Christian is not about us; it’s not about our self esteem. It’s about our being sick of our sin and our desperation for forgiveness. It is about seeing Christ as the priceless Savior from sin and death and hell, so that we will willingly give up as much as it takes, even if it costs us our families, our marriages, and whatever else we cherish and possess.”¹³

Third, the gospel is not about Jesus being one of many ways to heaven. Another defect in many modern presentations of the gospel is that Jesus is presented as a good and safe alternative, among many, to get into heaven. Mohler, citing Kimon Howland Sargeant, writes, “Today’s cultural pluralism fosters an under-emphasis on the hard sell of hell while contributing to an overemphasis on the soft sell of personal

¹²John Mark Terry, *Evangelism: A Concise History* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1994), 32.

¹³John MacArthur, *Hard To Believe* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 10-11.

satisfaction through Jesus Christ.¹⁴ The New Testament church and the apostles taught and preached that “there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). They understood that Jesus Christ is the only way to reach the Father, and there is no other safe alternative. Taking this stand would cost the lives of many of the early believers of the first century. Today, the gospel is presented in such a way as to allow people to add Jesus to their collection of gods without asking people to reject and give up those other gods. This kind of gospel is nothing better than having a rabbit's foot on the Day of Judgment. Jesus himself made the claim that he is "the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). In order for the gospel to be New Testament it needs to be presented to make sure the hearers understand that there is no other path to eternal life except for Christ alone.

Fourth, the gospel is not about Jesus being your friend.¹⁵ This understanding of the gospel has caused people to think of Jesus as a life coach, spiritual trainer, business partner, or merely a life companion. One of the major flaws with this presentation of Jesus and the gospel is that it puts Jesus and the sinner on the same plane. Christ is presented as an example that one should strive to imitate without giving any allegiance to him or surrendering one's will to his will.¹⁶ It deceives the sinner into thinking Christianity is a democracy, with Christ having 50 percent of the vote and the sinner having the other half. Jesus made the choice to come to this earth to serve and then made

¹⁴R. Alber Mohler Jr., *The Disappearance Of God* (Colorado Springs: Mulnomah, 2009), 45

¹⁵Dever, *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism*, 37.

¹⁶Ibid.

the choice to die. His life was a living sacrifice so others could have eternal life. The true gospel of Jesus Christ requires the sinner to follow his example of being a living sacrifice and surrendering one's will to the Father.¹⁷ These elements are missing when the gospel is presented as accepting Jesus to be one's friend.

Understanding What Evangelism Is

An understanding of evangelism is needed now that the gospel has been defined. Evangelism cannot happen without the gospel being presented and understood by those who are hearing it. Whether the person or persons receive or reject the message makes no difference if evangelism has occurred. Evangelism occurs when the gospel is presented and understood by those hearing it and have had a chance to respond to it. "The English word *evangelism* comes from the Greek word, *euaggelidzo*, which is often translated in English Bibles as 'preach the gospel.' *Euaggelidzo* comes from the word *euangellion*, which means 'gospel.' Thus 'evangelize' literally means 'to gospelize.'"¹⁸ Packer offers this definition of evangelism: "According to the New Testament, evangelism is just preaching the gospel . . . [I]t is a work of communication in which Christians make themselves mouthpieces for God's mercy to sinners. Since the divine message finds its climax in a plea from the Creator to a rebel world to turn and put faith in Christ, the delivering of it involves the summoning of one's hearers to conversion. If you are not, in this sense, seeking to bring about conversions, you are not evangelizing."¹⁹

¹⁷Ibid., 39.

¹⁸John Mark Terry, *Church Evangelism* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1997), 2.

¹⁹Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 41.

Common Misunderstandings and Practices of Modern-Day Evangelism

Now that the gospel and evangelism have been defined, it is important to clear up any misunderstandings of what evangelism is. First, evangelism is not sharing a testimony. A person's testimony can be very powerful and useful when evangelizing, but one needs to understand that just sharing a personal life story is not evangelism.²⁰ One of the problems of presenting confusing a testimony with evangelism is that it can take the place of the gospel. Personal testimony could have a several major pitfalls. First, it could play on a person's emotions. The result may be a faulty conversion, since the sinner is not turning to Christ but rather wants a changed life. This desire is understandable, since most people want a quick fix from a life of misery, defeat, and or addiction. As soon as the deceived person does not see a quick change or feels like he has been deceived, it is most likely the person will walk away from the faith. He was never confronted with the fact that he was a sinner in need of a Savior or that he needed to forsake his old lifestyle. In the book of Acts the Apostle Peter could have allowed the lame beggar who was healed at the Beautiful Gate to give a testimony and no doubt it would have been powerful; however, Peter took the opportunity to present the gospel to the massive crowd, and as a result about 5,000 men gave their lives to Christ (Acts 3:1-4:4). The gospel must still be presented, and the focus must remain on Christ and what he did on the cross of Calvary.

²⁰Dever, *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism*, 73.

The second misunderstanding many lay people have when it comes to evangelism is that they conceive of it as consisting of acts of charity or political action.²¹ Advocates of this view of evangelism support their understanding by pointing to Jesus' example of feeding the multitudes or healing the masses. The philosophy of such proponents of social service is "meet the need" and/or be an example of love to a lost and dying world. The reasoning behind doing such gracious acts of kindness or political reform is to improve the quality of life in a society. It is commendable for every Christian to perform acts of love; it can be a very effective way of opening doors to share the gospel. However, it often results in a loss of the message of the gospel. Donald McGavran is considered by many to be the father of the modern church growth movement and a pragmatist, yet even he made the following statement when it comes to doing social services or acts of love: "Evangelism is not proclaiming the desirability of a liquorless world and persuading people to vote for prohibition. Evangelism is not proclaiming the desirability of sharing the wealth and persuading people to take political action to achieve it."²² Oswald Chambers wrote that it is not the duty of the Christian to "uplift the heathen, not to heal the sick, not to civilize savage races, because all that sounds rational and so human, and it is easy to arouse interest in it and get funds for it. The primary duty . . . is to preach 'repentance and remission of sins in his name.'"²³ If the local church is to follow the principles and methodologies of Jesus and the New

²¹Ibid., 74.

²²Ibid., 75-76.

²³Oswald Chambers, *So Send I You: A Series of Missionary Studies* (Fort Washington, PA: Oswald Chambers Publications Association and Christian Literature Crusade, 1975), 142.

Testament church then the “gospel must be clearly communicated, whether in written or oral form.”²⁴ Christ and the New Testament church always gave a clear presentation of the gospel even after performing an act of love such as feeding the hungry, healing the sick, or casting out demons.

A third misunderstanding of many lay people and ministers in local churches is that paid professionals should do evangelism. It is the idea that the church pays the preacher or a person who has the gift of evangelism to do all the evangelism by himself. This type of mentality is in direct defiance of the command given by Jesus to all Christians found in the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20). It was never the Lord’s intention for only a few to carry the gospel into the whole world. That would not be possible or even feasible. In order for the Great Commission to be obeyed, each Christian must actively share his faith with unbelievers. John Mark Terry states, “The church’s assignment, then, is to make more and more disciples in every ethnic group in the world until the whole world is discipled.”²⁵ Herbert Cane wrote, “In those early days the church was mission. The responsibility for carrying out the task [the Great Commission] rests with the entire Christian community.”²⁶ The Great Commission was a commandment given by the Lord, and it was taken seriously not only by the apostles but also by all who came to the faith. In fact, the Bible records that when persecution hit the church in Jerusalem all of the apostles stayed but the Christians scattered throughout “Judea and

²⁴Dever, *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism*, 75.

²⁵Terry, *Church Evangelism*, 8.

²⁶J. Herbert Cane, *Christian Missions in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976), 65.

Samaria” (Acts 8:1). The message of the gospel was able to spread because the scattered Christians were spreading the faith and wanting to be obedient to the challenge of the Lord. Again, it was not something that was done by a few but by all true believers.

A fourth misunderstanding of lay people about evangelism, especially in the context of FWHC, is thinking that evangelism is simply inviting people to a church service or event. This type of evangelism is referred to as “event evangelism.” Simply put, it is “inviting people to an event at the church where they can hear the gospel and be saved.”²⁷ This may a good stepping-stone for someone who is just starting out in attempting to witness, but the fact of the matter is that evangelism is not just inviting someone to church. When a congregation only engages in this type of activity it says something about their theology of evangelism. First, it is disobedient to the command of the Lord when he says “go and tell.” The Christian who only invites people to a service or event inadvertently changes the focus of that command to “come and hear.” Second, this type of activity demonstrates that the Christian really buys into the previous point, namely, that evangelism should be done by professionals. Maybe the Christian feels inadequate or feels like the preacher would do a better job. The fact of the matter is that the Christian is saying that only the professional has the gifting and education to evangelize. This deceives the Christian into thinking that the clergy are to do the work of ministry instead of being equipped to carry it out as described in Ephesians.²⁸ Third, Christians usually only invite non-Christians to special events happening at the church,

²⁷Towns, *Evangelism and Church Growth*, 238.

²⁸Terry, *Church Evangelism*, 73.

which only happens a few times a year. This habit starts to downplay the urgency in the Christian to be constantly sharing their faith to the point they do not see the need to be on the outlook for lost souls. Fourth, it also puts pressure on the preacher and local church to be an attraction or event-oriented church rather than a Great Commission church that is equipping the saints to carry forth the gospel to a lost and dying world. It becomes evident the local church does not see its main mission as carrying forth the gospel; again, this reveals a faulty view of the church's focus when it comes to evangelism and whether or not it takes seriously the commandment of the Lord Jesus Christ to go into all the world.

The fifth misunderstanding of lay people is that evangelism is not the primary mission of the local church and is therefore not a priority.²⁹ The first rationale behind this position is that the pastor sees himself more as a teacher whose job it is to equip the saints and watch over their souls. The minister and church would see Ephesians 4:11-14 as their purpose for being a church. This type of church setting usually resembles a seminary, with a heavy emphasis on knowing Bible doctrines and taking notes.³⁰ The pastor of this type of church will more than likely spend a majority of his week in the study with little to no involvement with the lost. The church may be orthodox in its beliefs and practices but is cold and loveless place, much like the Ephesian church in the book of Revelation, because there is no love for the lost (Rev 2:1-7). A second reason a pastor or church might come to this conclusion is because it has become ingrown and stagnant. The church has become like a country club, or it sees its mission as taking care of the needs of

²⁹Ken Hemphill, *The Antioch Effect* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1994), 155-56.

³⁰Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 123.

the sheep at the expense of evangelism.³¹ Whether it is spoken or not the church is only looking out for the welfare of the members, and if someone new were to come into their fellowship, it would disrupt the whole system. Some may even see it as a threat to the unity of the church. The church members of these types of churches take pride in their facilities and in some cases even put a fence around their property and building to keep the outside community from coming in. It is only matter of time before the church members either die out or move out of the community, and since there was no emphasis on taking the gospel to the lost, the church building is the only record that there was any kind of lighthouse in the community.³²

The sixth misunderstanding of lay people about evangelism is that there is no need to press for a decision. Some Christians do a great job of presenting the gospel to a lost soul and even do it with thoroughness and clarity, but when it comes to asking the person if he or she would like to accept Christ, there is no follow through. One reason that a Christian might not press for a decision is because he or she feels as though it might be too confrontational. Another reason why a Christian might not press Christ on an individual is because he or she believes there should be no human involvement when it comes to the conversion of a person. With further study one can see how God works with humanity to bring about conversion:

[T]he word “convert” is a translation of the Greek *epistrephō*, which means—and is sometimes translated—“turn”. We think of conversion as a work of God, and so

³¹Ibid.

³²A number of churches in Fort Worth that were once thriving, all Anglo congregations, where the community has changed, have given over their buildings or even sold them at a third of the cost to help new inner city and minority church planters have a chance to reach out to the changing demographic; however, it should be noted that the churches that grew with changing congregations are churches who see the Great Commission as the number one priority of the church.

from one standpoint it is; but it is striking to observe that in the three New Testament passages, here *epistrephō* is used transitively, of “converting” someone to God, the subject of the verb is not God, as we might have expected, but a preacher.³³

When this meaning of the term is understood it becomes evident that the Lord desires Christians to make salvation available to the lost and also calls on the Christian to press for a decision. It is not good enough merely to present facts about the Bible or about Jesus, but the gospel must be presented in order for evangelism to take place; however, as seen in the definition given by Packer, evangelism has not taken place if there is no appeal or summons made to the sinner to accept Christ. The Apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost pressed upon the crowd to repent and accept Christ (Acts 2:38, 40). The Apostle Paul inquired of the disciples he discovered in Ephesians if they had received the Holy Spirit, meaning had they accepted Christ (Acts 19:2). When he found out they had only been water baptized with John’s baptism, he proceeded to share the gospel with them (Acts 19:4). His presentation urged the men to accept Christ, and they did so in verse 5. Paul believed in evangelism and believed it was a message to be given with urgency and with the hopes of seeing people converted. His desire to see this was so strong he says “I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some” (1 Cor 9:22).

Another misunderstanding done by lay people in the area of evangelism is in the area of prayer evangelism. Christians who engage in this activity will pray for an individual, neighborhood, part of town, or niche of society that is resistant to the gospel. Ed Silvano is an evangelist from Argentina and a major proponent of prayer evangelism.

³³Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 49.

He defines prayer evangelism as “talking to God about our neighbors before we talk to our neighbors about God.”³⁴ Prayer evangelism has become an important topic within the last 20 to 25 years and rightly so. Chuck Lawless has said, “We cannot ignore the reality of spiritual warfare,”³⁵ which is “*the conflict of two opposing wills*-namely of God and his followers versus Satan and his followers.”³⁶ Some of the leading proponents of this movement would include Peter Wagner, David Yonggi Cho, Jack Deere, and Larry Lea. The purpose of this type of ministry is for the Lord to soften the hearts of those who are resistant to the gospel, to tear down strongholds, bind the strongman over a particular area, and/or repent of past sins of cities or family members. Prayer was vital to Jesus and the New Testament church. Jesus said Christians should pray for the laborers to be sent into the harvest (Matt 9:38); When the New Testament church was being persecuted they prayed for boldness in sharing the gospel (Acts 2:31). The Apostle Paul asked for prayer for boldness to speak the gospel with freedom (Phil 1:19-20). There is little doubt that prayer and evangelism go hand-in-hand. The problem is many Christians are engaging in prayer, as they should, without engaging in the biblical practice of evangelism. Simply stated, prayer is not evangelism. Again, this is a common misunderstanding of many Christians who think all they have to do is pray and evangelism will take place. The communication of the gospel must take place for evangelism to happen.

³⁴Ed Silvano, *Prayer Evangelism* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2000), 35.

³⁵Chuck Lawless, *Disciplined Warriors: Growing Healthy Churches That Are Equipped for Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002), 16.

³⁶John Franklin and Chuck Lawless, *Spiritual Warfare: Biblical Truth for Victory* (Nashville: LifeWay, 2001), 7.

Another common misunderstanding and practice of modern evangelism is doing presence evangelism. Advocates of this type of evangelism argue that we are simply to live with such fullness of the presence of Christ that the lost engage us in dialogue that leads to evangelism. Tommy Tenney, a Pentecostal preacher and author, has described presence evangelism as follows: “the residue of God on a person creates a divine radiation zone of His manifest presence that affects those around him (see Acts 4:13).”³⁷ The problem with this type of modern-day evangelism is that it causes the unbeliever to reach out to the believer. The New Testament is filled with examples of Christ, the apostles, and the New Testament believers reaching out to the lost. They did not wait for the lost to start up a conversation concerning the Lord; rather, they were actively looking for opportunities to share the gospel. Jesus said, “Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out” (Mark 1:38). Paul says in Romans, “How are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent?” (Rom 10:14-15). Lay people need to understand that it is not enough simply to be present, but they must actively seek out the lost, engage them, and present the gospel in order for biblical evangelism to happen.³⁸

A final misconception and practice of evangelism is what is called friendship evangelism. Friendship evangelism is “the principle of reaching others for Christ through

³⁷Tommy Tenney, “How to Change the Atmosphere in the Room,” www.charismamag.com/life/women/9385-carriers-of-his-presence (accessed September 3, 2013).

³⁸Timothy K. Beougher and Alvin Reid, eds., *Evangelism for a Changing World* (Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw, 1995), 117.

natural relationships (i.e. one's friends, relatives, associates, and neighbors."³⁹ The idea is for believers strategically to develop relationships with people who are either lost and/or unchurched. The Christian is encouraged to engage the non-believer through various activities such as attending a sporting event, concert, hunting, barbequing, etc. It is hoped the lost will take notice in the difference in the lifestyle of the believer, that trust will be established, and that with enough time an open door to share the gospel will come out of it. The New Testament church took advantage of sharing the gospel with family members and friends, but it was not something that took years to happen. This is one of the major flaws of this type of evangelism method. Many Christians take years to share the gospel to the friend or associate because they are seeking to establish rapport and trust with the lost, and there are cases where this needs to happen. However, this method allows a Christian to become lax and forget that the reason for developing that relationship is to present the gospel. It could also be an excuse not to engage others whom the Lord could be placing in our paths and whom the Lord has been preparing to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ.

How the Local Church Hinders Lay People from Doing Biblical Evangelism

One way, previously discussed, that a church hinders lay people from doing biblical evangelism is to take the focus off evangelism and put it on teaching believers. In doing so, the church often unwittingly encourages the lay people to invite their non-believing friends only when there is a special event. Another thing that many churches do

³⁹Towns, *Evangelism and Church Growth*, 238.

that keeps church members from engaging in evangelism is conduct “seeker friendly” church services. Advocates and practitioners of the seeker friendly church model include Rick Warren, Ed Young Jr., and Bill Hybels. A seeker service is “a church service designed for the comfort of an unsaved person who is honestly seeking knowledge and experience about God, barriers to reach the persons are removed, and an approach is used especially to reach secular people with the gospel.”⁴⁰ This is a very noble motivation, but it takes the responsibility for evangelism from believers in general and places it in the hands of a few professionals. There is also the possibility that it can cause a church to be so focused on producing a “show” that it can replace the person and place of the Holy Spirit. The church may have the greatest musicians, singers, light show, and speaker, but it still falls short of doing evangelism the New Testament way. Another danger that this approach imposes is if the seeker friendly church is not aggressive in producing disciples it stops short of fulfilling the Great Commission. The result will be a church full of immature Christians who never develop in the faith and may never be able to share the gospel on their own.⁴¹ Again, it places emphasis on the church event and does not follow the New Testament model, in which every member is actively seeking out to spread the gospel.

A second way the local church and ministers often hurt biblical evangelism is by focusing on the numbers of people attending and regarding that as the Lord’s blessing. If the gospel is not presented and pressed on the people attending, it could lead a person

⁴⁰Ibid., 349.

⁴¹MacArthur, *Hard to Believe*, 16-17.

into thinking he is saved when in fact he is not. Jesus and the New Testament church were confrontational and pleaded urgently with the lost to accept Christ.⁴² One can be confrontational without being rude. The local church could hinder Christians from being able to engage in evangelism if it tells people they are okay, God understands their hang-ups, and they do not have to do anything to be saved since it is a God thing.⁴³ This makes the sinner think he cannot do one thing about his salvation, and it could even lead others to think they are saved simply because they enjoy attending a service that is uplifting.

A third way the local church often hurts biblical evangelism is by focusing on the number of people who respond to the altar calls and who say a prayer.⁴⁴ Many churches and Christians become so infatuated with the numbers that they will do surveys to find out where people are hurting and tailor messages to hit them where they live.⁴⁵ They will adapt the music to hit their “target” group to produce an atmosphere that plays on people’s emotions.⁴⁶ There is nothing evil about emotion in and of itself, but when it is used to manipulate people into making a hasty decision of accepting Christ without counting the cost, then the result is a faulty convert whose foundation is built on emotion and not on Christ.⁴⁷

A fourth way the local church often hurts biblical evangelism is by seeking to focus only on ways to target certain groups at the expense of excluding others from

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Dever, *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism*, 32-33.

⁴⁴MacArthur, *Fool’s Gold?*, 131.

⁴⁵Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 160.

⁴⁶MacArthur, *Fool’s Gold?*, 138.

hearing the gospel.⁴⁸ The church at Antioch is a New Testament example of how a church is to reach everyone it possibly can. The church of Antioch was a church that consisted of Jews and Greeks (Acts 11:19-20), and it was a growing and vibrant church (Acts 11:21). The church was a powerful church that ended up commissioning Paul and Silas for the ministry (Acts 13:1-3). It is true that every person has a certain group of people they are most comfortable with, but if the Christian is not encouraged to move outside of his comfort zone it could possibly mean a soul not having an opportunity to hear the gospel. It could also hinder a Christian from learning how to depend on the Holy Spirit when evangelizing. The Great Commission is for the Christian to obey, but the results belong to God. Ken Hemphill perhaps says it best: “The Great Commission is not a divine suggestion.”⁴⁹

The final point to be discussed concerning how ministers and local churches hinder biblical evangelism is that they often cut out some parts of the gospel in order to get decisions. This has a cascading effect. If ministers remove parts of the gospel when appealing to the lost to accept Christ, it sends the message to the Christians sitting in the pews that it is an approved method of evangelism, and it could even cause some to believe it is a biblical way. If people are led into thinking they are Christians when they have not been confronted with the gospel or do not have a correct understanding of the gospel it will flow down to their children and children’s children who are going to be the

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 160.

⁴⁹Hemphill, *The Antioch Effect*, 155.

ones leading the church in the next 15-20 years.⁵⁰ This effect will result in churches being filled with people who have never been converted now leading others to share the faith they do not truly hold.

Conclusion

In order for the local church to be as effective in reaching its world as Jesus and the New Testament church, there must be an evaluation of the differences between the evangelism of the New Testament church and modern evangelism methods employed today. In this chapter, I have attempted to demonstrate what Jesus and the New Testament church included in their presentation of the gospel and what the listeners would have understood when hearing the gospel. I also attempted to define what evangelism is. I then proceeded to touch on modern misunderstandings and practices of evangelism today followed by how the local church often hinders biblical evangelism in the life of a believer. In chapter 4, several key church leaders will be recruited for training in the employment of biblical evangelism at FWHC.

⁵⁰MacArthur, *Hard to Believe*, 12-13.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY USED TO EXECUTE RESEARCH PROJECT

The research project used for FWHC consisted of training members to discover the methods and principles of evangelism employed by Jesus and the New Testament church and the ability to utilize these methods and principles in presenting the gospel. The project consisted of recruiting members of the church based upon certain criteria such as being in good standing with the church and a cross representation of both age and race. The project consisted of a pre-test and post-test questionnaire, an eight-week training class on discovering the different evangelistic methods and principles used in the New Testament, three weeks of utilizing principles and methods discovered in the training in real settings, three weeks of reviewing the methods used and how they lined up with what was learned in the training seminar, followed by a general discussion of how their view of evangelism has changed from before the training. The training used for this project was based on the project's goals: (1) using biblical methods and principles of doing evangelism as seen in the life of Christ and the New Testament church; (2) unlearning and avoiding any modern methods of evangelism that they may be practicing that are not biblical; (3) making sure that the lay person is presenting the gospel as defined in this project and is evangelizing according to the New Testament; (4) impressing upon the members of the group that evangelism is to be a top priority for the

believer and that each believer should seek out opportunities to share the gospel on a consistent and aggressive basis.

Recruitment

The first week consisted of recruiting for the evangelism training seminar. Specific criteria had to be met in order for someone to participate in the training. The recruited person had to be an active member of FWHC and in good standing with the church. This meant that the member had to be born again and water baptized, had to have signed the church covenant and be attending both Sunday morning and Wednesday night services, and had to be a regular tithing member. The reason for this standard was to ensure that the members of the training class would take the project seriously and have a desire for key people in the congregation to understand and develop a passion for sharing the gospel. These recruits were sent a letter explaining that they had been asked to participate in my research project. They had to commit to the classes that would follow, which lasted for a total of fifteen weeks. A schedule was included in each letter so that the members of the training class could coordinate their dates to being in class. The invitation was sent to 25 people; a total of 18 agreed to participate. A major requirement for being able to participate in the training class was that the participant had to agree to not miss more than three sessions. The group consisted of 4 people ages 13-18, 4 people ages 18-24, 4 people ages 25-40, 3 people ages 40-60, and 3 people ages 60 and over. Those under 40 were allowed more members because they were the largest age bracket at FWHC. The group was racially divided as follows: 7 Hispanics, 4 Anglos, and 3 African Americans. Hispanics had the largest numbers because they compromised more than half

of the congregation at FWHC, with the remaining being evenly distributed between Anglos and African American believers.

Initial Meeting and Pre-Training Questionnaire

The group first met on Sunday morning, September 2, 2012, at 9:30 a.m. for ninety minutes. The first meeting described to them the purpose of the training and what would be required of them. It also consisted of an in-depth discussion of what they thought was the gospel and what was evangelism, along with a discussion of why they thought the church was not seeing New Testament results when it came to those being won to Christ. There were several major comments as to why those in the class thought converts were not made at a faster rate. The majority of the participants felt that the church did a good job at inviting people to church for special events or even to hear the gospel, but felt as though the church was weak when it came to having members go and share the gospel on a daily and weekly basis. Some voiced that this could be happening because there was not enough emphasis made about this from the pulpit while others said it could be that there were not enough testimonies from those who regularly witnessed about their faith. Others voiced that the church needed to do more outreach programs like feeding the poor, clothing the hungry, have more guest speakers, and have more concerts. There were other opinions, but the main opinion was that evangelism involved more church activity and the adding of more programs. I led the meeting more like a facilitator in order to get the people to open up about their views about what they thought was evangelism.

During the initial meeting, I raised an alternative point as to why the church was not seeing New Testament converts. I told the group that it could be due to the

methods and principles employed while evangelizing. This point caused many in the class to question whether they were being biblical in their evangelizing, and it led to a discussion over whether or not the church was falling in line with the Bible. The discussion ended with what the members wanted to see happen in their own lives in the area of sharing their faith and what they would like to see happen at FWHC. It was a time of learning for me and realizing that I need to define more clearly from the pulpit, in private conversations, and in practice what the gospel and evangelism are.

The meeting concluded with the pre-training questionnaire. The questionnaire asked participants what they thought was evangelism, the methods they currently used, if any, in presenting the gospel, how many times they engaged in evangelizing the lost, and what their motive(s) or reasoning were for sharing the gospel. I passed out the questionnaire to each participant and explained how it worked. They each took one and finished in about ten minutes and then turned the questionnaires in to me. These questionnaires helped me to touch on key points during the teaching phase and also served as reviews to see how the participant's attitudes towards evangelism had changed from the beginning of the seminar to the end.

The pre-training questionnaire consisted of nineteen questions (see Appendix 1). The first few questions asked the participants to give their names, the number of years they had been serving the Lord, and their age range. One question asked how comfortable they were in sharing the gospel and to rate themselves on a scale of 1-10 with 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest. The next two questions dealt with how often the person shared his or her faith and asked the person to mark the answer that best described why the participant did not share his or her faith. The fourth question on that section of the

survey asked the participants how many evangelism classes or training classes they had attended and participated in. The second part of the questionnaire consisted of twelve questions with the answers given on a 5-point Likert scale. The questions dealt with ascertaining the attitudes and philosophy of the participants when it came to matters of explaining evangelism, explaining the gospel, and understanding the importance of repentance in presenting the gospel.

Time Line

1. Invitations via email and Facebook were sent to 25 people—August 26, 2012
2. Pre-Training Questionnaire and Discussion Class—September 2, 2012
3. Began training—September 16, 2012
4. Concluded training—November 11, 2012
5. Sent out witnessing teams—November 12, 2012
6. Evangelism Report 1—November 18, 2012
7. Sent out witnessing teams—November 19, 2012
8. Evangelism Report 2—November 25, 2012
9. Sent out witnessing teams—November 26, 2012
10. Evangelism Report 3—December 2, 2012
11. Post-Training Questionnaire and general discussion—December 9, 2012

Synopsis of Eight-Week Training Class

The eight-week training class was a Sunday School class that met every Sunday from 9:30 - 10:45 a.m. beginning on September 16. This class was followed by three weeks of each participant partnering up with a fellow class member for the purpose of utilizing the skills they learned from the Bible about sharing the gospel. The person

with whom each partnered had to be of the same sex. They also were asked to use the same partner for the entire three weeks. Their partners would give a verbal assessment of their effectiveness in presenting the gospel and encouraging the person to accept Christ. Each week each person would fill out an evangelism report (see Appendix 3). After each weekly evangelism practicum, the class met to hear the oral evangelism reports from various individuals in the class. During this time, each person would give an oral report, evaluating his or her evangelistic experience. The class was encouraged to ask questions about the different aspects of how they presented the gospel, what method or principle they utilized, how they knew and selected the person, how they feel they could improve, and what would they do differently given the opportunity.

Each class concluded with the participants turning in their evangelism reports and getting feedback from me during the week via email, Facebook, or by phone. The group met for the final time on Sunday, December 9, at which time we concluded with a general discussion of what the training had taught them, how their views had changed, if at all. This time of discussion was followed by the class filling out a post-training questionnaire and discussing their answers.

Lesson 1

The first training class introduced the biblical meaning of the gospel as defined in this project. The definition used during this training was taken from Mark Dever:

The good news is that the one and only God, who is holy, made us in his image to know him. But we sinned and cut ourselves off from him. In his great love, God became a man in Jesus, lived a perfect life, and died on the cross, thus fulfilling the law himself and taking on himself the punishment for the sins of all those who would ever turn and trust in him. He rose again from the dead, showing that God accepted Christ's sacrifice and that God's wrath against us had been exhausted. He now calls us to repent of our sins and trust in Christ alone for our forgiveness. If we

repent of our sins and trust in Christ, we are born again into a new life, an eternal life with God.¹

The class teaching also touched on what would happen if someone misunderstood the gospel; it would produce faulty conversions, unconverted members, and would eventually result in unconverted leadership. These results would happen because people would be deceived into thinking that they were saved. The class also touched upon what modern presentations are missing, namely that humans are sinners and also that repentance is part of the gospel. The following definition of repentance was used: “A change of mind relating to one's actions or attitudes. . . . [I]t may be reflected in sorrow or remorse.”² The teaching also touched upon what the gospel was not—a method for gaining wealth, a self-help technique, the idea that Jesus was a way to heaven, and the idea that Jesus is merely one's friend.³ Attention was given to the following passages: 1 Corinthians 15:1-5, Matthew 16:24-25, Acts 4:12, and John 14:6.

Lesson 2

This lesson defined evangelism and focused on the Greek meaning of *euaggelidzo* and *euaggellion*. The definition that the class used was a definition taken from J. I. Packer:

¹Mark Dever, *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 43.

²Elmer L. Towns, ed., *Evangelism and Church Growth: A Practical Encyclopedia* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1996), 340.

³One of the reasons these points were touched upon was because FWHC members are surrounded by the teachings of charismatic pastors such as Kenneth Copeland, Mike Murdoch, T. D. Jakes, John Hagee, and Joel Osteen. All of these ministries, with the exception of John Hagee and Joel Osteen, are within a thirty-minute drive of FWHC. The other two ministries are located within the same state, only a few hours away.

According to the New Testament, evangelism is just preaching the gospel. . . . [I]t is a work of communication in which Christians make themselves mouthpieces for God's mercy to sinners. Since the divine message finds its climax in a plea from the Creator to a rebel world to turn and put faith in Christ, the delivering of it involves the summoning of one's hearers to conversion. If you are not, in this sense, seeking to bring about conversions, you are not evangelizing.⁴

The training session also touched upon common misunderstandings about evangelism and how the local church hinders laymen from doing biblical evangelism. The following misunderstandings and practices of modern evangelism were discussed and dealt with: sharing one's testimony (the tendency is for people to put the focus on the life of the person rather than on what Christ has done on the cross), doing social services or acts of charity (the idea that one is bringing salvation to a people by bringing about reform and meeting needs like Christ), the thinking that evangelism should be done by paid professionals (this way of thinking is contrary to the practice of the New Testament church, which took the Lord's Commission found in Matthew 28:18-20 seriously and did not believe it was only for the apostles), the thinking that inviting a person to church is doing evangelism (this way of thinking causes a church to be disobedient to the Great Commission and unwittingly places the pressure of doing the task of evangelism on the pastor and programs and events), and the thinking that evangelism is not the primary task of the church. The reason a church would get to such a state is because the pastor begins to see himself more as a teacher whose job is to equip the saints than to do ministry as described in Ephesians 4:11-14 and the church is seen more as a place where learning

⁴J. I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1961), 41.

biblical doctrine the priority. Or, another extreme may arise where the needs of the members are placed as a priority of the church at the expense of the church becoming ingrown and stagnate.

Another misunderstanding and practice of modern evangelism is when one presses a person who is being evangelized into making a decision to accept Jesus Christ. Several possibilities were given to explain this behavior: (1) the witness may feel like he is being too confrontational and placing the lost person in an awkward position; (2) the theology of the witness might be skewed, prioritizing the human element of salvation as opposed to the reality that salvation is only from the Lord (passages reviewed for this section were Acts 2:38, 40; Acts 5:19; 1 Cor 9:22). The next misunderstanding among modern day evangelists is to think that prayer evangelism is evangelism. While it is true that Christians are to pray that the Lord would send more laborers into the field to share the gospel with boldness and freedom, the clear communication of the gospel still lies with the believer. Passages reviewed for this section included Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 2:31, and Philippians 1:19-20.

The next misunderstanding and practice made by laymen in modern evangelism is presence evangelism. The idea behind this misunderstanding is that the believer should be so filled with the glory of God that the lost take notice and engage the believer in conversation. Some would point to Moses and Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration shining with the glory of God to illustrate this concept of evangelism. Another example of those who believe this form of evangelism is true evangelism is taken from Acts 4:13, where the council could tell Peter and John were uneducated but had been with Jesus. This idea is in direct contrast to the examples left by Jesus and the

Apostle Paul (Mark 1:38; Rom 10:14-15). The last misunderstanding concerning evangelism made by laymen is the practice of friendship evangelism. This idea teaches that evangelism is best accomplished through developing relationships and friendships with lost family members, friends, and acquaintances. The idea is to live with the person one is trying to evangelize with the hopes of gaining the trust of that person. This may take several weeks, months, and even years. This approach to evangelism can cause a person to lose sight of engaging the person evangelistically, or having the Christian become lazy, or causing the Christian to lose focus on any one else that the Lord may be trying to place in his or her life.

Lesson 3

Lesson 3 dealt with how the local church hinders laymen from engaging in biblical evangelism. The main points that were discussed in this lesson were as follows: the church not seeing evangelism as its main priority and instead seeing its main purpose to teach biblical doctrine and simply invite people to a service that is catered to the lost; focusing on numbers as a sign that God's blessing is upon the church; focusing on the number of people walking the aisles and saying a prayer; and, finally, focusing on target groups at the expense of reaching out to those who do not fit the image the church is wanting to present.

Lesson 4

This lesson will covered the principles Jesus used in evangelism as found in the gospels, which include the following aspects: Jesus was personal (Matt 4:18-19; 19:16-30; John 3:1-21; 4:1-42; 8:1-11); Jesus was pointed (Mark 8:34-38; 10:38-39; John 6); Jesus was prayerful (Matt 9:35-38; 26:39-46; Mark 1:35-39; Luke 5:15-16); Jesus was

powerful (Matt 12:28; Luke 4:1; John 1:32); Jesus was passionate (Matt 9:35-36; 14:14; 15:32; 20:29-34); and Jesus was purposeful (Matt 9:11-13; Luke 19:1-10; John 4:1-15).

Lesson 5

Week 5 covered the methods of Jesus' evangelism found in the gospels, including the following: his interaction with Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46-52), the Gadarene demoniac (Luke 8:26-39), the man born blind (John 9:1), and his meeting with the Samaritan woman (John 4:3). The method of Jesus' teaching was also discussed: how he taught (Matt 4:23; 9:33), the fact that his teaching amazed people (Matt 7:28) and that he taught with authority (Matt 7:29), the fact that Jesus told stories that the people could understand (Matt 13:34), and that people enjoyed listening to him (Mark 12:37).

Lesson 6

Week 6 was a continuation of the principles used by Jesus when evangelizing with special attention given to the following: his preaching (Matt 4:17; Mark 1:38; Mark 1:15); his meeting the needs of the people (Matt 15:30; Luke 6:17-18; John 6:2); his producing and re-producing of disciples throughout the world (Mark 3:14); his commissioning of his disciples to go out and do what he did (Luke 10:1-12; John 20:21); and his giving of the Great Commission as a model for all of his disciples to continue making new disciples and reaching the nations (Matt 28:16-20).

Lesson 7

Week 7 consisted of an overview of the methods employed by the New Testament Church in doing evangelism as found in the book of Acts. Special attention was given to the following areas:

1. Mass evangelism as done by Peter on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2) and on Solomon's Portico (Acts 3: 11-4:4); Philip in Samaria (Acts 8:4-8)
2. House-to-house witnessing done by the believers (Acts 5:42). A look into how house-to-house witnessing helped with the conversion of Cornelius and his household (Acts 10:23-48), and the conversion of the Philippian jailor (Acts 16)
3. Public preaching by Peter and John in the temple (Acts 3:1-10); Paul preaching to Agrippa and other high officials in Caesarea and Rome (Acts 26 and 28)
4. Personal witnessing as performed by Philip's encounter with the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-38); Ananias and Saul (Acts 9:10-18), and the scattering of the Jewish Christians after persecution arose in Jerusalem (Acts 11:19-21)
5. Public debate by Paul in Athens (Acts 17:16-17)

Lesson 8

Week 8 was a continuation of the review of the evangelistic methods employed by the New Testament Church as found in the book of Acts with specific attention given to the following areas:

1. The place of prayer within the New Testament church with particular attention given to the following passages: Acts 1:14; 2:42; 3:1; 4:31; 12:5; 13:3.
2. The use of power encounters and power evangelism as demonstrated by Peter healing a lame man (Acts 3:1-10), Philip in Samaria (Acts 8:4-8), Peter's healing of Aeneas (Acts 9:32-35), Peter's healing of Dorcas (Acts 9:36-43), Paul's confronting Elymas (Acts 13: 8-12), Paul in Iconium (Acts 14:3), Paul in Lystra (Acts 14:8-11), and Paul in Ephesus (Acts 19:11-20)
3. Literary evangelism as done by the apostles when they wrote out their accounts of Jesus and what he came to do (Luke 1:1-4; John 20:31)

Post-Training Seminar

Participants of the class were given three weeks to evangelize lost family members, friends, or even complete strangers implementing the methods and principles learned from the class. Each member partnered with a fellow classmate even though each participant had to evangelize a person independent of each other. The partners could be

with them during the entire three weeks of doing the evangelism practicum, however. Each participant only had to witness one time during the week. This practicum helped the participants put into practice what they had just learned while also putting pressure on them to be actively involved in evangelizing the lost. After each evangelistic encounter, the two team members sat down and critiqued each other as to how they did—if they were clear in their presentation and if they were persistent in encouraging the person to accept Christ. This time of critique would also take place during the reviews with the bigger class in case each member remembered something or had something else to share. It was also a way to encourage each other that they were doing an effective job.

After each week of engaging in evangelism, the class met and went over the evangelism report that each person had filled out for the person to whom they had witnessed. The evangelism report was based on the model given as a resource from the Doctor of Ministry office at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. The class members dealt with how they decided on a person to evangelize. They also dealt with how they specifically went about setting the time for the evangelistic encounter. In other words, was the meeting over a meal or was it simply a planned appointment? Next, each person was asked how he or she made the transition into presenting the gospel to the lost person. Each person who gave a report also had to give an evaluation on how well he or she presented the gospel and what he or she included or maybe forgot to include. The class also had each partner give their opinion on how the witness did in presenting the gospel to determine if anything was missing. Each person gave a candid assessment of what he or she did or did not do. Each candidate was also asked to share the specific method he or she followed from either Jesus or the New Testament church. All of the

class members were able to categorize their methods with one of the Bible methods presented in the research project.

On the final week, the participants re-took the pre-test questionnaire and compared their answers to their pre-test questionnaire. The questionnaire was given at the beginning of the class; the class was given ten minutes to fill it out. After they filled out the questionnaire, the class discussed how their views on evangelism had changed, if they now had more of a passion to share the gospel, if they felt better equipped to share, and if they could determine what was missing in their presentation of the gospel from before the training to the end of the class. Each member felt that they had a better understanding of the gospel and what it meant to evangelize biblically. They also felt they could now give a thorough presentation of the gospel now that they understood what the gospel meant to the New Testament church. Their passion to win people to Christ as the New Testament church was exciting and contagious to say the least. They felt equipped to make disciples of Jesus Christ because they had studied the different case scenarios from the Bible itself as opposed to studying someone's mere method of gaining a convert. The last class was one of rejoicing due to the people who had been won to the Lord and also encouragement to the believer who now felt as instrument in the hand of God.

CHAPTER 5

PROJECT EVALUATION

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The purpose of this project was to discover the evangelistic methods employed by Jesus and the New Testament church as found in the Gospels and the book of Acts and implement those principles among the laypersons of Fort Worth Harvest Church. In many ways, this purpose was fulfilled. Bible passages, terminology, and examples were covered. It was also fulfilled by having the participants of the project go out and evangelize using the knowledge they had gained during their training. The oral reports allowed the participants to honestly assess what they had done, and it also allowed honest feedback from fellow peers to determine if the person was utilizing the methods as employed by Jesus and the New Testament church. This project did indeed fulfill its purpose.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

This project attempted to accomplish five goals. The first goal was to discover the evangelism principles utilized by Jesus and the New Testament church within the Gospels and the book of Acts. The second goal was to help laypeople avoid or unlearn any modern evangelistic methods or principles not employed in the New Testament. The third goal was to teach laypeople how to present the gospel when they evangelized. The fourth goal was to impress upon the members that evangelism should be the priority of

the church; it was done on a regular basis in hopes that the members would start engaging in evangelism consistently.¹ The fifth and final goal was personal. It was my personal objective to engage in evangelism outside of the pulpit more than any one else in the church.

Of the 18 people who agreed to participate in this project, when asked if they were interested in using the principles and methods of evangelism as employed by Jesus and the New Testament church, the results from the pre-seminar questionnaire and the post-seminar questionnaire changed in favor of it by 7 votes. The pre-seminar questionnaire only had 11 out of the 18 interested in discovering the models as opposed to 17 out of the 18 in the post-seminar questionnaire. When asked in the final meeting why this number went up, the answer was that none of the members had ever done a study on their methods and principles of evangelism. This change is a by-product of having gone through the seminar and looking at the various New Testament examples of Jesus and the New Testament church and how they practiced evangelism. The seminar helped pique the curiosity of the members; it also caused them to want to begin a deeper study of each scenario and to discover what else they could learn about evangelism.

The second goal was more of a compromise. It was to unlearn and avoid any evangelistic practices not described in the Bible. The class continued to use models of evangelism such as friendship, acts of services, prayer evangelism, sharing one's testimony. They used modern methods to open doors to engage someone in evangelism and then presented the gospel. By the end of the fifteen weeks, each student was able to clearly define the gospel and evangelism.

¹For quantifiable results of these goals, see Appendix 2.

The third goal of the project was to teach the believers the gospel and to make sure that they could clearly present the gospel message when sharing their faith. The participants learned a working definition of the word “gospel.” Based on the discussions given during class and on their evangelistic reports, the majority were presenting the gospel clearly when they went out to share their faith with a partner. Those who participated have developed into a Great Commission Task Force and are using the working definition they were taught as a means to evangelize.

The fourth goal of the project was to have the participants see evangelism as a priority and make it a consistent practice in their daily lives. This goal has been accomplished so far. The class made the commitment to form a Great Commission Task Force within FWHC for the purpose of keeping each other accountable by weekly teaming up with other members of the class for the purpose of engaging in evangelism, especially for the purpose of winning lost family members to Christ. The enthusiasm of the class exceeded my expectations. The Great Commission Task Force also decided to meet every week and allow individuals to give an oral report of their evangelistic endeavors, sharing the methods they used from the Bible and allowing for a time of feedback from the group.

The fifth goal was my own personal goal. I had planned to share the gospel with at least three people a week outside of the pulpit ministry. I wanted the three individuals to be people whom I had never met before or who did not consider FWHC their home church. I shared this goal with my fellow elders and filled out a weekly report during the fifteen weeks the class met. This process kept me accountable, and it also made me think of the people I was training when they faced different scenarios. Doing

evangelism reminded me that it is not always as smooth as one might think. These encounters allowed me to address various issues with our class that arise while evangelizing. For example, I was able to share with them how one avoids getting into a theological debate with a lost person, what to do when the person is taking over the conversation, how to keep in mind that one is there to present the gospel, and to be aware of those who claim to be saved but do not see the purpose of going to any church. It allowed me to see the different battles people are having to face first hand when evangelizing in today's society.

Strengths of the Project

One of the strengths of the project was that it forced the people to study how Jesus and the New Testament church did evangelism. This study allowed the people to see what is most important in doing evangelism. Evangelism is not the mastery of a method but is seeing people as Jesus sees them—with love, compassion, and as individuals with a story. The class was amazed to discover that Jesus treated his encounters with people differently and that he took the time to value those to whom he was evangelizing. He took the time to find out what ailed them and, out of love, he sought to heal them from that ailment. It was instilled in the students that to be involved with evangelism was to love people as Christ loved people. There were a few people in the beginning who had an attitude of “I've done my job of sharing the gospel” and who had little care or compassion for the lost, but, by the end of the training seminar, their attitudes of judgment were overcome by love.

A second strength of the project was that it gave people a better understanding of the gospel and evangelism. The majority of the class believed that evangelism was

simply doing anything in the name of the Lord or inviting a person to church or handing out a business card with the church's information on it. Many of their beliefs on evangelism were challenged because they had heard from well meaning people that doing evangelism was helping people, praying for them, befriending them, or just being in their lives. This project pushed the believers out of their comfort zones and challenged them to open their mouths and declare who Jesus is, what his life and death meant, and to exhort others to accept Christ as their Lord and Savior. For a majority of those in the class, this class enabled them to share their faith for the very first time.

A third strength of this project was that it ignited a passion in the believers' lives to evangelize. The brothers and sisters were not only fulfilling the Great Commission but were using their spiritual gifts to uplift and encourage each other when they met during their evangelistic reports. It caused them to pray like the New Testament church did in Acts; it caused them to focus on their mission, which was to win the lost for Christ; and it caused them to see that while they are responsible for sharing the good news, only God brings about the results. These outcomes helped the class understand that evangelism is not about how many people accept Christ; rather, it is about the believer being faithful to the Great Commission and trying to do so under the power of the Holy Spirit and with great urgency.

Weaknesses of the Project

One of the weaknesses of the project was the time constraint of the class, specifically the fact that there was not enough time for the class to interact with the different Bible passages that were covered in the class. I would have preferred that the class spend more time with each text and to ask questions so that different scenarios

could be brought up. More time would have allowed the people to adapt new principles or methods of evangelism to their own lives. The time constraint prevented the members of the class from digging deeper into the different texts, and it even prevented new discoveries from being made.

A second weakness of the project was that a plan of action after the project was completed was not developed. The class decided to continue doing evangelism and developing a Great Commission Task Force that will continue for the entire 2013 calendar year. The Task Force will meet weekly for prayer, review evangelism reports, and each member will recruit members of the congregation who have not gone through the initial training. Three times during the year the class will recruit new people—once for the spring, once for the summer, and once for the winter. These are all positive ideas, but this was the work of the Lord and it was not something for which I can take credit.

A third weakness of the project was not making the class mandatory for all of the deacons in the church. My plan was to make evangelism a priority in the lives of those who participated and to make evangelism part of the culture of FWHC. The reason I would make it a mandatory class for deacons is to have them all agree on what the true gospel and evangelism are. I also wish that I had asked the deacons to select two members of the congregation to train by taking them along with them when evangelizing. One last thing that I would have changed is requiring this training and practice for all those wishing to become deacons. In other words, it would be a requirement for all those who wanted to be elected into the office of deacon.

What I Would Do Differently

I would have done three things differently with the project. The first thing I would have done differently is have the group members spend more time having discussions concerning their evangelistic endeavors. Due to time constraints and the way the project was scheduled, the participants did not have enough time to share what they faced in explaining the gospel in the evangelistic prospects. It would have helped if the class could have been extended a few weeks and each student, or pair of students, could have given a brief, oral report with follow-up time to allow for adequate input. I also would have asked the students to set up a time with me to go over their questions and assessment of how they did.

The second thing I would have done differently is set up meetings at intervals of three and six months after the class to see if the students were still regularly engaging in biblical evangelism and assess if they were still utilizing what they had learned from the class and what biblical models they were incorporating into their evangelistic practices. I would have set these meetings up where we met as a class to hear how the Lord was working in their lives.

The final thing I would have done differently was to make an assessment in the months following the class to see what percentage of the converts in our congregation were being won through those in our evangelism class and also to see how the fruit was being preserved. I would liked to have seen if the converts being won as a result of those doing evangelism were being followed up with—discipled, water baptized, and active in the church life through small group Bible studies and church membership. These are a few of the things I would have done differently.

Theological Reflections

One of the lessons I learned from this project concerning God is the fact that he has chosen to use humanity in order to reach a lost and dying world with the gospel of Jesus Christ. I had always seen evangelism as something that I was to do because I was a Christian, but, from the time I started the D.Min. program until now, a change happened within my heart, a change for the better. The realization that God had chosen me to share and spread his message of hope caused me to realize that it was a privilege, joy, honor, and not a duty. He could have used angels, signs in the heavens, and any other means he found fit to win the lost, but he chose me. This fact has humbled me and caused my love and passion for him to grow. I completely identify with the words of John Newton: “I once was lost but now I see.”

Another theological reflection I learned from this project concerning God was the role that he plays in the salvation process. I did my Master’s degree at one of the Southern Baptist Convention’s most conservative seminaries, but its approach to evangelism was pragmatic. It was never stated, but I felt that getting people to walk an aisle, say a prayer, or adapt one’s message to hit a target group was overemphasized. Numbers were prioritized. For years, this approach left me going from one church growth conference to another to find out what the Lord was doing. This project allowed me to search the Scriptures and look to Jesus, the apostles, and the New Testament church as models for doing evangelism. This project has stirred up so much excitement within my church that it makes me realize that the pure and simple gospel found in the Bible still works. When people started to follow the Great Commission with a passion it brought about a renewed zeal, passion, and personal revival to everyone who was involved.

This project also allowed me to see that God still wants to use his church to reach the world with the gospel. Before starting the D.Min. program, I would put myself under a lot of pressure if I did not see growth in the area of conversions and baptisms in any given season of the year. This project allowed me to see God's plan to mobilize his church to win the lost. My passion as a pastor to equip the saints to do the work of ministry has reached an all time high. The people of FWHC are very sweet and loving and want to be used of God. I was failing at my job to equip them to do ministry. This project allowed me to see the great possibilities that are available if both pastor and church are willing to do what God has told them to do in his Word.

I have been amazed at how getting the local church back to winning souls has brought a spirit of revival. The people who participated in this project are still going out and winning people to Christ and sharing their faith and taking others from the congregation with them. There has been an outpouring of love and unity at FWHC, and I believe it is only the start of better things to come. People who did not get along before are putting aside their differences, asking each other for forgiveness, and desiring God to use them in being faithful to the Great Commission; and these changes are due to the people not wanting to miss out on what God is doing.

Before doing this project, I was not optimistic about the local church's ability to fulfill the Great Commission. I had grown so cold and pessimistic about the spiritual forecast of the United States that I had unwittingly written her off and had already considered America to be a post-Christian country. However, God, in his wonderful grace, has allowed this project to give me a glimpse of what I believe is his heart's desire—to win this country back to him. It has also birthed a passion within me to see

that the local church is God's plan to reach humanity with the gospel. When I hear of a new church being planted, I am excited and have found myself giving more to my local association in order to help church planters. This is directly due to this project and the D.Min. program at Southern.

Personal Reflections

The following section discusses my strengths as a leader. Some of my chief strengths as a leader are the ability to cast a vision, be a people gatherer, and unify people for a common goal or vision. I have always been able to bring people together who share specific talents or gifts. For example, I am an accomplished musician who has recorded several albums, and it has always been easy for me to find musicians of great caliber for my church and special events. I believe it is the principal of "like attracts like" at work.

The same strengths listed above have also proven true when I was a College minister. My goal in college ministry was to be a spiritual refuge for students. I specifically targeted students who were seeking how to live out their faith in an environment that was hostile to Christianity. In less than two years, I was able to gather a group of college students from different races and socioeconomic backgrounds who had captured the vision to share Christ with their campus. The result was a college ministry that grew from less than 5 people to nearly 200 in a period of a year and a half. I recognize that it was not because of my great oratorical ability that they were coming but that it was due to the fact that they had caught a vision, and they all worked for the same objective. I learned early on that if I did not constantly lay the vision before them, they would easily lose sight of what they were suppose to do. If an event, ministry, or program did not fulfill the vision or help fulfill it, I quickly did away with it. I have learned

through the process of leading that when an organization takes things on that do not help fulfill the vision confusion and frustration sets in. It causes energy, money, and man power to be wasted.

Another one of my strengths is the ability to make people feel they matter to the vision of the organization. I have learned from experience that people must feel like they are part of the vision in order to buy into the vision. When people understand that the vision can only be a success if they cooperate, momentum builds.

Alongside my leadership strengths, I also recognized some weaknesses in my leadership. I entered the D.Min. program needing to sharpen my tools in the area of making our church a Great Commission church. I had fallen into a routine of just going through the motions and had accepted the fact that our church was doing good with having between 200-300 people attend each Sunday throughout the year. I had reached the point of blaming the leadership and the church for not wanting FWHC to grow anymore, but deep inside I knew it had more to do with me than I wanted to admit. I had become so pessimistic about church growth that my attitude was that any church with over 1000 attendees had just sold out to a watered-down gospel and was not a true Great Commission church. I believed that the Lord, in his sovereign way, directed my path to Southern for the purpose of rescuing me from the rut I found myself in and allowed the professors to speak into my life and correct the crooked paths in my life.

This project and D.Min program has also revealed to me how lazy I had become when it came to acting upon the Great Commission. I needed more than to just attend another conference where I could learn the latest tools and techniques of the trade. This project has made me aware that if an event, ministry, or program does not help

fulfill the vision of the church, then it must quickly be done away with. The D.Min. program has helped me to realize that when an organization takes things on that do not help fulfill the vision confusion and frustration sets in.

This project has birthed a new zeal in me to develop a culture in our church that prioritizes the Great Commission and causes us to shift our focus on what is most important. The people of FWHC are learning more about this project and are seeing the testimonies that are coming as a result when people are baptized. A new momentum has started to build at the church and this project has helped the church to take a closer look at who it is and if it is pleasing to God.

This project has also allowed me to empower the people of our church once again. In most of the books concerning church growth and Christian leadership, they mention the need to empower people so that they can help fulfill the vision of the church. No one person can do it alone, but people need to be empowered to do their task. Empowering people helps a person to know that he or she can be trusted. I have seen people rise to the occasion and do an outstanding job in the area that they were empowered to lead. My experience has also shown me that an empowered person will do a far better job than I could ever hope to do. It truly is a winning situation. Empowering people takes the vision of an organization from belonging to one person and makes it become the vision of the people. The more people buy into the vision, the more they can help with the load. They also make sure that the job gets done well. It is my hope that people continued to be empowered at FWHC.

One of my greatest weaknesses this project and program has shown me is my lack of providing feedback. I have a tendency not to provide adequate feedback to those

whom I have empowered. This is something I am addressing. I have learned that people need an opportunity to ask questions, ask for help, and even ask for direction. I have a tendency to assume that a person will know what to do once I explain a task. I figure that by painting the picture of where we are going, people will automatically know how to get there. In the past, I have seen this part of leadership as vexing, and it has caused me to be impatient. This impatience in turn causes a person to leave meetings feeling misunderstood, unappreciated, offended, and, in some extreme cases, ignorant because they feel like they should know better. When people feel this way it lowers morale and the vision of the organization suffers. While it is exciting to see people get excited about a vision, it takes a constant flow of information both from the leader and those under his or her care. Those communication lines must remain open. These open lines of communication allow the organization to reach its goals. I am taking steps to correct this weakness by asking my deacons, teachers, and department leaders to fill out evaluations where they can be completely honest with how I am doing in this area of leadership.

My deficiency in the area of providing adequate feedback has caused my fellow leaders to burn out. This can be traced back to feeling frustrated because they have to figure things out on their own. It has been my experience to see people turn from feelings of frustration to anger and resentment and then become disillusioned with staying in a place where they are not celebrated. People need direction and feedback when they are in positions that in which they have never served. Communication and feedback brings clarification and helps give a person a clear vision of where he or she needs to go. In addition, the more a person understands his or her job description, the chances of reducing friction and frustration increases. It prevents an organization from

coming to a standstill. The D.Min. program has taught me that true leadership is not about giving out orders and expecting people to obey; it is about taking the time to go into detail about how to do the task at hand.

Another of my weaknesses as a leader that I discovered while doing this project is my failure to mentor my people. In what follows, I outline what I am doing to address this issue. First, every four months, I provide my leadership team with a bibliography of books and leadership journals on leadership, making decisions, and working as a team. Secondly, I provide once-a-month training for all of my leaders on protocol in a group setting. Each session usually lasts about ninety minutes. Next, during our monthly meetings, I spend an extended amount of time answering questions and concerns.

The final weakness that this project and D.Min. program has shown me is that I do not deal swiftly enough with people who are insubordinate. This leadership weakness has caused me several setbacks because I do not enjoy being in an environment of conflict. I have learned that when I do not deal with a situation quickly it will fester into something bigger, and, in the end, it will cause greater heartache. Not wanting to confront attitudes or work performances has caused that same attitude to spread. When a few people know that they can get away with something it does not take long before the whole organization starts taking on the same attitudes and practices of these few, rogue leaders. This has caused me to be seen as a weak leader, and it has also caused some to think that they are indispensable to the organization. This lack of assertiveness on my part could keep the church from accomplishing its vision. Acting swiftly and decisively

prevents me from doing damage control at a later date. Again, this is something I am still in the process of improving.

As I reflect on all that I learned while earning my D.Min. and in completing this project, the importance of being a healthy leader stands out. I am not speaking about being healthy physically, which is something that any leader should strive for in order to live life to the fullest, but mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. The shortcomings in one's life will eventually come to the surface when leading people; it is only a matter of time. If a person is quick-tempered, jealous, suspicious, or insecure, those traits will come out one way or another; the result is having a leader who is not in a healthy state. The people under his leadership will most likely model the same behavior because they will come to believe it is the norm. An unhealthy leader is a person who will eventually abuse those under his authority and may even damage future potential leaders.

Another discovery I made during this journey was that a healthy servant leader is always learning. A leader should not expect his leadership or organization to grow if he is not constantly feeding himself mentally and spiritually. The moment a leader stops growing is the moment his organization stops growing. The world is constantly changing and a leader should strive to be familiar with what is going around him. He should also strive to learn new models, strategies, and methods that can help him and his organization grow. People desire to follow someone who is knowledgeable and has expertise in areas they are seeking to develop. A growing leader will have growing people and a growing organization; however, this is a discipline a leader must be intentional about or he will find himself too busy to study and grow.

Finally, I want to reflect on something the D.Min. program made me do but that I am forever grateful for. I entered the D.Min. program with an attitude of “I am here to learn, not to make more friends or join a brotherhood.” One of the goals of the D.Min. program as stated in my first seminar was that it would provide an environment for students to develop lifelong friendships. I can honestly and humbly say that I am grateful to the Lord and the professors of Southern Seminary for arranging the program in such a way that allowed for friendships to happen. I have become close with those in my cohort. There have been numerous times when I have picked up the phone to ask their advice and input concerning church issues I may be facing. I have gone to several Baptist conventions or retreats in other states at the suggestion or recommendation of these men. I have met their wives, fiancées, children, and even church members. We might be in different geographical locations, but I know that these men would do anything for me and that I would do anything for them.

Conclusion

This project and the D.Min. program has allowed me to grow spiritually and mentally. I have gained invaluable insight into leading our church to be faithful to the Lord’s commandment of fulfilling the Great Commission. My hope is that I will continue to use the tools I have gained in doing this project and that I will continue to develop a Great Commission culture at FWHC. This project has put our church back on track. We now see the task of evangelism as our number one priority. I believe that the best is yet to come for FWHC and that we are on the road to becoming a healthy Great Commission church.

APPENDIX 1

PRE- AND POST-SEMINAR QUESTIONS

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure your confidence level and your knowledge level of how you engage in evangelism to what extent it follows the principles and methods employed by Jesus and the New Testament church. This research is being conducted by Bonifacio “Barney” Ramirez for purposes of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will simply answer the questions before we begin training and you will answer the same questions after we complete the training. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential* and, at no time, will your name be reported or identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

The first section of this questionnaire will obtain the demographic information of those taking this class:

1. Please write your name: _____

2. Circle the number of years since you came to faith in Christ:

1-5 years 6-10 years 11-15 years 16-20 years 20+

3. Age:

____ Less than 20

____ 20-25

____ 26-30

____ 31-35

____ 36-40

____ 41-45

____ 46-50

____ 50-55

____ 56-60

____ 61+

The following section deals with your confidence when sharing the faith:

1. On a scale of 1-10 (1 being the lowest and 10 the highest) how confident are you in sharing the gospel? _____

2. Please check the following that best indicates how often you share your faith.

- 2-5 times a week
- 1 time a week
- 1 time a month
- once a year
- almost never

3. Please check the primary reason why you do not engage in evangelism:

- Fear of rejection
- Do not want to come across as pushing your religious views on a person
- Fear of hostility
- Worried you are not engaging in evangelism correctly
- I see evangelism as something that should be done by clergy
- Not a priority

4. How many evangelism classes or trainings have you gone through? _____

Using the following scale, please write the number that best corresponds to your feelings in response to the following questions:

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

- ____ 1. I feel confident in defining what evangelism is and is not.
- ____ 2. I feel confident in what is to be included in the gospel when presenting it to lost people.
- ____ 3. Evangelism is nothing more than getting a person to make a decision for Christ.
- ____ 4. Any means necessary is fine in getting a person to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior as long as those means do not cause a person to sin.
- ____ 5. It is more important for a person to accept Jesus Christ without having to discuss the issues of repentance or discipleship.
- ____ 6. Evangelism is doing an act of kindness for a lost person.
- ____ 7. Evangelism is inviting a person to a church event.
- ____ 8. Christians should follow biblical models of evangelism instead of what seems to work.

- ___ 9. I am interested in using the principles and methods used by Jesus and the New Testament church.
- ___ 10. If Christians were to follow biblical models of doing evangelism, there would be less people “falling through the cracks.”
- ___ 11. Getting a person to say a prayer is doing evangelism.
- ___ 12. Getting a person to make a decision is the goal of the Great Commission.

APPENDIX 2

PRE- AND POST-SEMINAR RESULTS

Question	Pre-Seminar (out of 18)	Post-Seminar (out of 18)
I feel confident defining what evangelism is and is not.	11 marked “agree”	16 marked “agree”
I feel confident in what is to be included in the gospel when presenting it to lost people.	15 marked “agree”	16 marked “agree”
Evangelism is nothing more than getting a person to make a decision for Christ.	9 marked “disagree”; 6 marked “strongly disagree”; 3 marked “uncertain”	14 marked “disagree”; 3 marked “strongly disagree”; 1 marked “uncertain”
It is more important for a person to accept Jesus Christ without having to discuss the issues of repentance or discipleship.	11 marked “agree”; 4 marked “uncertain”; 3 marked “strongly disagree”	4 marked “agree”; 10 marked “disagree”; 4 marked “strongly disagree”
Getting a person to say a prayer is doing evangelism	8 marked “agree”; 3 marked “uncertain”; 5 marked “disagree”; 2 marked “strongly disagree”	15 marked “disagree”; 2 marked “strongly disagree”
Getting a person to make a decision is the goal of the Great Commission	5 marked “uncertain”; 6 marked “disagree”; 3 marked “agreed”; 1 marked “strongly agree”; 3 marked “strongly disagree”	13 marked “disagreed”; 4 marked “strongly disagree”; 1 marked “uncertain”

APPENDIX 3

EVANGELISTIC OUTREACH REPORT

EVANGELISTIC OUTREACH REPORT # _____

Name _____ Date _____

I. CONTEXT

A. Person(s) with whom you shared: _____

B. Date: _____ Time: _____ Location: _____

C. Accompanied by: _____ [] alone

D. This outreach opportunity came as a result of:

[] an appointment (explain): _____

[] a referral (explain): _____

[] a “way of life” situation (explain): _____

[] talking with individuals “at random”

[] other (explain): _____

II. INTERACTION

A. What did you learn about this person’s spiritual condition?

B. What key issues or questions surfaced during your conversation?

C. Were there any hindrances to your conversation (television set blaring, children running around, etc.)? How did you address them?

D. Which of the following statements best describes your witnessing encounter with this person?

I gave a complete/thorough presentation of the gospel.

We had a Christ-centered religious discussion, but I did not present the gospel because_____.

We did not discuss religion or Christ because _____.

E. In your opinion, how clear was your explanation of the gospel message?

clear as mud 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 *crystal clear*

F. If you did present the gospel, how did you transition into it?

G. What evangelistic method learned from the study did you implement while evangelizing?

III. CONCLUSION

A. Did you specifically ask the person if he/she was willing to receive Christ? If not, why?

B. If you did ask the person to receive Christ, what was his/her response?

C. If the person did not respond positively, what do you think is preventing him/her from receiving Christ?

D. What plans did you make to talk again?

IV. SELF-EVALUATION

A. What did you do well?

B. What would you do differently?

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ABSTRACT

IMPLEMENTING BIBLICAL EVANGELISM METHODOLOGIES AT FORT WORTH HARVEST CHURCH FORT WORTH, TEXAS

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Chapter 1 gives a ministry description of Fort Worth Harvest Church. The description gives a brief history of the church up until the present time. Some demographic details concerning the area surrounding the church and the city of Fort Worth are given as well. Chapter 1 details the kind of change that the church needs to embrace in order to be effective at reaching out. This chapter also includes the goals of the research project and the rationale for discovering and implementing the methods and principles of evangelism employed by Jesus and the New Testament church.

Chapter 2 examines the theological and biblical bases for this project. Special attention was given to the Gospels and the book of Acts in discovering the principles and methods used by Jesus and the New Testament church. Several passages concerning the methods of Jesus were examined (Matt 4:23-25; 7:28-29; Mark 1:35-39; Luke 6:17-19; John 20:20-21). Students were asked to pay attention to the identified principles and methods employed and to take note of those that seem the easiest to implement in their own personal witnessing.

Chapter 3 examines the theoretical and practical issues of modern day evangelism with those found in the New Testament. This chapter discusses how to help individuals understand what the gospel is, what some of the common misunderstandings of evangelism are, and how the church hinders lay people from doing biblical evangelism. In addition, it argues that the goal of the Great Commission is to make disciples, not decisions.

Chapter 4 gives an outline of the project's methodology and how it was carried out. A detailed account of the entire process was given. The point of this chapter is for someone to be able to duplicate it in their own ministry context.

Finally, chapter 5 evaluates the effectiveness of the project. The survey instruments indicated that people grew in confidence while sharing their faith and that they felt as if they were following the methods employed by Jesus and the New Testament church. This evaluation helped determine that this project was a success and allowed churches and church leaders options and tools that might help them in their own ministry contexts.

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