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AN EVALUATION OF A MODEL FOR MISSIONS MOBILIZATION
OF CHURCHES IN SAN FELIPE BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

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AN EVALUATION OF A MODEL FOR MISSIONS MOBILIZATION
OF CHURCHES IN SAN FELIPE BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

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To Beth,
my love and true partner
for thirty-five years in
life, family, and ministry

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES	ix
LIST OF GENERAL ABBREVIATIONS	x
LIST OF CHURCH ABBREVIATIONS	xi
LIST OF COUNTRY ABBREVIATIONS	xii
PREFACE	xiii
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Preamble	1
Purpose	1
Goals	1
Context	3
Rationale	6
Definitions	8
Limitations	9
Research Methodology	9
2. SCRIPTURAL FOUNDATIONS FOR THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH	12
Old Testament Foundations	12
The Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 17:1-8)	12

Chapter	Page
The Inclusion of Many Nations	13
The Royal Line of a Savior	14
The Promise of Eternity with God	15
An Obedient People	16
God’s Omnipotence in the Mission	17
The Worldwide Extension of God’s Glory	18
The Gathering of All Nations (Isa 66:18-23)	18
God’s Universal Invitation (Joel 2:28-32)	21
The Global Call to Worship God (Ps 67:1-7)	26
The Great Commission of Jesus Revealed in the Gospels	30
The Background of the Four Commissions	30
The Chronology of the Commissions	30
The Contrast in Contexts	32
The Johannine Commission (John 20:21)	33
The Matthean Commission (Matt 28:18-20)	35
The Authority for the Mission	35
The Focus of the Mission	37
The Scope for the Mission	38
The Power for the Mission	39
The Markan Commission (Mark 16:15-16)	39
The Lukan Commission (Luke 24:46-48)	41
Summary of the Commissions	42

Chapter	Page
The Mission of the Early Church	42
The Admission by the Jerusalem Church (Acts 11:17-18)	43
The Mission Modeled by the Antioch Church (Acts 13:1-4)	45
Conclusion	50
3. SBC ASSOCIATIONS MOBILIZING CHURCHES FOR MISSIONS	51
A History of Baptist Associations and Church Missions	51
A Connection with Missions Created	51
Missions and Baptists in America.	54
The Impact of William Carey	54
Supporters of Global Missions	56
Promoters of SBC Missions	57
The Return of Missions to Associations	59
The Advantages of SBC Associations for Church Missions	61
Calling Churches to the Mission	61
Strategically Positioned to Help Churches	61
Coordinating Collaborative Efforts	62
Renewing the Mission of SBC Churches.	64
SBC Associations and Missions Today	67
The Quest for Relevance	68
A New Generation of Leaders	70
Networks as a New Model for Missions	72
The STARS Network	75

Chapter	Page
The Priorities of the STARS Network	76
The Strengths of the STARS Network	77
Conclusion	79
4. A DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT	80
Steps Taken for the First Goal	80
Steps Taken for the Second Goal	82
Steps Taken for the Third Goal	83
Steps Taken for the Fourth Goal	85
Steps Taken for the Fifth Goal	87
5. EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT	88
Evaluation of the Project’s Purpose	88
Evaluation of the Project’s Goals	88
Evaluation of the First Goal	89
Evaluation of the Second Goal	92
Evaluation of the Third Goal	95
Evaluation of the Fourth Goal	99
Evaluation of the Fifth Goal	103
Strengths of the Project	105
Weaknesses of the Project	105
What I Would Do Differently	106
Theological Reflections	107
Personal Reflections	108
Conclusion	109

Appendix	Page
1. SFBA CHURCHES INCLUDED IN THE PROJECT	110
2. QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CHURCH LEADERS WITH SHORT-TERM MISSIONS EXPERIENCE	111
3. RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRES FOR CHURCH LEADERS WITH STM EXPERIENCE	113
4. INSTRUCTIONS FOR ADMINISTERING QUESTIONNAIRES FOR RESEARCH ON SHORT-TERM MISSIONS	114
5. QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ADULT MEMBERS OF SHORT-TERM MISSIONS TEAMS	115
6. RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRES FOR ADULT MEMBERS OF STM TEAMS	117
7. QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ADULT MEMBERS OF CHURCHES INVOLVED IN SHORT-TERM MISSIONS	120
8. RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRES FOR ADULT MEMBERS OF CHURCHES INVOLVED IN STM	122
9. QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CHURCH LEADERS IN REPEAT-TRIP MISSIONS PROJECTS	127
10. QUESTIONNAIRE FOR NETWORK PARTNERS IN REPEAT-TRIP MISSIONS PROJECTS	128
BIBLIOGRAPHY	129

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. STM experience of actively participating church leaders	89
2. Responses of sub-group to statements of personal impact	91
3. Missions experience of adult team members with their churches	92
4. Summary of personal growth of adult team members	93
5. Comparison of one-time and repeat international participants' responses . .	94
6. Involvement background of adult church member respondents	96
7. Comparison of responses of adult church members by involvement	97
8. Responses of adults in areas of missional growth	98
9. General data relating to RTM projects of SFBA churches	100
10. Responses to strategy-related questions for church RTM projects	101
11. Responses of international partners to RTM questionnaire	102
12. Responses to statements of STARS Network assistance for RTM	103
A1. List of SFBA churches actively participating in missions	110
A2. Results of questionnaires for church leaders with STM experience	113
A3. Results of questionnaires for adult members of STM teams	117
A4. Results of questionnaires for adult members of churches involved in STM	122

LIST OF GENERAL ABBREVIATIONS

CON	Construction
CP	Church planting
DP	Discipleship
DRT	Disaster relief training
EVG	Evangelism
IMB	International Mission Board
OC	Orphan care
PT	Pastor training
RTM	Repeat-trip missions
SBC	Southern Baptist Convention
SFBA	San Felipe Baptist Association
SNM	Special needs ministry
STM	Short-term missions
VBS	Vacation Bible School

LIST OF CHURCH ABBREVIATIONS

BBBC	Brazos Bend Baptist Church
CLF	Christian Life Fellowship
CCC	Creeside Community Church
EBPBC	El Buen Pastor Baptist Church
FBCA	First Baptist Church, Alief
FBCB	First Baptist Church, Bellville
FBCR	First Baptist Church, Rosenberg
FBCS	First Baptist Church, Sealy
FBF	Fort Bend Fellowship
HPCC	Houston Praise Community Church
ISBR	Iglesia Segunda Bautista, Rosenberg
NLBC	New Life Baptist Church
PGBC	Pecan Grove Baptist Church
RBBC	River Bend Baptist Church
SCCC	Second Chance Community Church
SBBC	Sovereign Grace Baptist Church
TBF	The Bridge Fellowship
TBC	Trinity Baptist Church
WECC	Waters Edge Community Church
WEBC	West End Baptist Church

LIST OF COUNTRY ABBREVIATIONS

BZ	Belize
CR	Costa Rica
CU	Cuba
IN	India
MX	Mexico
PE	Peru
SZ	Swaziland

PREFACE

This project represents the next step in a fourteen-year journey into world missions that has thoroughly transformed my life and ministry. I am indebted to many whom God has allowed to walk with me and play key roles along the way. For each of these, I am grateful for God's sovereign and perfect design in bringing them into my life.

I am thankful for two men who became mentors and friends from my early days in Pennsylvania and helped guide me in missions and ministry. I gained much of my understanding of church planting and associational missions from T. B. Smith, my first Director of Missions. Ron Burkett has been a steady influence over the years, especially in steering me through the challenging waters of pastoring churches.

I want to thank the members of West Oaks Baptist Church in Houston, Texas, who supported and grew with their pastor in those initial years of missions engagement in Belize. We were unaware then of the laboratory experience in which God had placed us to demonstrate his tremendous blessing on a church devoted to the missionary task.

I want to express my appreciation for the friends who encouraged me and joined me in a passion for the Great Commission. They include pastors, laymen, and missionaries such as Charles Bagenda, John Boaz, Brandon Carroll, Bob Farley, Craig Miller, Pablo Monroy, and Robert Park. In retrospect, it is clear that God was building a team of friends and partners in the task, many of whom would later be part of a new missions network.

I want to recognize and honor the pastors and church leaders of San Felipe Baptist Association. Many have followed God's call, leading their churches to actively participate in the Great Commission and in our work together. As a testament to what God has done, these men and women are too numerous to name.

I want to thank especially Dr. Darrell Horn, Dr. Charles Owens, and Dr. David Sills for their encouragement and advisement. God used them at different stages in my scholarship as I returned to seminary after many years to prepare for missions leadership.

Finally, I want to pay tribute to my family, beginning with my loving wife. Beth has been by my side for thirty-five years of ministry and study, including four pastorates and two seminary experiences. She has been my partner, my friend, and my love. Together we raised Julie, Krystal, and Samuel, and we welcomed Luke and Amanda as our son-in-law and daughter-in-law. Together now, they have given us four active grandchildren to enjoy, Caleb, Caedmon, Hannah, and Asher. How blessed we have been, and how proud I am of all of them.

Samuel A. Waltman, Jr.

Fulshear, Texas

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Preamble

In 2010, the leaders of the San Felipe Baptist Association began to explore the concept of a missions network. The network would link churches' domestic and international missions connections, incorporating previously adopted priorities of the Association. After a year of discussion and refinement, the STARS Network was launched at the Association's 2011 annual meeting.¹ The acronym, STARS, affirms the Network's priorities of "Strategizing for lostness," "Training leaders," "Assisting with connections," "Reproducing churches and leaders," and "Strengthening churches."

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to evaluate the STARS Network as a model for mobilizing churches in SFBA for participation in missions.

Goals

This project employed five goals to appraise the effectiveness of a missions network that was launched in 2011. The first goal sought to show that the STARS Network provides opportunities for introducing church leaders to active participation in missions. Active participation will be defined later. This goal was measured by surveying

¹Minutes of the San Felipe Baptist Association 64th Annual Meeting, October 16, 2011.

a sample of 20 to 25 SFBA church leaders. The leaders were chosen from those who have personally been on at least one STM team while serving in their present capacity. A questionnaire was first used to select respondents whose initial active experience in international missions came through an STM project through the Network. Two statements determined if the Network has served as a factor in their participation and if they were likely to turn to Network connections for future missions service. This goal was deemed successful with a statistical mean of at least 5.0 to responses to both statements from at least 30 percent of the sub-group of respondents.

The second goal sought to certify that the STARS Network leads to the engagement of members of SFBA churches in active missions participation. This goal was evaluated by surveying STM adult team members from 10 to 15 churches that have been participating in missions through the Network. A questionnaire was administered, seeking to determine whether their participation in missions began with their church's Network project and if they intended to continue as active participants. This goal was considered successful if at least 50 percent of the respondents answered positively to the first question, with a statistical mean of at least 5.0 to responses to the second one.

The third goal was to confirm that the STARS Network stimulates an increased understanding of and commitment to missions within Network-participating congregations. This goal was measured by surveying church leaders, mission team members, and non-participating church members from 10 to 15 churches that have been active through Network connections. Respondents were asked if they could confirm that they had grown in personal understanding of and commitment to missions due to their

churches' active participation. This goal was deemed successful if at least 30 percent of the respondents indicated agreement with both statements.

The fourth goal was to confirm that the STARS Network serves as an impetus for churches to engage in RTM projects and relationships. This goal was evaluated by conducting interviews with leaders of SFBA churches that are committed to repeat-trip projects within the Network. Their Network partners, consisting of pastors and missionaries, were also interviewed. Both groups of respondents were asked if the Network has assisted them with making connections for their repeat-trip projects. They were also asked if the Network assisted them with the development of their mission strategy. This goal was deemed successful if at least 50 percent of the respondents answered positively to both questions.

The fifth goal was to identify any necessary adjustments to the structure of the STARS Network that would enhance the engagement of SFBA churches and the participation of their members in STM and RTM. This goal was evaluated through the observations and conclusions reached in conducting the surveys and interviews. The goal was considered successful by the identification of specific improvements that would advance the impact of the Network in missions mobilization.

Context

The SFBA was organized in 1948 as an alliance of Baptist churches in communities dotting the plains of Fort Bend, Austin, and Waller Counties, located immediately west of Houston, Texas.² For most of its history, SFBA functioned

²Minutes of the Organization of the San Felipe Baptist Association, October 21, 1948.

according to the needs of the rural and small town churches, providing resources and fellowship while facilitating local mission projects.

In 2006, a significant shift occurred under the leadership of Executive Director of Missions, Darrell Horn. The Executive Board of SFBA voted to restructure the organization according to a renewed purpose and mission.³ Specifying “the Great Commission and the two Great Commandments” as “our common vision,” SFBA would later define itself in 2010 as “a network of relationships through which give and receive assistance, encouragement, and resources to fulfill our common vision.”⁴ Committees were eliminated in “a new structure that will allow the Association to better respond to our churches,” establishing three Priority Teams of Church Planting and Missions, Leader Development, and Church Strengthening.⁵ The later development of the STARS Network in 2011 began with these priorities, expanding upon them in detail and reaching beyond the immediate contexts of SFBA churches to apply them in international projects.

My employment with SFBA began on October 1, 2007, as Church Planting Strategist and Associate Director of Missions. I came to associational work after nine years of pastoring new churches in Pennsylvania (1985-1994) and twelve years of pastoring churches in Texas (1995-2007). Beginning in 2000, much of my time was spent in international missions and in developing connections for mission work. Some of them emerged as central to the evolution of the STARS Network. Already working with SFBA churches, they became some of the first Network affiliates.

³Book of Reports, San Felipe Baptist Association 59th Annual Meeting, September 17, 2006, 10.

⁴Book of Reports, San Felipe Baptist Association 63rd Annual Meeting, October 17, 2010, 5.

⁵Book of Reports, September 17, 2006, 10.

The STARS Network was carefully structured to satisfy several concerns in the process. First, its priorities remain consistent with the Association teams established five years previously, reinforcing Church Planting and Missions, Leader Development, and Church Strengthening and extending their focus globally. The Network provides the structure and encouragement for churches to adopt a Scriptural strategy for their mission, with a witness and presence “in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Network priorities give direction to churches involved in international projects and coordinate their work together.

Second, the Network recognizes and allows for the partnership of Baptist churches with non-Baptist churches and mission organizations in mission projects without compromising their Baptist identity or doctrinal beliefs. The structure establishes two levels of participation in cooperative missions. Baptist churches that affirm any version of the Baptist Faith and Message and contribute financially to SFBA are eligible for Association membership. Meanwhile, evangelical churches and mission organizations subscribing to the statement of faith for the National Association of Evangelicals may apply as STARS Network affiliates. No financial contributions or gifts are expected from or promised to affiliates.

Another issue raised in the process of developing the Network concerned the initiative of international mission work from the churches. It was determined that SFBA would not drive the work, only facilitate it. The decision preserved the Association’s purpose as stated in its mission statement, “to assist, encourage, and resource our churches to fulfill the Great Commission and the two Great Commandments.”⁶

⁶Ibid., 5.

Consequently, Network affiliates are limited to and arise from the missions connections of the churches, requiring the recommendation of an Association member church.

One additional observation shaped the vision shared by SFBA leaders for the future of SBC associational work in general. The leaders recognized that geographical proximity was becoming less a factor as churches choose to link with other churches and ministries in cooperative relationships. Advances in travel and in internet communication have bridged the distance between churches and have made personal meetings less essential. Church leaders are demonstrating a preference for alliances that are meaningful rather than close, often choosing national networks over local associations. Therefore, the forecast is that Baptist churches, if they participate in a Baptist association at all, will choose that association based more on affinity than on geography. The leaders of SFBA view it as no coincidence that in the same annual meeting in which the STARS Network was launched, the first international church was received as an Association member. SFBA welcomed Vida Abundante in Heredia, Costa Rica, with mission churches in Costa Rica and Columbia.⁷ Thus, the Association's membership was stretched globally as the missions network was birthed.

Rationale

This project was needed to appraise the STARS Network as a vehicle and framework for mobilizing churches in SFBA to actively embrace the Great Commission. The Network was not launched simply to recognize the missions efforts of SFBA churches but to connect the churches to God-given opportunities and to educate them in how to approach them with missiological excellence.

⁷Minutes, October 16, 2011.

Pastors and other leaders were originally skeptical of the idea of the Network, fearing that it would detract from support for missionaries serving with the IMB of the SBC. Their skepticism began to dissipate following an endorsement of an IMB representative, assuring them that the Network was completely in line with the IMB strategy to encourage churches to “Embrace the Ends of the Earth.”

Now supportive of the concept of the Network and of churches directly engaging the world, the leaders of SFBA churches and of Network affiliates have been lacking the knowledge of how to get started. The Network is intended to introduce them to opportunities for missions work and to assist them in accomplishing the New Testament mission most effectively.

While the primary purpose of the STARS Network is to mobilize the churches of SFBA to participate in the Great Commission, the leaders of SFBA are not aware of any current associational model like the Network. Although some Baptist associations coordinate joint missions projects for their churches, no other example is known of an association that networks all of the projects of its churches, multiplying connections and opportunities. In addition, no plan is offered from the IMB for associations to encourage and resource churches to accept their challenge to “Embrace the Ends of the Earth.”

The leaders of SFBA and the STARS Network recognize the opportunity at hand to pioneer an associational model that facilitates the return of the Great Commission to the local church while remaining supportive of SBC missions. Associations can work closely with their churches to accomplish what the denomination’s mission board is urging them to do from a distance. This project was necessary to confirm the Network’s

effectiveness in connecting churches and their leaders with missionaries and Network affiliates and in stimulating their understanding and commitment to missions.

Definitions

Over the course of this project several terms are used that need clarification. In order to communicate clearly the intent of the project, those terms will be defined here. When the project refers to the “active participation” of churches in missions, it speaks of direct involvement in STM or RTM projects, in contrast to only prayers and financial contributions for cooperative missions. While “short-term” missions refer to projects with goals to be achieved in one mission trip, “repeat-trip” missions are defined as projects with objectives to be met over the course of two or more mission trips.

The term “evangelism” refers to the verbal communication of the gospel message of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ. Samuel Moffett describes it as “the telling of the good news (the Gospel) that Jesus the Messiah is the saving King,” as “the announcement of Christ’s kingdom,” and as “an invitation to enter that kingdom by faith and repentance.”⁸ Ralph Winter defines “evangelism” as the “the activity of reaching out from an existing church within the same mini-sphere, working to its fringes.”⁹

The term “lostness” refers to the natural state of mankind prior to and without a personal experience of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ. The term is described by Andreas J. Kostenberger and Peter T. O’Brien as stemming from “the fall of Adam,” in

⁸Samuel Moffett, “Evangelism: The Leading Partner,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1981), 729.

⁹Ralph D. Winter, “The Task Remaining: All Humanity in Mission Perspective,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1981), 316.

which “man becomes a sinner . . . and the whole story of humankind is disastrously affected by the consequences of his disobedience to God.”¹⁰

The term “people group” pinpoints an ethno-linguistic unit used in missions strategy. The Lausanne Committee in 1982 defined it for evangelism as “the largest possible group within which the gospel can spread as a viable, indigenous church planting movement without encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance.”¹¹

Limitations

This project is confined to the results obtained from the limited two-year existence of the STARS Network. Therefore, most of the project goals examine only the Association churches which have engaged in active Network participation in that short timespan. In addition, research was largely dependent upon the cooperation of church leaders and members in responding to questionnaires.

Research Methodology

This project surveyed church leaders and members in gathering data to measure results and arrive at conclusions regarding the accomplishment of the stated goals. Questionnaires were used to probe the experience of participants and the impact of active participation in Network-connected projects on them and their churches.

The research for the first goal was obtained through a survey of 20 to 25 SFBA church leaders. A sample was selected from pastors and church staff members with personal experience in at least one STM while serving in their present ministry position.

¹⁰Andreas J. Kostenberger and Peter T. O’Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 27.

¹¹Alan Johnson, “Major Concepts of the Frontier Mission Movement,” *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 18 (April 1, 2001): 91.

They completed the Questionnaire for Church Leaders With Short-Term Missions Experience (Appendix 2). The instrument used a six-point Likert scale to assess the extent to which the STARS Network led to their participation. Leaders indicated whether they plan to partake in future Network-related missions opportunities. This goal was achieved with a mean response of at least 5.0 to both questions from at least 30 percent of the respondents. The results are listed by respondent in Table A2 in Appendix 3.

Research for the second goal surveyed STM adult team members from 10 to 15 SFBA churches that participated in Network-connected projects. The Questionnaire for Adult Members of Short-Term Missions Teams (Appendix 5) was administered, using a six-point Likert scale. It sought to determine whether their participation in missions began with their church's Network project and whether they intend to continue as active participants on future trips. A mean response of at least 5.0 in agreement with both of these statements would signal the success of this goal. Their responses to other statements provide insight for observations and conclusions to be made following the research. The questionnaire results are compiled in Table A3 in Appendix 6.

The third goal's research was obtained by surveying 10 to 15 SFBA churches that have been active participants in Network-related missions projects. A questionnaire was administered to at least 5 percent of the average attendance in each church. Those surveyed included church leaders, adult mission team members, and non-participating adult church members. In addition to other questions, they were asked if their personal understanding of and commitment to missions increased due to their church's active participation. Table A4 in Appendix 8 summarizes the findings from the Questionnaire for Adult Members of Churches Involved in Short-Term Missions (Appendix 7).

The fourth goal employs two questionnaires to assess the influence of the STARS Network in RTM projects and relationships. One questionnaire (Appendix 9) was administered to church leaders, with the results shown in Tables 9 and 10. Meanwhile, a similar questionnaire (Appendix 10) was given to the pastors and missionaries who serve as their Network partners. Their responses are compiled in Table 11. Both groups indicated whether the Network served as a factor in their RTM project together and whether they would recommend it for others. The results of the questionnaires were evaluated through observations and conclusions.

The fifth goal used the observations and conclusions from the previous goals to arrive at improvements to be recommended for the STARS Network. Specific steps are identified for enhancing the mobilization of churches for missions.

CHAPTER 2

SCRIPTURAL FOUNDATIONS FOR THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

The mission of the church emerges from a thoroughly grounded divine agenda. Scripture establishes the centrality of the Great Commission in God's purpose and in its assignment to the church. The Bible furnishes the impetus to propel the evangelistic quest of the worldwide body and each local assembly. The intent of God is revealed consistently within every major section of Scripture. It stretches from God's general call of an Old Testament patriarch to the specific mandate of Jesus Christ to his followers then and to contemporary congregations today.

Old Testament Foundations

The Old Testament portends the mission inaugurated by Jesus Christ and assigned to the church in the New Testament. The mission originates through God's covenant with Abraham and is reinforced by the prophets and the psalmist. The authors trace the conveyance of the mission from one man to a favored nation to the Messiah.

The Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 17:1-8)

God introduced his promise to the nations in his covenant renewal with Abraham in Genesis 17:1-8. The encounter followed thirteen years of silence since the covenant was first revealed in Genesis 12:1-3. Several concepts fundamental to the New Testament mission are announced here in God's call for a response to his faithfulness.

The inclusion of many nations. The New Testament mission to “make disciples of all the nations” (Matt 28:18) is first expressed in Abraham’s call. God had already hinted that his impact would exceed that of forming “a great nation” (Gen 12:2). Somehow, through him God would bless “all the families of the earth” (Gen 12:3). Gerhard Von Rad notes, “Abraham’s call was connected with the hope of a universal extension of God’s salvation beyond the limits of Israel.”¹

Now, thirteen years later, God certifies the global influence of the patriarch by issuing him a new name. John H. Sailhamer analyzes the move: “The promise of abundant descendants is memorialized in the change of Abram’s name to ‘Abraham,’ which is interpreted to mean ‘father of many nations.’”² Bruce Waltke suggests that “the text explains his name: ‘(because I will make you) the father of many nations.’”³ R. Kent Hughes amplifies the meaning. “The effect was that every time people called him ‘Abraham,’ they reiterated God’s promise that he would be a father of a multitude!”⁴

Abraham’s fatherhood would be distinctly spiritual in nature. John Calvin asserts that “the Gentiles were to be, by faith, inserted into the stock of Abram, although not descended from him according to the flesh.”⁵ He adds that God therefore “extends the name of *father* as to make it applicable to the whole world, in order that the Gentiles, in

¹Gerhard Von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, rev. ed., The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), 200.

²John H. Sailhamer, *Genesis*, in vol. 2 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1990), 138.

³Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2001), 260.

⁴R. Kent Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 247.

⁵John Calvin, *Genesis*, The Crossway Classic Commentaries (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001), 163.

other respects strangers and separated from each other, might from all sides combine in one family of Abram.”⁶ Waltke observes, “The psalmist (Ps. 87:4-6) and the apostle Paul (Rom. 4:16-17; cf. Gal. 3:15-19) both interpret the text with reference to the Gentiles becoming Abraham’s offspring. According to this spiritual interpretation, ‘father’ designates a spiritual relationship.”⁷ Victor Hamilton distinguishes between the import of Abram’s circumcision and that of his new name:

The patriarch’s new name . . . universalizes Abraham’s experience with God. This point contrasts with the later emphasis in the chapter on circumcision, which particularizes Abraham’s relationship with God. His circumcision identifies him as the father of Israelites. His new name identifies him as the father of the faithful, regardless of what particular ethnic group they represent.⁸

Thus, Abraham would serve as the father of a new spiritual family of people from every nation on earth. God’s plan for redemption through Christ would bear fruit in every global corner. Indeed, Sailhamer affirms that as God pledges to make Abraham “exceedingly fruitful” (17:6), he “seems intended to recall the blessing on all mankind in 1:28,” thus “showing the covenant with Abraham to be the means through which God’s original blessing would again be channeled to all mankind.”⁹

The royal line of a Savior. Salvation would flow to God’s new family through a chosen bloodline. God forecasted that “kings will come forth” (17:6) from Abraham’s loins. Earthly kings are certainly included in the promise. Kenneth A. Matthews concedes, “Reference to ‘kings’ among Abraham’s descendants indicates that

⁶Ibid.

⁷Waltke, *Genesis*, 260.

⁸Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 464.

⁹Sailhamer, *Genesis*, 139.

autonomous nations will result (17:16; 35:11); Abraham, though not a king himself, is the ancestor of multiple royal houses.”¹⁰ Yet, an “everlasting covenant” (17:7) implies an eternal king. Waltke agrees that though the immediate reference may be to Israel’s kings, the verse points also to “the messianic king.”¹¹ Hughes comments that the fulfillment of the promise began one thousand years later with the Davidic dynasty and culminated “another thousand years later in the advent of Jesus Christ, King of the Jews.”¹²

The promise of eternity with God. The covenant with Abraham was not for him alone. Von Rad notes the expanded promise in verse 7 is new in that “the covenant is made not only with Abraham but also with all his descendants. It is therefore a reference to its timeless validity.”¹³ Sailhamer spots a key term. “The focus of vv. 7-8 lies in the repetition of the term ‘everlasting.’ The covenant promised is an ‘everlasting covenant’ (v. 7) and the possession of the land an ‘everlasting possession’ (v. 8).”¹⁴

The eternal nature of the covenant points to everlasting life through the Savior. Mathews explains that “the promise of ‘inheritance’ was the divine gift reserved for Abraham’s offspring (Exod 32:13; Deut 4:21; 12:10; Josh 11:23; 23:4; Isa 61:7),” but “the church expanded the land grant to include the whole earth (Rom 4:3; Matt 5:5 with Ps 37:9) and interpreted it as the inheritance of eternal life (Heb 11:8; 1 Pet 1:4).”¹⁵

¹⁰Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 11:27 – 50:26*, The New American Commentary, vol. 1B, (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2005), 202.

¹¹Waltke, *Genesis*, 260.

¹²Hughes, *Genesis*, 247.

¹³Von Rad, *Genesis*, 200.

¹⁴Sailhamer, *Genesis*, 139.

¹⁵Mathews, *Genesis*, 203.

An obedient people. God’s covenant with Abraham heralded the creation of a new people of God. Walter Brueggemann interprets the occasion: “Abraham is the first fruit of the new creation. He is the bearer of what is intended in creation. He is indeed ‘the new creation’ (Rom. 8:23; II Cor. 5:17; James 1:18).”¹⁶ God declares his intent to overcome man’s sin nature with his decree to “walk before Me and be blameless” (17:1). According to Hamilton, the phrase “walk in front of” is “well chosen” in that “it usually expresses the service or devotion of a faithful servant to his king.”¹⁷

The emphasis in the command to be “blameless” is on sincerity of devotion to God. Von Rad indicates that it “actually means ‘whole’ or ‘perfect,’ not, to be sure, in the sense of moral perfection but rather in relationship to God” and that “it signifies complete, unqualified surrender.”¹⁸ Hamilton terms the lifestyle as “transparent or candid.”¹⁹ Calvin comments that “because the eyes of God look for faith and truth in the heart, Abram was commanded to be full of integrity.”²⁰

The new creation of mankind accomplished through Christ begins here with one man. R. R. Reno frames God’s re-creation of Abraham:

Abraham has walked the land, and now he is instructed to walk in the covenant. The promises give a new future. In order to inhabit those promises, Abraham must change. He must become a different kind of man, one fit not only to walk in the land, but also to walk before the LORD. He must be altered in his flesh, beginning with the act of circumcision.²¹

¹⁶Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis*, Interpretation (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 153.

¹⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 461.

¹⁸Von Rad, *Genesis*, 198.

¹⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 461.

²⁰Calvin, *Genesis*, 162.

²¹R. R. Reno, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2010), 168.

God divulges the outcome of redemption. Reno adds an analysis of the announcement:

God will use a particular people, time, and place to achieve his universal plan of drawing all creation into his Sabbath rest. . . . He commands, and we have the power to obey and, in obeying, to become different (2:17). The way forward is thus set: “You shall walk in all the ways which the LORD your God has commanded you” (Deut. 5:33). This will not only provide a remedy for sin, but will also serve as a means for the sanctification of human life. To walk in the ways of the LORD is to partake in his will.²²

The concept of an obedient people resurfaced in the Great Commission when Jesus Christ defined his disciples as those who “observe all that I have commanded” (Matt 28:20).

God’s omnipotence in the mission. In addressing Abraham, God began by establishing his position of power as “God Almighty” (17:1). Hughes indicates, “*El-Shaddai* signifies God’s power (omnipotence) and sovereignty” and “the name by which the patriarchs came to know God.”²³ He adds that by invoking this “divine designation,” God was saying, “I am able to fulfill the awesome hopes that I have set before you.”²⁴

The name “God Almighty” certifies the accomplishment of the covenant and the mission. Mathews notes that the “the epithet conveys in context the majesty and power of the divine person,” especially in regard to “the divine promise of children and nations.”²⁵ Waltke suggests that the moniker of potency is used “to confirm God’s power to produce supernatural offspring.”²⁶ Jesus Christ echoed the assurance in the last words of his commission: “I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matt 28:20).

²²Ibid., 168-69.

²³Hughes, *Genesis*, 246.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Mathews, *Genesis*, 201.

²⁶Waltke, *Genesis*, 258.

The Worldwide Extension of God's Glory

God's covenant with Abraham was continually reinforced in the remainder of the Old Testament. The promise to make him "the father of many nations" unfolded in more detail as the prophets and the psalmist pointed to the universal extension of God's glory. A foundation was clearly laid for including the Gentiles in God's eternal plan.

The gathering of all nations (Isa 66:18-23). God spoke through Isaiah to trumpet the assembling of every nation on earth to worship him. He assured that the gathering was imminent by stating, "the time is coming" (66:18). Brueggemann depicts it as "a great, inclusive, universal reach of Yahweh to claim sovereignty over all peoples and to include all nations in the protected, blessed, covenanted community."²⁷ John Oswalt indicates, "The message of God is not for the descendants of Jacob but for the world, and those of the world who respond to it are the true children of Jacob."²⁸

God's purpose in mustering the nations is for them to "see My glory" (66:18). Brueggemann suggests it is their time to "recognize Yahweh's majestic sovereignty."²⁹ What has been hidden from most of the world will now be universally unveiled. Calvin elaborates, "To see the glory of the Lord is nothing else than to enjoy the grace he had bestowed on the Jews," concluding that now the Gentiles "will see that glory, for the Lord will reveal himself to everyone without exception."³⁰

²⁷Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66*, Westminster Bible Companion, vol. 2 (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 258.

²⁸John Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 687.

²⁹Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 258.

³⁰John Calvin, *Isaiah*, The Crossway Classic Commentaries (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000), 396.

God specified certain verifiable events in the prophecy that would link it to the New Testament mission. The first would be a sign set by God among the nations (66:19). Edward J. Young compares the language of the text with that of sign miracles in Exodus 10:2 and Psalm 78:43, concluding that God is pointing to Christ and his cross.³¹ Oswalt is less certain and allows for the Spirit's outpouring at Pentecost as the sign. In either case, he agrees that the sign would signal the inclusion of the nations. He concedes that the prophet "understood that at the end of the age God would make his power clear in certain miraculous ways, and in so doing call to himself all who are willing to hear."³²

The prophecy foretold of God dispatching "survivors" of his judgment to "declare My glory among the nations" (66:19). Brueggemann views the Jewish remnant as messengers, even "missionaries," who "will go where the news of Yahweh has never been before" and "witness to the cosmic splendor of the one who inhabits eternity and dwells among the humble and contrite" with the message of "Yahweh's governance."³³

Calvin sees the Christian mission unfolding. The "survivors" become "his heralds to celebrate his name among the Gentiles," with the effect that "the knowledge of God will spread throughout the world."³⁴ Names of inconspicuous places are listed as their destinations. Oswalt notes, "In an effort to underline the universal nature of the appeal, place-names representing the farthest reaches of the earth are introduced. *The distant islands* represent the very ends of the world, even beyond what is known."³⁵

³¹Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 3: 500.

³²Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 688.

³³Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 258.

³⁴Calvin, *Isaiah*, 397.

³⁵Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 689.

The missionary venture fulfills God's most coveted act of worship, as "new brethren from all the nations" are brought "as a grain offering to the Lord" (66:20). Oswalt interprets the fruit of the mission as "a precious offering to God" and suggests that "the remnant of his own chosen people, now having come to their true fulfillment, will certainly be a priceless gift to him."³⁶ He highlights the irony of the imagery, pointing to the comparison between the Gentiles and "*the pure vessels* in which Israel offers its grain offerings to the Lord," noting that the Gentiles, "who are by definition unclean, who hear the word of God's glory and come pressing to worship him at all costs, they are the pure ones."³⁷ Brueggemann stresses their promotion, observing, "They shall be included 'just as the Israelites' and shall be reckoned 'clean' just as are good Jews."³⁸

The degree to which Gentiles would be included is made plain by God's vow to "take some of them for priests and for Levites" (66:21). Brueggemann calls the pledge "the ultimate imagery of inclusiveness," making Gentiles "true insiders in the community of Yahweh."³⁹ Oswalt contends,

This thought is so shocking that it can only have been intentional. It is of the same order as saying that a eunuch or a foreigner is a servant of God (56:5-6). It flies in the face of the teaching of the Torah. Not even every member of the house of Israel could be a priest, much less any Gentile! . . . Nothing else could as effectively symbolize the breaking down of the barriers between Jews and Gentiles.⁴⁰

The Gentiles would be more than token bystanders in the mission of the integrated church. Calvin comments on their prominent place in God's agenda, noting,

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid., 690.

³⁸Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 259.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 690.

“The Gentiles will not only be adopted by God but will also be elevated by him to the highest honor.”⁴¹ He interprets their priestly role as “ministers and teachers whom the Lord also chose from among the Gentiles and appointed to the distinguished office of preaching the gospel.”⁴² Joseph A. Alexander concurs, viewing the promise as a reference “to the Christian ministry, to which the Gentiles have as free access as Jews.”⁴³

God’s purpose for gathering the nations into the redeemed community is that “all mankind will come to bow down before Me” (66:23). Oswalt points out that this achieves “the ultimate end of Israel’s religion, that everyone should have the opportunity of joining Israel in worshiping the one God.”⁴⁴

Worship of God would be not only universal but continuous once the nations took their place in the church. The description of “from new moon to new moon and from Sabbath to Sabbath” (66:23) stresses unceasing praise, not limited to “the old God-given Jewish system of special days and Sabbaths for worship.”⁴⁵ Oswalt speaks to the universality of worship in the Gentile era. “The prophet envisions a day when the Spirit of God makes his home in every heart and where every heart is Jerusalem.”⁴⁶

God’s universal invitation (Joel 2:28-32). God’s method of gathering the nations to himself would come through a universal invitation to salvation, announced

⁴¹Calvin, *Isaiah*, 398.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 399.

⁴³Joseph A. Alexander, *Commentary on Isaiah* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Classics, 1992), 478.

⁴⁴Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 691.

⁴⁵Geoffrey W. Grogan, *Isaiah*, in vol. 6 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 353.

⁴⁶Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 692.

through the prophet Joel. Thomas J. Finley sees the prophet's message forecasting "the day when the Lord Himself will establish justice in the earth by judging the unrighteous and setting up a new kingdom for His people."⁴⁷ Joel links Israel's vindication to a spiritual transformation that would include the nations: "The people will serve God from their hearts and have no fear for the terrifying effects of divine wrath upon the earth."⁴⁸

God's punishment of the disobedient Israelites would induce their repentance. Finley remarks that "after the locust plague, the Lord poured out a blessing in the form of abundant rain," indicating his acceptance of their contrition.⁴⁹ Confirmation of a "fresh spiritual work in them" would be the "firm trust in the name of Yahweh" among the Gentiles.⁵⁰ David W. Baker comments that Joel "moves beyond restoration to promising a new thing, advancing beyond anything his people, or any people, experienced before."⁵¹

The new thing Joel foretold was the outpouring of God's Spirit "on all flesh" (2:28). John Barton observes that he uses the prophetic formula, "It will come about after this," to introduce "a completely new set of ideas," predicting "the coming transformation of human nature by the outpouring of YHWH's spirit, not on the land but on people."⁵² Duane A. Garrett contends that the formula "maintains continuity" with the previous

⁴⁷Thomas J. Finley, *Joel, Amos, Obadiah*, The Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1990), 71.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Ibid., 70.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹David W. Baker, *Joel, Obadiah, Malachi*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 98.

⁵²John Barton, *Joel and Obadiah: A Commentary*, The Old Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 94.

passage: “The pouring out of the Spirit is distinct from but analogous to the pouring out of rain on the land. Both are saving works of the day of the Lord.”⁵³

The unprecedented outpouring is of God himself in bestowing his power. Barton appraises the gift of “the spirit (*rûah*) of YHWH” as “that in YHWH which corresponds to the spirit or vital force in human beings – the principle of YHWH’s own life, the breath in YHWH’s own nostrils,” employed “to communicate the *power* of YHWH.”⁵⁴ Barton cites such examples of dynamic infusion in the stories of Judges, as “the ‘spirit of YHWH’ rushes into people,” thereby “empowering them to do great deeds, often of a violent kind” and in the Spirit’s bestowal “in the empowerment of prophets.”⁵⁵

Barton notes specifically that “it is this spiritual gift of prophecy with which Joel 2:28-29 is concerned,” seeing it “as a fulfillment of Moses’ hope expressed in Num. 11:29: ‘Would that all YHWH’s people were prophets, and that YHWH would put his spirit on them!’”⁵⁶ Garrett agrees, adding, “The gift of the Spirit is prophetic,” as “it enables people to prophesy, to experience revelatory dreams, and to see visions.”⁵⁷ He characterizes the coming age “marked by the presence of the Spirit,” as one of “direct experience with God as in Joel,” in addition to “the grace that enables his people to love God from the heart, as in Ezekiel.”⁵⁸

⁵³Duane A. Garrett, *Hosea, Joel*, The New American Commentary, vol. 19A (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1997), 367.

⁵⁴Barton, *Joel and Obadiah*, 94-95.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 95.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*

⁵⁷Garrett, *Hosea, Joel*, 368.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*

The scope of God’s new work was to begin with Israel and extend to the nations. The initial outpouring of the Spirit was to be “on all flesh” (2:28). David A. Hubbard assigns the phrase exclusively to Israel, due to Joel’s reference to “*your* sons and *your* daughters.”⁵⁹ He insists that “the entire people of Israel will participate,” since “*all flesh* is defined as comprehensively as possible: sons and daughters, old people and young men, servants and handmaids,” emphasizing that “no exclusion will be made on the basis of gender, age or social station.”⁶⁰

The decree rises to its pinnacle in what Baker terms “the widespread dispersion of the Spirit.”⁶¹ He notes the outpouring on “people from all walks of life, all social strata, and even from all nations,” to the end that they “will be blessed, empowered, and vivified through the gift of the Spirit of God.”⁶² Garrett clarifies the conferment:

The Spirit is universal in that he is given to all Israel rather than to all humanity. This does not mean, however that Joel altogether excluded Gentiles from participation in the kingdom of God. . . . The Gentiles’ reception of the Spirit does not mean that God is no longer God of Israel but that Gentiles have submitted to Israel’s God. . . . For Joel the gift of the Spirit to Israel was vindication of their status as the people of God.⁶³

The outcome, God’s new creation, is what Barton labels “a new ‘inspired’ community.”⁶⁴

Joel clearly links the outpouring of God’s Spirit to the deliverance of God’s people. Finley explains, “Joel speaks of a God who is so gracious that He sends His Spirit

⁵⁹David A. Hubbard, *Joel and Amos: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 25 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 73.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Baker, *Joel, Obadiah, Malachi*, 107.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Garrett, *Hosea, Joel*, 369.

⁶⁴Barton, *Joel and Obadiah*, 97.

to prepare His chosen people to turn back to Him and experience blessing rather than judgment.”⁶⁵ After describing cosmic events associated with the bestowal, Joel introduces the means of deliverance with the phrase, “And it will come about . . .” (2:32). He then issues an open invitation to escape further judgment, prescribing that “whoever calls upon the name of the LORD will be delivered.” Garrett expounds on his meaning:

The phrase implies identifying Yahweh as one’s own God. This is not a prayer of desperation in a moment of crisis but a consistent identification with the God of Israel. It includes confessing him before the nations (Isa 12:4; Ps 105:1). It also involves faithfulness to the Lord through a period of trial (Zech 13:9). Above all else, identification with the Lord is a response to the pouring out of the Spirit (Isa 44:3-5).⁶⁶

Richard D. Patterson notes the qualifier in “among the survivors whom the LORD calls.” “While salvation-deliverance will be the experience of the one who truly ‘calls on the name of the LORD’ in that day, it is God himself who will summon that remnant.”⁶⁷

Joel’s prophecy became a touchstone text for both Peter and Paul in their New Testament expressions of the gospel. Peter cited the passage as he heralded the Spirit’s arrival at Pentecost (Acts 2:17-21), although he had not yet welcomed the Gentiles. Finley observes that Peter “took the event Joel foresaw and linked it with the beginning of the new age of the Spirit,” summarizing that “Joel saw the end point of the whole process, while Peter fixed his eyes on the onset.”⁶⁸

Paul’s inclusion of the Gentiles was consistent with his calling (Acts 9:15) and hinged on Joel’s words. His declaration that “there is no distinction between Jew and

⁶⁵Finley, *Joel, Amos, Obadiah*, 75.

⁶⁶Garrett, *Hosea, Joel*, 375.

⁶⁷Richard D. Patterson, *Joel*, in vol. 7 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985), 257.

⁶⁸Finley, *Joel, Amos, Obadiah*, 80.

Greek” (Rom 10:12) finds its support in the prophecy. Paul continues, claiming, “the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him.” He then appeals to Joel’s open invitation. Baker observes that Paul “does not limit the application to the Israelites, as the Joel passage could be read, but uses it as a universalizing statement,” arguing “for the universal availability of the Spirit.”⁶⁹ Finley contends that Paul’s “extension of the promise of the Spirit to Gentiles was something new, but it was not inconsistent with Joel’s vision,” that he viewed them as “a wild olive branch grafted into the cultivated olive tree, which represents God’s chosen people, Israel (Rom. 11:17).”⁷⁰

The global call to worship God (Ps 67:1-7). The psalmist summoned all the earth to worship God in response to his faithfulness to Israel. H. C. Leupold hails Psalm 67 as “one of the clearest expressions of the thought that Israel is to be God’s priest to the nations.”⁷¹ Gerald H. Wilson suggests the psalmist’s primary concern is “that all humanity – Israelite and non-Israelite – should know, acknowledge, and respond in praise for the blessing of God’s salvation.”⁷² He claims a “nonadversarial attitude toward the pagan nations” is evident in the passage.⁷³ Wilson sees a reminder of “the covenant of God with Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3), in which the blessing of Abraham (and Israel through him) is linked with God’s ultimate intention to bless ‘all peoples on the earth.’”⁷⁴

⁶⁹Baker, *Joel, Obadiah, Malachi*, 107.

⁷⁰Finley, *Joel, Amos, Obadiah*, 79.

⁷¹H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of The Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1959), 485.

⁷²Gerald H. Wilson, *Psalms*, vol. 1, *The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 925.

⁷³*Ibid.*

⁷⁴*Ibid.*

The psalmist begins by praying, “God be gracious to us and bless us” (67:1a). John Goldingay interprets the petition: “Both grace and blessing are not merely spiritual matters but realities that bring deliverance in life’s crises and fullness of life in the outward aspects of human experience such as family life, food, and health.”⁷⁵ Israel’s welfare was to establish her witness to the rest of the world as evidence of God’s favor.

Wilson identifies the request that God “cause His face to shine on us” (67:1b) as “a communal blessing” with roots in “the classic benediction on Israel in Numbers 6:24.”⁷⁶ A. A. Anderson explains, “A ‘shining’ face is an expression of pleasure and delight,” hence “to make one’s face shine forth towards another person means to show him favour.”⁷⁷ James Montgomery Boice adds, “It implies the friendliness of warm personal relationships,” signaling “that God would himself enter into a gracious personal relationship with his people.”⁷⁸ Wilson reveals that “the shining of God’s ‘face’ or ‘light’ is regularly coupled with the anticipation of deliverance, redemption, or salvation.”⁷⁹

The psalmist’s earnest desire is for God’s “way” and “salvation” to be published globally (67:2). Artur Weiser construes “God’s way ‘upon the earth’ as embracing the destinies of the foreign nations themselves in and through which God’s providential rule is made manifest, the final goal of which is the salvation of the whole

⁷⁵John Goldingay, *Psalms*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 300.

⁷⁶Wilson, *Psalms*, 926.

⁷⁷A. A. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, vol. 1, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 479.

⁷⁸James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), 2: 546.

⁷⁹Wilson, *Psalms*, 927.

world.”⁸⁰ He views “particular happenings, whether natural blessings or divine guidance granted in the events of history” as actually “the footprints of God” and assurance of “the materialization of his plan of salvation that comprises the whole wide world of nations.”⁸¹

Anderson spells out the psalmist’s prayer in behalf of Israel: “The nation asks for God’s blessings, not simply for their own selfish reasons, or for the sole purpose of self-preservation, but they also desire to see God’s power and authority acknowledged by the whole world.”⁸² Leupold recognizes the psalmist’s plea for “material blessings upon God’s people.”⁸³ He reasons, “For when God’s people fare poorly, their lot leads the nations to believe that their God cannot provide for them. If, on the other hand, they are blessed, this fact serves as an indication to the nations round about that He is well able to provide for His people’s wants.”⁸⁴ Weiser observes that in the psalmist’s prayer,

the natural barriers set up by religion are lifted so that the faithful are set free to take fresh thought and perceive in the light of their common bond with the Creator of the world and the Lord of their history the universal purpose of God to save all nations, and through their joint praises and thanksgiving to unite in a great congregation of those who are blessed by God.⁸⁵

The psalmist cries out a repeated cheer, “Let the peoples praise you, O God” (67:3, 5). Wilson interprets the spontaneous call to worship: “The inclusion of all the peoples and nations of the earth in God’s saving plans calls forth a paean of universal

⁸⁰Artur Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary*, Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), 475.

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, 480.

⁸³Leupold, *Exposition*, 486.

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵Weiser, *The Psalms*, 475.

praise.”⁸⁶ He comments that the verb for “praise” is frequently rendered “give thanks,” indicating that “by joining in singing this refrain, the reader/listener is affirming and accepting the thanksgiving of all the ‘peoples’” of the world, resulting from “their knowing the ‘ways’ of God (67:2) and their experience of his ‘salvation.’”⁸⁷ Weiser identifies the cry as “the decisive point of the psalm,” asserting that the praise deservedly given to God “is the true purpose which unites the assembly in Israel celebrating the feast with the nations of the world in a single worshipping congregation.”⁸⁸

The psalmist elevates the praise and cause for thanksgiving in his second section. He establishes a theological basis for global worship, in response to a God who “will judge the peoples with uprightness and guide the nations on the earth” (67:4). As he segues from the nations’ initial call to a celebration of God’s salvation, Wilson points to a growing intimacy with God. “Now the world’s tribes (*le’ummim*) are ‘glad’ and ‘sing for joy’ because of God’s just rulership and guidance of all the peoples and tribes of the earth (67:4).”⁸⁹ Weiser expounds, “They are to rejoice in God’s righteous judgments and in his guidance which they have been privileged to experience in their own lives.”⁹⁰

Goldingay underscores the psalmist’s point, “that God decides for people with uprightness, fairness, or equity” and that his “upright dealings with Israel are a paradigm for God’s dealings with the world.”⁹¹ Thus, he calls for universal gladness and praise.

⁸⁶Wilson, *Psalms*, 929.

⁸⁷Ibid., 927.

⁸⁸Weiser, *The Psalms*, 476.

⁸⁹Wilson, *Psalms*, 927.

⁹⁰Weiser, *The Psalms*, 476.

⁹¹Goldingay, *Psalms*, 302.

The Great Commission of Jesus Revealed in the Gospels

The mission of God in the Old Testament resurfaces as the pursuit of Jesus Christ in the Gospels. Jesus entrusted his mission from the Father to a handful of raw disciples during a series of post-resurrection appearances. On three separate occasions prior to his ascension, Jesus Christ gave direction and insight into the divine assignment for his followers. The four New Testament evangelists chose particular excerpts of Jesus' words on these occasions to include in their gospel accounts. Thus, they open four distinct windows into the missionary task unveiled in the heart of God. Taken together, these statements form what the church has come to embrace as the Great Commission. A close inspection of these four complementary commissions leaves those committed to the mission with a well-defined grasp of the objectives and parameters of the sacred venture.

The Background of the Four Commissions

The Synoptic writers join John in presenting gospels with unique emphases in the life, ministry, and mission of Jesus. Each author's eyewitness account is consistent with his own gospel concentration. Before examining each of these statements, a few observations should be made concerning the timeline and the distinct circumstances of Christ's appearances and words.

The chronology of the commissions. It appears that the Johannine commission (John 20:21) is the only one of the four which occurred on the Sunday evening following Jesus' resurrection, making it the earliest of the four statements. Appearing suddenly to the disciples in a closed room that night, Jesus added a few words of commission to his other words of assurance and rebuke for unbelief.

In his second appearance, Jesus issued the missionary command in a promised meeting (Matt 26:32; Mark 14:28) on a mountain in Galilee. William Hendriksen notes, “It was indeed in Galilee that the risen Savior met with these eleven men (28:16), with seven of them (John 21:1-23), and with more than five hundred of his followers (1 Cor 15:6).”⁹² Matthew and Mark provide accounts of the charge. Although the Matthean commission is clearly given on this occasion, debate exists as to the time and location of the statement in Mark. Despite its inclusion in the same paragraph, following Mark’s account of the closed room appearance, there is some justification for placing the commission one week later, with the Matthean commission.⁹³ R. C. H. Lenski reasons,

These words of Jesus sound much like those that are recorded in Matt. 28:18-20, which were spoken in Galilee (Matt. 28:16). They contain the same Great Commission and similar great promises. If we begin a new paragraph at v. 15 we have the very matter in Mark which so many otherwise miss, namely the meeting in Galilee which is made so important by 14:28; Matt. 28:10; and Mark 16:7. . . . Mark is not narrating a fourth appearance of Jesus . . . , he is passing on to the climax, the Great Commission and Promise of the risen Savior.⁹⁴

The third and final commission appearance made by Jesus is recorded by Luke in both of his volumes. In his Gospel he begins an account which he continues and expands in Acts. The last commission (Luke 24:46-48) occurs during another episode which may at first glance be easily lumped into the Sunday evening appearance. However, the inclusion of the Lord’s instruction to the disciples to wait in Jerusalem appears to link it with Luke’s account in Acts 1:4 on the Mount of Olives, serving as the farewell commission in Luke’s

⁹²William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973), 914.

⁹³Alfred Plummer, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, Thornapple Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1982), 373.

⁹⁴R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Mark’s Gospel*, *Lenski’s New Testament Commentary Series* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), 763-64.

gospel.⁹⁵ Hendriksen suggests that verses 44-49 could be viewed “as containing various sayings of our Lord to be ascribed indefinitely to the forty days before the ascension, and then possibly assign the last of these verses (verse 49) to the final day, the very day of the ascension.”⁹⁶

The contrast in contexts. The four commissions given by Jesus were issued around the circumstances of the three appearances and must be examined and understood within those contexts. The initial charge was uttered as an appendix to his shocking appearance and challenging statements to the surprised gathering on Sunday evening. His suffering, death, and resurrection serve as the backdrop for their assignment. David Bosch asserts that “the scars of the risen Lord do not only prove Jesus’ identity,” they also “constitute a model to be emulated by those whom he commissions: ‘As the Father has sent me, even so I send you.’ It is a mission of self-emptying, of humble service.”⁹⁷ The statement was brief, prefacing Jesus’ next commission.

The Matthean and Markan commissions reflect the calculated plan of Jesus through the meeting on a Galilean mountain. Before he was arrested, Jesus had revealed an unfolding, predetermined plan, instructing the disciples to meet him there (Matt 26:32; Mark 14:28). On Easter morning, the angel and Jesus himself confirmed the plan and reminded them of the scheduled meeting, sending word through the women at the tomb (Matt 28:7,10; Mark 16:7). The location of the meeting was probably well understood.

⁹⁵Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, The New American Commentary, vol. 24 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishing Group, 1992), 619.

⁹⁶William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978), 1073.

⁹⁷David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in the Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), 514.

As Alfred Plummer suggests, “there was some particular spot in this hilly district near the lake that was known in the circle of Christ’s disciples as ‘the mountain.’ Our Lord would be likely to appoint a familiar spot, and we know of no other occasion on which He appointed a definite place for meeting Him after the Resurrection.”⁹⁸ Thus, Jesus selected the peak for his most direct and momentous commands.

Luke’s commission stands apart by the tone of Christ’s statement. Here Jesus apparently intends to rehearse the testimony for his witnesses. Bosch contends,

Jesus’ words . . . reflect, in a nutshell, Luke’s entire understanding of the Christian mission: it is the fulfillment of scriptural promises; it only becomes possible after the death and resurrection of the Messiah of Israel. . . . Luke presents all this, not in the form of a mandate or commission, as Matthew does, but rather in the form of a fact and a promise; as such, the words of Jesus at the end of the gospel correspond to what he says in the beginning of Acts (1:8).⁹⁹

Accordingly, such an interpretation narrows the task of the disciples. Robert Stein pinpoints Luke’s view of their role “as witnesses assuring the veracity of the message,” seeing the disciples “not just [as] proclaimers of Jesus’ message but [as] eyewitnesses who were to share their personal experience of the risen Christ.”¹⁰⁰ Not the least of their testimony would be a first-hand account of Jesus’ ascension soon to follow.

The Johannine Commission (John 20:21)

John’s record of the Lord’s appearance to the disciples on Sunday evening is highlighted by two conferrals of “Peace be with you” (20:19, 21), sandwiched around the display of his wounds to them. J. Vernon McGee sees the refrain as deliberate, prefacing

⁹⁸Alfred Plummer, *An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew*, Thornapple Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1982), 427.

⁹⁹Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 91.

¹⁰⁰Stein, *Luke*, 621.

Jesus' first commission, contrasting "peace *with* God" with that of "those who are in fellowship with God and are doing His will," as "described in Matthew 11:29: 'Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, . . . and ye shall find rest unto your souls.'"¹⁰¹ They would soon need that peace as they accepted his charge.

Jesus' first commission to his disciples was brief. John's account lacks the details revealed in his later commands. This was not a time for assignment but for assurance. Their participation in his mission had been part of his promise, now sealed by his appearance before them. Lenski sees it as no surprise to the eleven, rather that "they had known for a long time that this would be their work (4:38; 13:16; 15:16; 17:18). Yet, Jesus now rightly tells his disciples of this their sending. Heretofore his own work was not finished, and his death made it appear as though all had been in vain; now risen from the dead and glorified, he tells the disciples that their work will, indeed, go on."¹⁰²

As Christ's mission has been central in John, the theme of divine appointment is now stressed as he hands his mission to the disciples. Andreas Kostenberger and Peter O'Brien point to the continuity in the two missions by John's use of "just as" (*καθὼς*):

The Fourth Gospel's primary focus is the mission of Jesus: he is the one who comes into the world, accomplishes his work and returns to the Father; he is the one who descended from heaven and ascends again; he is the Sent One, who, in complete dependence and perfect obedience to his sender, fulfils the purpose for which the Father sent him. He is also the shepherd-teacher who calls followers to help gather his eschatological harvest. The mission of Jesus' followers is presented within this framework.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible with J. Vernon McGee*, vol. 4, *Matthew through Romans* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983), 498.

¹⁰²R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel, Lenski's New Testament Commentary Series* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), 1370.

¹⁰³Andreas J. Kostenberger and Peter T. O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission*, *New Studies in Biblical Theology* no. 11, ed. D. A. Carson (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 203.

Although Jesus uses the perfect tense to refer to the completion of his own mission (“the Father has sent Me”), he employs the present tense for the disciples’ task. Lenski observes, “The redemptive mission of Jesus is now finished,” concluding that “now begins the gospel, the evangelizing mission on the part of all of the disciples of Jesus. The present tense, ‘I am sending,’ does not mean that now this work is at once to begin; as so often, the present denotes an act in progress.”¹⁰⁴ The success of their mission is assured, since they are not initiating their own work but continuing the work of their Lord.¹⁰⁵ In A. T. Robertson’s words, “Jesus still bears the Commission of the Father.”¹⁰⁶

The Matthean Commission (Matt 28:18-20)

Matthew supplies the most familiar commission of the four, given by Jesus on the mountain in Galilee. Hendriksen imagines the setting as “a place of picturesque scenery and subdued quietness,” and “above all, a scene of tender reminiscences, both for Jesus himself and for his followers, reminding them of what had happened earlier; perhaps on this particular elevation.”¹⁰⁷ The mountain setting would provide an appropriate site for Jesus to convey a few peak concepts in the Great Commission.

The authority for the mission. Jesus begins his commission here by declaring his new cosmic clout. Bosch brings out, “Now, after his resurrection, Jesus is given *all* authority, not only on earth but also in heaven. What is new is the universal extension of

¹⁰⁴Lenski, *Interpretation of St. John’s Gospel*, 1370.

¹⁰⁵Kostenberger and O’Brien, *Salvation*, 222.

¹⁰⁶A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol. 5, *The Fourth Gospel, The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1932), 314.

¹⁰⁷Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*, 996.

his authority.”¹⁰⁸ Once he had been urged by the devil to shun the cross and seize world dominance without suffering (Matt 4:8-10; Luke 4:5-7). Now Jesus lays down a principle for his disciples to remember, one that should instill boldness in their future mission. Lenski construes that “Jesus himself shows his disciples the kingdoms of this world after the cross had been borne and points out the conquest his sacrifice and his love shall achieve through the gospel.”¹⁰⁹ His point is clear, that the Father rewards sacrifice and suffering in service.

The mission will go forth now since Jesus is fully in charge. Robertson notes, “He spoke as one already in heaven with a world-wide outlook and with the resources of heaven at his command.”¹¹⁰ Christ’s claim to supremacy shapes his commission (“Therefore, go . . .”). Robert Garrett suggests that “the words that follow, no matter how difficult, have weight because the Lord of all authority requires it. Thus, fulfilling the Great Commission is not an option for the disciples but a matter of simple obedience.”¹¹¹ Bosch views the mandate as “an empowerment rather than a command,” in essence, “a creative statement in the manner of Genesis 1:3, ‘Let there be’”¹¹²

¹⁰⁸Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 78.

¹⁰⁹R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Matthew’s Gospel, Lenski’s New Testament Commentary Series* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), 1170.

¹¹⁰A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol. 1, *The Gospel According to Matthew, The Gospel According to Mark* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1930), 244.

¹¹¹Robert Garrett, “The Gospels and Acts: Jesus the Missionary and His Missionary Followers,” in *Missiology: An Introduction to the Foundations, History, and Strategies of World Missions*, ed. John Mark Terry, Ebbie Smith, and Justice Anderson (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1998), 71.

¹¹²Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 78.

The focus of the mission. Jesus clarifies the mission's focus with the command, "Make disciples," the only New Testament occurrence of "μαθητεύσατε."¹¹³

Garrett views "going," "baptizing," and "teaching" each as critical to making disciples:

It is most likely that these represent a process, or a simple *three-step method*, in which disciples are produced: first, by going to those who have had no opportunity; second, by calling them to a relationship with Jesus in which they repent, believe, and are baptized as a symbol of their allegiance to Christ and his kingdom community (the church); and third, by teaching them to hold fast to all that Christ commanded.¹¹⁴

The new disciples are baptized in one "name" but in all three persons of the Trinity. Hendriksen views baptism in one's "name" to mean "being brought into vital relationship with that One" and "proclaiming that he has broken with the world and has been brought into union with the Triune God, to whom he intends to devote his life."¹¹⁵

Jesus specifies that after new converts are baptized, they should be taught "to observe all that I have commanded you." As Spirit baptism serves as entry into the church (1 Cor 12:13), water baptism implies placing new believers within communities for nurture and teaching. Bosch interprets Jesus' instructions as to mean that the apostles should diligently teach new disciples "to submit to the will of God as revealed in Jesus' ministry and teaching."¹¹⁶ Garrett contends the teaching "speaks of lifestyle and ethical integrity, putting into practice in personal and collective life the mandates that come from Jesus – not the least of which is this last command to make disciples of all the

¹¹³Ibid., 73.

¹¹⁴Garrett, "The Gospels and Acts," 72.

¹¹⁵Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*, 1000-01.

¹¹⁶Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 66.

peoples.”¹¹⁷ The prescription echoes God’s original decree for the covenant community laid out in his charge to Abraham, to “walk before Me, and be blameless” (Gen 17:1).

Thus, disciple making is clearly the focus given by Jesus. Garrett analyzes the mission, explaining, “All disciples are to go, baptize, and teach others, who then learn from them to go, baptize and teach others,” showing that Jesus “intended to start a *chain reaction* of ‘disciples making disciples’ that would encompass the entire planet.”¹¹⁸ The reproduction of disciples becomes essential to the mission. As Avery Willis illustrates, “Anyone can see the number of apples on a tree; only a few can see the number of trees in an apple.”¹¹⁹ Jesus envisaged the fruit of exponential global discipleship.

The scope for the mission. Now Jesus expounds on the extent of the promise made earlier to his disciples, that he would make them “fishers of men” (Matt 4:19).¹²⁰ Garrett spells out that “the *scope* of the Great Commission’s discipling process is ‘all the nations’ . . . embracing all ‘people groups’ of the world and nothing less.”¹²¹ Earlier, Jesus had limited his own mission to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt 15:24), but here he sends the disciples into the Gentile world.¹²²

According to Bosch, Matthew presents the Gentile mission as possible only after “the Messiah of the Jews” had been raised from the dead.¹²³ Plummer explains that

¹¹⁷Garrett, “The Gospels and Acts,” 73.

¹¹⁸Ibid., 74.

¹¹⁹Avery Willis, *The Biblical Basis of Missions* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1979), 85.

¹²⁰Plummer, *Exegetical Commentary on Matthew*, 429.

¹²¹Garrett, “The Gospels and Acts,” 72.

¹²²Plummer, *Exegetical Commentary on Matthew*, 429.

¹²³Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 64-65.

before, “they were not to go into any way of the Gentiles or into any city of the Samaritans,” but afterward, the risen Lord dispatched them especially to the Gentiles “to make them as fully disciples of Christ as they are themselves.”¹²⁴

The power for the mission. The risen Lord now stands before his followers and assures them of his continued presence and power with them to the end of the mission. Lenski states it best: “He does not send his disciples out into the world of nations alone. Invisibly he will always be at their side, assuring their success. Here he answers every fear, doubt, discouragement, weakness.”¹²⁵ The “end of the age” signals the culmination of the Church’s missionary task, world evangelization.

The Markan Commission (Mark 16:15-16)

The commission recorded in Mark falls within a passage (16:9-20) which has been the subject of scholarly debate regarding its length and authorship. Bruce Metzger concludes that Mark’s original version ended with 16:8, with several scenarios yielding the last twelve verses.¹²⁶ Regardless, a similar version of Matthew’s charge is given here. Robertson and others concur that “this commission in Mark is probably another report of the missionary *Magna Charta* in Matt. 28:16-20 spoken on the mountain in Galilee.”¹²⁷

¹²⁴Plummer, *Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew*, 429.

¹²⁵Lenski, *Interpretation of St. Matthew’s Gospel*, 1180.

¹²⁶Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 126.

¹²⁷Robertson, *Matthew, Mark*, 405.

The urgency of Mark's commission reflects the active nature of Peter, from whom Mark likely received the story.¹²⁸ McGee points out that "Mark does not include all the details," reasoning that "this has been a gospel of action. Now He's telling them to get into action!"¹²⁹ Mark's account deviates from Matthew's on several points. First, in the general command to "go into all the world" and to evangelize "all creation," with no mention of "the nations." Lenski points to "the universality of grace which is expressed," in that "no human being is shut out from the gospel."¹³⁰

A second departure from Matthew's account is Jesus' charge to "preach the gospel" rather than to "make disciples." The meaning is to broadcast the benevolent message of one's superior.¹³¹ Plummer submits, "The disciples were already accustomed to baptize (John 4:2), but their main duty was to preach."¹³² The emphasis is on the urgency to *proclaim* the message.

The third distinction in Mark's version is the certainty that "he who has disbelieved shall be condemned." J. C. Ryle sees Jesus warning "all who will persist in their wickedness and leave this world without faith in Christ. The greater the mercy offered to us in the Gospel, the greater will be the guilt of those who obstinately refuse to believe."¹³³ Here, Jesus stresses the urgency to *receive* the message.

¹²⁸Ibid., 249-50.

¹²⁹McGee, *Matthew through Romans*, 236.

¹³⁰Lenski, *Interpretation of St. Mark's Gospel*, 765.

¹³¹Ibid., 28.

¹³²Plummer, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, 374.

¹³³J. C. Ryle, *Mark: Expository Thoughts on the Gospels*, The Crossway Classic Commentaries (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1993), 268.

The Lukan Commission (Luke 24:46-48)

Jesus' final commission is best viewed as imparted on the Mount of Olives just prior to his ascension and in conjunction with Luke's second account in Acts 1:3-8. Now Jesus validates prophecies so that the disciples might be assured of their coming roles. Alluding to his earlier prediction (24:44), he unfolds the divine agenda. Kostenberger and O'Brien elucidate, "At the centre of God's saving plan is the person of Jesus the Messiah, and in him the Old Testament Scriptures have been fulfilled. His death and resurrection are the climactic events of history," opening the way "for repentance and the forgiveness of sins to be proclaimed in his name to all the nations (24:47)."¹³⁴

The motifs of repentance and forgiveness are woven throughout Luke-Acts and are thus included in Luke's commission. The disciples' witness elicits a response and anticipates a conversion. Luke develops this theme later in Saul's call to evangelize the Gentiles "that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness for sins" (Acts 26:18).¹³⁵

Like Matthew, Luke cites ethno-linguistic groups ("πάντα τὰ ἔθνη") as the recipients of the worldwide message. Darrell Bock points out that "the disciples initially stumbled over this element in Jesus' commission, seemingly assuming that Jesus meant the message was to go to Jews in every nation."¹³⁶ The mission would begin in Jerusalem (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4, 8).

¹³⁴Kostenberger and O'Brien, *Salvation*, 123.

¹³⁵Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 117.

¹³⁶Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, vol. 2, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1996), 1940.

Rather than scattering from the cross, the group of disciples remained intact so that the saddened spectators might become bold corroborators of the resurrection.¹³⁷

Lenski relates how as witnesses they would ignite a wildfire of post-Pentecost preaching:

Jesus does not need to say outright that these disciples to whom he is speaking are to be the preachers that were foretold in the Scriptures as going out to all nations. All he says is: ‘*You* are witnesses of these things.’ . . . Their proclamation is to be testimony. They therefore lead all other heralds, who, because they are not themselves witnesses, can only take up the testimony of these witnesses.¹³⁸

Summary of the Commissions

The evangelists collaborate for an integrative account of the Great Commission in four diverse statements from Jesus. Each declaration spotlights certain facets of the gospel gem, from Luke’s affirmation of prophecy in worldwide proclamation to the priority of disciple-making stressed by Matthew, to the urgent call for evangelistic action in Mark.¹³⁹ Add to those the divine appointment of the church formulated in John. Jesus persuaded his disciples to exchange a misguided passion to restore Israel for the greater quest of gathering a new people of God from the nations of the world.¹⁴⁰

The Mission of the Early Church

The early church adopted Jesus’ mission to the nations as its own assignment. Local congregations accepted responsibility for the Great Commission as they came to grips with God’s plan to include the Gentiles. Bock describes the divinely driven process

¹³⁷Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 116.

¹³⁸R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Luke’s Gospel, Lenski’s New Testament Commentary Series* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1946), 1207.

¹³⁹Bock, *Luke*, 1941.

¹⁴⁰Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic, 2006), 506.

that played out. “God brings various ethnic groups into one in Christ. This message is important in Acts. Jesus brings reconciliation not only with God but also between people. The new community will be diverse in makeup, equal in status, and called to reflect peace with one another (Eph 2:11-22).¹⁴¹ As the early church overcame ethnic bias and hostility, they discovered the mission of God and their own part in it.

The book of Acts pivots on two decisive events transpiring within two foundational churches. The churches at Jerusalem and Antioch provide the stage for what John MacArthur refers to as “the divine effort to lay the groundwork for the first Gentile church.”¹⁴² He observes that “at least seven years elapsed from Pentecost until the founding of that church at Antioch.”¹⁴³ He reasons that the development of leaders and the maturity of new believers were essentials to “tear down the long-established wall of prejudice.”¹⁴⁴ MacArthur concludes that once integral pieces were in place, “the time was right to give birth to the church in a Gentile land and to move to the last phase of our Lord’s plan for evangelism – ‘to the remotest part of the earth.’ (Acts 1:8).”¹⁴⁵

The Admission by the Jerusalem Church (Acts 11:17-18)

The apostle Peter’s experience of presenting the gospel to Cornelius and others in Caesarea (Acts 10:34-48) triggered a reaction from the church in Jerusalem. The

¹⁴¹Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 410.

¹⁴²John MacArthur, Jr. *Acts 1-12, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 311.

¹⁴³Ibid.

¹⁴⁴Ibid., 311-12.

¹⁴⁵Ibid., 312.

Jewish church leaders confronted him upon hearing that he went to “uncircumcised men” and dined with them (11:2-3). Peter responded by recounting the story of his vision on the housetop in Joppa, of being summoned by Cornelius, and of the Spirit’s outpouring on the Gentiles. He concluded by asking them that if God had granted the same gift of the Spirit to the Gentiles that the Jews had received, “Who was I that I could stand in God’s way?” (11:17). The Jerusalem church leaders were compelled to agree, confessing that “God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life” (11:18).

Peter’s irrefutable case is captured by MacArthur. “Who wants to argue with what the Lord has done? It was unarguably God saving the Gentiles, as evidenced by the coming of the Holy Spirit with the very same attendant phenomena as at Pentecost.”¹⁴⁶ Larkin insists, “To refuse to incorporate the Gentile believers into the church via baptism and full table fellowship would be to thwart God’s purposes. Peter cannot, indeed he would not be able to, stand in the way of God.”¹⁴⁷ Lenski comments, “The very idea that Peter might hinder God in this bestowal is preposterous.”¹⁴⁸ In fact, John B. Polhill renders the verb “κωλύσαι” as “expressing the idea of opposition to God,” meaning “opposition to the Gentiles’ baptism *would* be opposition to God, for God’s leading of Peter and of Cornelius proved beyond doubt his intention to include them in his people.”¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶Ibid., 311.

¹⁴⁷William J. Larkin, Jr., *Acts*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series, ed. Grant R. Osborne (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 173.

¹⁴⁸R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of The Acts of the Apostles, Lenski’s New Testament Commentary Series* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), 446.

¹⁴⁹John B. Polhill, *Acts*, The New American Commentary, vol. 26 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 267.

The significance of the moment is not lost in Luke's account. Polhill sums up the response of the Jewish leaders. "There really was not much the 'circumcision group' could say now. God was clearly in it. Who could object? Silence quickly gave way to praise of God in his triumph advance of the gospel."¹⁵⁰ Bock highlights their conviction, noting that "the complaints of the objecting group are silenced" and that "God is now seen as the one who brought this about, so they rejoice."¹⁵¹

The reference to salvation as "the repentance unto life" signals the complete capitulation of the Jewish church leaders in Jerusalem. Lenski sees their concession as approval that "God has succeeded in opening the door of the church to the Gentiles."¹⁵² He stresses God's part "in having the Jewish Christians who were already within the portal welcome these incoming Gentiles and praise him for bringing them in."¹⁵³ MacArthur digests the gospel feat. "That they would come to the admission that God had 'granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life' was one of the most shocking admissions in the annals of Jewish history. For until the Hebrew Christians came to that realization, they would never begin the task of evangelizing the Gentiles."¹⁵⁴

The Mission Modeled by the Antioch Church (Acts 13:1-4)

Upon hearing of a great harvest of new Gentile believers in Antioch, the Jerusalem church sent Barnabas to investigate the report (Acts 11:22). Barnabas rejoiced

¹⁵⁰Ibid., 267-68.

¹⁵¹Bock, *Acts*, 409.

¹⁵²Lenski, *Interpretation of The Acts*, 446-47.

¹⁵³Ibid., 447.

¹⁵⁴MacArthur, *Acts I-II*, 311.

in the work of God there, encouraged them, and brought Saul to Antioch to join him in teaching the new “Christians” (11:23). The church at Antioch would soon model Godly benevolence (11:29) and the missionary commitment for local assemblies of believers.

The first commissioning of missionaries from a local church erupted as the natural response to God’s call. Bock points out that “the call of Barnabas and Paul takes place in the context of worship,” emphasizing that “everything about the event argues that mission is grounded in God’s command and the response of a church engaged in devotion.”¹⁵⁵ He adds, “This is the end of spontaneous ministry to Gentiles. Now this Gentile outreach is planned and directed by God in a fuller, more intentional manner.”¹⁵⁶ Polhill comments that “the first Christian congregation to witness to the Gentiles in its own city (11:19f.)” was also “the first to send missionaries forth into the larger world.”¹⁵⁷

The Antioch church grasped the Gentile mission. Curtis Vaughan notes that Luke focuses on the leadership of the church, the activity of the two men, and the manner in which they were set apart.¹⁵⁸ R. Kent Hughes portrays the heterogeneous church:

It included Barnabas, a native of Cyprus, and a black man named Simeon (his other name, “Niger,” is Latin for “black”). Another Gentile named Lucius may also have been black because he was from Cyrene or North Africa. Also in this church was Manaen, who had been reared as part of King Herod’s household. Finally, there was Rabbi Saul. This was the church staff at Antioch – a racially integrated group of go-getters who Luke says in verse 1, were “prophets and teachers.” . . . The perfect profile for a missionary church was exhibited there at Antioch. They were in microcosm what the church would become in the world. This was no accident, but rather a deliberate work of God!¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁵Bock, *Acts*, 438.

¹⁵⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷Polhill, *Acts*, 288-89.

¹⁵⁸Curtis Vaughan, *Acts*, Bible Study Commentary (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1974), 85.

¹⁵⁹R. Kent Hughes, *Acts: The Church Afire*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1996), 174.

Larkin sees the “prophets and teachers” there as a “multiculturally and socioeconomically diverse” team of leaders and “a list of potential candidates for missionary service, for those who head and complete it are called by the Spirit to such work (13:2).”¹⁶⁰

God spoke to the Antioch church as they worshiped and fasted (13:2). Polhill suggests that “the directive of the Holy Spirit” to commission the two men “may well have been mediated through the inspiration of the prophet-teachers.”¹⁶¹ He claims, “That they were fasting indicates the church was in a mood of particular expectancy and openness to the Lord’s leading.”¹⁶² Hughes observes, “‘Fasting’ is always a mark of deep spiritual concern, indicating that a person is willing to set aside the normal demands of life in order to concentrate for a time on what God wants. It appears that the entire Antioch church was joined in this pursuit.”¹⁶³ The church was listening for God to speak.

Luke does not specify just how the Holy Spirit spoke to the church to appropriate the two men. Lenski mentions, “It is usually assumed that it was by means of a special revelation to one of the three teachers who was to remain.”¹⁶⁴ He analyzes the instruction received by the church:

The order of the Spirit was: “Separate now for me Barnabas and Saul,” etc. Here the second person plural cannot refer to the five men who are included in the *αὐτῶν*, because two of them were to be separated; this command is addressed to the entire church. It was to give up the services of Barnabas and of Saul and let them serve the Holy Spirit elsewhere. *Δὴ* is rare and has a note of urgency. It emphasizes the imperative, . . . an emotional particle, and we may render: “Do now separate!”¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁰Larkin, *Acts*, 190.

¹⁶¹Polhill, *Acts*, 290.

¹⁶²Ibid.

¹⁶³Hughes, *Acts*, 175.

¹⁶⁴Lenski, *Interpretation of the Acts*, 495.

¹⁶⁵Ibid.

Vaughan agrees that “the whole church was in some way involved in this experience.”¹⁶⁶ Lenski confirms the church’s limited role. “The members were certainly concerned in the mission of these two. The Holy Spirit alone was their Sender and not the congregation.”¹⁶⁷ Larkin notes the balance in the call and the commission: “God sends the missionary through two essential and complementary means: the personal, inward call to the individual and the outward confirmation through the church.”¹⁶⁸

Luke relates that “when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away” (13:3). He later indicates that “they had been commended to the grace of God for the work” (14:26). Bock clarifies the action of the congregation:

The laying on of hands points to the establishing of connection and is used in commissioning and in healing. This is not a call into a new office, as their role was already defined before the call. Rather it is an identification with this specific “work” to which God has called them. . . . Here is a church that has seen the need to reach out to the world as its members draw near to God. Their heart has become wedded to God’s calling as a result. They commission their messengers to their work for the world.¹⁶⁹

Hughes interprets their laying on of hands as “saying in effect, ‘Brothers, we are with you in this great enterprise. As you go, we go. We are part of you.’ Barnabas and Saul left on their journey with the full identification and support of the church.”¹⁷⁰

Polhill remarks that “the gesture was more a symbol of the congregation’s endorsing the work of the two. They separated them for a task in which they would

¹⁶⁶Vaughan, *Acts*, 87.

¹⁶⁷Lenski, *Interpretation of the Acts*, 494.

¹⁶⁸Larkin, *Acts*, 191.

¹⁶⁹Bock, *Acts*, 440.

¹⁷⁰Hughes, *Acts*, 175.

perform a witness on behalf of the whole church.”¹⁷¹ Lenski salutes the obedience of the church, noting that “what the Spirit ordered was promptly done” and not postponed for another day.¹⁷² He adds that they immediately plunged into a commissioning service which was “considerably prolonged,” and after fasting, praying and laying hands on the two men, ““they released them,’ namely the whole church at Antioch.”¹⁷³ He concludes, “It was a great day for the entire church.”¹⁷⁴

The church at Antioch recognized the New Testament mission to the Gentiles and embraced it as its own mission. Vaughan lists some principles established in Antioch for any church seeking to explore their part in the mission:

(1) Opportunities for greater service ordinarily come not to the idle but to those who are faithfully performing their present duties. (2) When God calls someone to a task, He often will make this known not only to the recipient of the call but to others as well. (3) Churches should be willing to part with the very best in their membership for the greater diffusion of the Gospel. (4) Churches should enlarge their vision, being mindful not only of the needs immediately about them but also of the needs of the whole world.¹⁷⁵

Larkin views the episode at Antioch as God’s paradigm for local churches engaging in Christ’s mission to the nations, concluding,

Antioch, then becomes a model for the missionary vision and missionary deployment of every church. A church that embodies cultural diversity and has spiritually gifted, sensitive and obedient leaders will release into Christ’s service those so called, earnestly interceding for them and standing in solidarity with them. With more than half the world’s population yet to hear the gospel for the first time, our Lord needs many more Antiochs.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷¹Polhill, *Acts*, 290.

¹⁷²Lenski, *Interpretation of The Acts*, 495-96.

¹⁷³Ibid.

¹⁷⁴Ibid.

¹⁷⁵Vaughan, *Acts*, 88.

¹⁷⁶Larkin, *Acts*, 192.

Conclusion

The mission of God to include the nations of the world in his eternal plan is revealed in the Old Testament call of Abraham and repeated by the prophets and the psalmist. Jesus Christ later assumed the Father's mission in his sacrificial death and resurrection, and he transferred the task to his disciples through the Great Commission statements. Then the disciples adopted Christ's mission as their own in the book of Acts.

Following Pentecost and the birth of the Jerusalem church, the mission to the Gentiles was renewed through Peter's experience with Cornelius and the founding of the church at Antioch. Finally, the commissioning of Saul and Barnabas by the Antioch church to evangelize the Gentiles became the example for every church to individually embrace the mission. God's mission to "make disciples of all the nations" (Matt 28:19), the Great Commission, remains the primary mission and responsibility of every church.

CHAPTER 3

SBC ASSOCIATIONS MOBILIZING CHURCHES FOR MISSIONS

As churches embrace the Great Commission and seriously contemplate their particular role in the mission, they have a plethora of resources to turn to for assistance. Perhaps the most immediate resources for SBC churches are made available by SBC associations of churches. In fact, the SBC association is positioned to play a key role in mobilizing churches for missions engagement. Each association is challenged to discover and implement the most effective structure and methods for encouraging and assisting its churches to actively participate in the mission.

A History of Baptist Associations and Church Missions

The priority of missions should not be foreign to an SBC association. The history of Baptist associations in general reveals that their chief aim has been to assist churches with missions. As paradigms have changed, the SBC association in particular has remained central to the participation of and support from SBC churches for missions.

A Connection with Missions Created

Baptists in America adopted the concept of an association of churches from their brethren in England. E. C Watson records that churches first organized themselves for “fellowship and counsel with one another” in England in the 1640s.¹ He adds, “By

¹E. C. Watson, *The Baptist Association* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1975), 11-12.

1655, the designation ‘association’ was well recognized among Baptists.”² Watson notes that some early associations were formed out of other circumstances:

In their zeal to witness, Baptist churches often established satellite congregations some distance away. Consequently, one church might have congregations meeting in several different communities, yet all were members of the same church. . . . In time, these satellite congregations became separate churches. Immediately, they missed the fellowship experienced when they were all parts of one church. Joint meetings were maintained so that this fellowship could continue. These meetings developed into organized associational life.³

Watson explains that associations were birthed in America “by Baptists from England, Ireland, and Wales who had become accustomed to the associational idea and were convinced of its value” long before they immigrated.⁴ Yet, from their inception, associations of Baptists in America would be driven by more than a desire for fellowship.

Baptist associations in America established an immediate connection with missions. Robert A. Baker reports that while the first Baptist church was founded much earlier, Baptists in America had “no organizational structure beyond the local churches from 1639 to 1707,” when the Philadelphia Association was created.⁵ Alan Neely reveals that “the stated purposes for its formation apparently were not missions or evangelism, but these eventually became principal items on the organization's agenda.”⁶

The Particular Baptist churches of the Philadelphia association may have initially organized for fellowship and doctrinal unity, but they quickly gathered a greater

²Ibid., 11.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., 12.

⁵Robert A. Baker, *The Southern Baptist Convention and Its People 1607-1972* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1974), 94-95.

⁶Alan Neely, “A History of Associational Involvement in Missions,” *Baptist History and Heritage* 17, no. 2 (April 1982), 23, <http://web.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.sbts.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=fb3b6f0d-b6af-47ed-8af4-3137aa65ddcc%40sessionmgr4&vid=5&hid=20> (accessed August 9, 2013).

vision for missions. Paul Stripling suggests they grasped that “by cooperating formally, more could be accomplished *together* than through separate sister congregations.”⁷ Elliott Smith names the Philadelphia Association as the first to use “a strategy of mission outreach beyond the local environs” as a “deliberate program” of an association.⁸

The Philadelphia Baptist Association initiated missions collaboration among Baptists in America. The second association, Charleston, South Carolina, is described by Baker as “a direct offshoot from the Philadelphia body.”⁹ Neely reports, “The Philadelphia Association sent missionaries not only to the South, but ‘in every direction,’ and even into Canada.”¹⁰ Elliott Smith appraises the Association’s mission work:

There were only sixteen Baptist churches in all of the New World in 1700. . . . For Baptists, themselves still toddlers, to reach beyond their own Judeas approached the impossibility level. But it was possible to reach “into the next towns.” The fledgling churches of the Philadelphia Association did that [by implementing] the satellite method, . . . practiced by their ancestors in Wales the previous century. . . . Several new congregations were added to the association during an age that was noted for its spiritual lethargy. Without that satellite ministry . . . it is doubtful that the next phase in mission outreach could have developed. The leaders of that next phase were being trained in the satellites of Philadelphia Association.¹¹

Watson credits the Philadelphia association with being “not only the first but the most influential body of its kind in America,” setting the pattern for associations “to be used increasingly as a denominational voice for missions, education, and religious liberty.”¹²

⁷Paul Stripling, *Turning Points in the History of Baptist Associations in America* (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2006), 5.

⁸Elliott Smith, *The Advance of Baptist Associations Across America* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1979), 32.

⁹Baker, *The Southern Baptist Convention*, 95.

¹⁰Neely, “A History,” 24.

¹¹Smith, *The Advance*, 30.

¹²Watson, *The Baptist Association*, 12.

Missions and Baptists in America

The missions resolve of the Philadelphia Association reverberated through America as new churches were founded and new Baptist associations were multiplied. Baker reports that in 1766 the Philadelphia Association created a “permanent missionary fund” for the purpose of supporting “ministers traveling on the errand of the churches, or otherwise, as the necessities of said churches shall require.”¹³ Smith details how the Association “responded to appeals for help by sending John Gano, Benjamin Miller, Isaac Sutton, and John Thomas to Virginia,” and how “from that year forward, ‘traveling preachers’ would be on the road south” and “other congregations [were] formed.”¹⁴

The zeal for missions caught fire among Baptist churches and associations in the latter half of the eighteenth century. According to Neely, the first three associations in America, Philadelphia, Charleston (South Carolina), and Sandy Creek (North Carolina), were all “by 1770 extensively involved in a program of missionary outreach.”¹⁵ He adds, “The fervor of the Baptists to extend the influence of the gospel, much of which was sponsored formally and informally by the associations, helped to explain their growth from less than twenty churches in 1700 to more than 2,000 a hundred years later.”¹⁶

The Impact of William Carey

The alliance between Baptist associations and missions took a major step toward addressing the Great Commission on May 31, 1792 in Nottingham, England. Smith states, “It was at an association meeting that the modern missionary movement had

¹³Baker, *The Southern Baptist Convention*, 97.

¹⁴Smith, *The Advance*, 32.

¹⁵Neely, “A History,” 23.

¹⁶*Ibid.*

been thrust into history.”¹⁷ Neely documents how on that date William Carey delivered to the Northampton Baptist Association a sermon “in which he implored his brethren to accept the responsibility and seize the opportunity for conveying ‘the Gospel message to some portion of the heathen world.’”¹⁸ Neely reports that following Carey’s sermon, the Association decided in Kettering in October to form “‘The Particular Baptist Society for the Propagation of the Gospel amongst the Heathen’ (later named the Baptist Missionary Society), not an agency of the association as such, but undeniably a product of it.”¹⁹

Smith describes the Nottingham meeting as “momentous.”²⁰ Stripling claims, “The profound influence of Carey on his fellow ministers and messengers and their decision to form the new missionary society cannot be overdramatized.”²¹ He adds:

Kettering was certainly a historic moment for what many term the “modern-day missionary movement.” . . . The impact of Carey on the mission spirit of Baptists was profound; he certainly helped to ignite a passion for the unbelievers beyond the walls of associational churches. . . . [It was] an awakened missions consciousness on which authentic associationalism would stand, a Great Commission mandate!²²

Smith records that “two years after Carey lit the torch in England, the flame had leapt the Atlantic.”²³ By 1800, Charleston Association was urging prayer for world missions, and the minutes of other associations were reflecting “a new blaze of missions concern.”²⁴

¹⁷Smith, *The Advance*, 108.

¹⁸Neely, “A History,” 22.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Smith, *The Advance*, 108.

²¹Stripling, *Turning Points*, 8.

²²Ibid., 11-12.

²³Smith, *The Advance*, 109.

²⁴Ibid.

Supporters of Global Missions

Baptist associations in America began the nineteenth century with a fresh enthusiasm for global missions. Smith identifies “a new feeling of responsibility toward the heathen” as a factor in their distinction as “the denominational agency to make the first missionary thrusts toward the Indians of the modern era.”²⁵ Baker recounts how the Shaftsbury Association of Vermont sealed the union between associations and missions. In 1802 it developed a plan to “handle mission contributions, examine the candidates, recommend the time and place of appointments, and pay salaries of missionaries.”²⁶ The plan “resembled on a small scale the type of structure subsequently adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention,” evolving two years later into pledges to support the missionaries.²⁷ Other associations copied their model, ensuring that both domestic and international missions were “firmly entrenched in the hands of associational bodies.”²⁸

Missionaries began turning to Baptist associations in America for support following another unique turn of events. Smith tells the story of three Congregational missionaries, Adoniram and Ann Judson, and Luther Rice, whose conversion to Baptist beliefs in India “is among the more remarkable events in American church history.”²⁹ Following their defection from the Congregationalists, “the Judsons communicated with Baptists in America, and Rice returned home to make personal appeals for support.”³⁰

²⁵Smith, *The Advance*, 125.

²⁶Baker, *The Southern Baptist Convention*, 98.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Smith, *The Advance*, 111.

³⁰Ibid., 112.

Smith states that “from that time forward, foreign missions would receive top priority” for Baptist associations in America as Rice “began an extensive tour,” which continued the rest of his life.³¹ Watson tells how Rice’s impact led to other developments:

Impetus for the formation of the Triennial Convention in 1814, as well as other mission societies, came from the associations. Reports were read, offerings were taken, and encouragement was given to churches for involvement in the missionary organizations. Later the initiative for the formulation of state conventions also grew from associations.³²

Neely reports that after mission societies and conventions were formed, “associational meetings became a principal forum for missionary education, promotion, and support.”³³

Promoters of SBC Missions

As societies and conventions assumed the lead in organizing support for missionaries, SBC associations began promoting their work during 1845-1919, “shifting from a doctrinally based fellowship of churches to an implementing agency of the denomination.”³⁴ J. C. Bradley explains that an “increasing concern for missions had given rise to societies and conventions,” because “associations had recognized the need for a connectionalism more broadly based than that which they could give.”³⁵ He adds that associations were therefore “actively involved in establishing state conventions and the Southern Baptist Convention for missions, education, and other benevolences.”³⁶

³¹Ibid.

³²Watson, *The Baptist Association*, 15.

³³Neely, “A History,” 27.

³⁴J. C. Bradley, *A Baptist Association: Churches on Mission Together* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1984), 28.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid.

Neely reveals, “When the Southern Baptist Convention was organized in 1845 and the Foreign and Domestic (Home) Mission Boards were named, the associations provided the basic financial support for the Convention's mission work.”³⁷

The association’s role in promoting SBC missions became official with the forming of the Cooperative Program (CP) in 1925. H. Leon McBeth refers to the plan “for churches to send their offerings for denominational ministries” as “the life-line of Southern Baptist ministries.”³⁸ He identifies the CP as “a major factor in the growth of missions, evangelism, and Christian education among Southern Baptists.”³⁹

Bradley notes that “*cooperation* became the watchword of Southern Baptists during the twenties.”⁴⁰ McBeth suggests that naming the program “cooperative” “shows the near canonization of both the word and the concept among Southern Baptists.”⁴¹ Stripling confirms therefore that “cooperation among associations with the Cooperative Program process became a primary focus.”⁴² Bradley quotes E. P. Alldredge’s “very definite conviction that the district association is still the basic organization or agency of all cooperative service among Baptists.”⁴³ He sees the CP as having “an unbelievable impact on the concept and work of the association for many years to come.”⁴⁴

³⁷Neely, “A History,” 28.

³⁸H. Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1987), 622.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Bradley, *A Baptist Association*, 29.

⁴¹McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*, 622.

⁴²Stripling, *Turning Points*, 43.

⁴³Bradley, *A Baptist Association*, 29.

⁴⁴Stripling, *Turning Points*, 41.

The Return of Missions to Associations

As SBC churches and associations multiplied, mission opportunities did as well during the first half of the twentieth century.⁴⁵ However, as denominational promotion became the SBC association's primary role, it appeared that it lacked its own program.⁴⁶ Neely divulges that “the steady decline in activity, interest, and significance of the association prompted some observers to regard it as an anachronism.”⁴⁷

SBC associations began evolving from denominational promoters to the servants of church needs and missions after the Gulfshore Conference on Associational Missions at the Gulfshore Baptist Assembly in 1963. Watson reports, “The chief result was the agencies’ shift to the ‘cafeteria line’ approach in relating to associations and churches. Under this concept, individual needs and the right of associations to choose are recognized, and alternate approaches, depending on the needs of the local situation, are suggested.”⁴⁸ The responsibility for missions was redirected to SBC churches as the associations assisted the “planning, conducting, and coordinating” of their missions.⁴⁹

Stripling cites the *Report of the Conference on Associational Missions* from Gulfshore as confirming “the association as a missionary enterprise, an integral part of world missions.”⁵⁰ Watson documents that “more than five hundred missionaries and denominational leaders in attendance” arrived at an agreement and reported,

⁴⁵Neely, “A History,” 30.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Watson, *The Baptist Association*, 16-17.

⁴⁹Ibid., 17.

⁵⁰Stripling, *Turning Points*, 45-46.

We affirm that the association as a vital link in Baptist life exists for fellowship, cooperation, and service; and that one of its major tasks is missions. We recognize that there are many other areas of work such as evangelism and education, but that all of these are parts of the basic missionary enterprise which takes its motivation from the Great Commission. . . . For this reason the association is an integral part of the world missions program and should be so recognized.⁵¹

The decision rendered at the Gulfshore Conference opened the door for SBC associations to pursue the appropriate course in missions for their churches. In 1982, Neely recapped that “Southern Baptist associations have in a sense come the full circle and presently are planning and overseeing a wide range of mission activities not only within their own geographical territory, but beyond it as well.”⁵² Missions had returned to associations.

In the last fifty years, SBC associations have increased their participation in missions. In 1976, the Missions Challenge Report of the SBC was approved, stating:

The association should be broadened and strengthened as a missionary organization. It should understand that it is churches on mission for Christ. *It should not attempt to duplicate the churches, rather to serve them as they carry on the work. It should not become a miniature state convention. It should not undertake an extensive instructional ministry.* Its chief service to the churches and the denomination is as coordinator of the local missions outreach of the churches.⁵³

Stripling quotes Bradley from his speech at Glorieta Conference Center in 1974, predicting, “Associations will increasingly take on a role in world missions – such as partnership-relations with other associations, and beyond.”⁵⁴ SBC associations in the twenty-first century will need to fulfill his prediction if they are to remain relevant to the churches they serve.

⁵¹E. C. Watson, *Superintendent of Missions for an Association* (Atlanta: Home Mission Board, SBC, 1969), 13.

⁵²Neely, “A History,” 30.

⁵³*The Southern Baptist Missions Challenge*, The Report of the Missions Challenge Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention (Nashville, 1976), 11.

⁵⁴Stripling, *Turning Points*, 47.

The Advantages of SBC Associations for Church Missions

SBC associations offer advantages to churches as they pursue their mission. Bradley recognizes that “Baptists have historically been concerned with respecting the freedom and autonomy of the local church.”⁵⁵ Yet, churches form outside organizations for assistance. According to Bradley, “Every entity created by the churches is designed to assist the churches, individually and collectively, in fulfilling their mission.”⁵⁶ He characterizes SBC associations as “a means by which churches remind themselves that, as members of a larger community of faith, they are interdependent.”⁵⁷

Calling Churches to the Mission

Associations of SBC churches function with a particular objective. Bradley suggests that they are “to call churches to be on mission” and thus “achieve the purpose for which they exist, both individually and together.”⁵⁸ He specifies, “The call may involve the sharing of biblical teachings and an awareness of opportunities and needs,” challenging churches “to move from mere activity to a commitment to mission.”⁵⁹

Strategically Positioned to Help Churches

As the closest denominational entity to local churches, the SBC association is strategically positioned to mobilize churches and to assist them with missions efforts.

⁵⁵Bradley, *A Baptist Association*, 39.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Ibid., 22.

⁵⁹Ibid.

Watson believes the association “has the distinct advantage over any other Baptist denominational body in its proximity to the churches.”⁶⁰ The benefit offered is active participation in missions. Watson sees the association as “near enough to every church that any member may gain from personal involvement in cooperative ventures.”⁶¹

Bradley contends, “Associations help the churches in ways no other general Baptist body can.”⁶² They foster the relationships through which help flows in times of church crisis, earning themselves an advisory posture for missions. Bradley sees them as designed to help “in whatever the churches do in faithful response to God’s mission,” providing “a network of relationships through which churches give and receive assistance.”⁶³ Watson points to Biblical principles and examples in church history.⁶⁴

Coordinating Collaborative Efforts

Bradley proposes that SBC associations may help churches best in addressing “mission frontiers, . . . the unaddressed opportunities and needs that exist in a particular association’s context.”⁶⁵ He adds, “The frontiers may be geographic, ethnic-cultural, socioeconomic, physical-institutional, racial, religious-philosophical, or life-style.”⁶⁶

⁶⁰Watson, *The Baptist Association*, 45.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Bradley, *A Baptist Association*, 19.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Watson, *The Baptist Association*, 46.

⁶⁵Bradley, *A Baptist Association*, 66.

⁶⁶Ibid.

Watson recognizes, “Churches often have found that working alone they could not meet such needs as effectively as when they work cooperatively through the association.”⁶⁷

Bradley clarifies that associations can help churches fulfill their mission by “extending the work of the churches through cooperative activities in which churches work together.”⁶⁸ In evaluating the benefit of collaborative efforts, Watson observes,

The church often finds that what needs to be done can be done more effectively in cooperation with sister churches than when each acts separately. When this is true, the church may express both its nature and its mission through the association. Thus, both the nature and the mission of the association originate in the nature and mission of the church.⁶⁹

Bradley suggests that churches learn interdependence through collaboration. He charges, “A church is missing something if it never attempts anything too big to do alone.”⁷⁰

Cooperation often begins with strategizing. Bradley states that as churches collaborate, the association becomes “a base for mission strategy.”⁷¹ Watson explains,

Each church must devise its own strategy for accomplishing its purpose. However, it is often evident that one or more churches have learned effective methods which will benefit all. When this is true, some way is needed to present this method to other area churches and to agree on its use. The association provides a way for a method to be carefully examined by the various congregations and, when agreed upon, to be taught to the members. Also, when churches decide to act cooperatively, they need a plan of action. The association provides a natural structure through which a plan for cooperative action may be designed and effected.⁷²

Effective strategizing requires good communication. Allen W. Graves portrays the SBC

⁶⁷Watson, *The Baptist Association*, 44.

⁶⁸Bradley, *A Baptist Association*, 19.

⁶⁹Watson, *The Baptist Association*, 27.

⁷⁰Bradley, *A Baptist Association*, 39.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, 19.

⁷²Watson, *The Baptist Association*, 44.

association as “a nerve center of a communications network with information flowing in all directions,” generated by the association, the churches and their organizations.⁷³

Renewing the Mission of SBC Churches

The SBC association’s purpose should be to mobilize churches and assist them in the mission. Each church is compelled to embrace it. The association must not attempt to relieve churches of their burden or to replace them through its own initiatives. Rather, its role is to remind churches of their biblical duty and to assist them with some of the information and resources necessary to take part in the Great Commission. Associations should join others in calling for a renewal of the churches’ responsibility in the mission.

On June 15, 2010, messengers to the SBC annual meeting in Orlando, Florida overwhelmingly adopted a report from the Great Commission Resurgence Task Force.⁷⁴ It included a recommendation of eight core values “for our work together,” the seventh of which asserted, “We believe the local church is given the authority, power, and responsibility to present the Gospel of Jesus Christ to every person in the world.”⁷⁵ Akin expresses his support for the report: “We are in agreement that the Great Commission is a divinely mandated assignment given to the church by the Lord Jesus,” adding that “too few answer the call to take the gospel to the nations from their churches.”⁷⁶

⁷³Allen W. Graves, *Principles of Administration for a Baptist Association* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1978), 101.

⁷⁴Mark Kelly, “SBC Messengers Adopt GCR Report by Wide Margin,” *Baptist Press* (June 15, 2010), <http://www.sbc Baptist Press.org/BPnews.asp?ID=33150> (accessed September 28, 2013).

⁷⁵“Great Commission Resurgence Task Force Final Report Challenges Issued,” *Baptist Message* (May 13, 2010), <http://www.baptistmessage.com/node/6332> (accessed September 28, 2013).

⁷⁶Daniel L. Akin, “Answering the Call to a Great Commission Resurgence: A Theology and Vision to Unite Us,” in *Great Commission Resurgence* (Nashville: Lifeway Christian Resources, 2008), 19.

In a new era for missions, some SBC leaders are boldly reaffirming that the biblical mission was assigned to local churches, not simply to denominational agencies. Chuck Lawless states, “At its foundation, the Great Commission is a local church-based mandate.”⁷⁷ He points to the congregational tasks of evangelism, discipleship, discipline, prayer support, and the training and sending of lay leaders, pastors, and missionaries.⁷⁸ Lawless insists, “The local church (despite all its imperfections and struggles) is still the vehicle through which God intends to get the gospel to the world.”⁷⁹ Mohler contends, “The church is faithful only when it is found to be missional, and the mission must be the strategic deployment for the cause of the gospel.”⁸⁰ H. Al Gilbert agrees and claims, “We have to look at the missionary task differently,” emphasizing, “The responsibility of telling the whole world belongs to the CHURCH—the whole CHURCH!”⁸¹

Those pushing a renewed church mission admit that many Southern Baptists mistakenly believe the mission belongs to the professionals. Jerry Rankin counters, “The task cannot be dependent on the limited number of missionaries alone. Only as every church and every believer catch a vision for God’s purpose and are mobilized to be on mission with God can a lost world be reached.”⁸² He claims, “Many churches have distorted their purpose as the people of God and limited the scope of their responsibility,”

⁷⁷Chuck Lawless, “The Great Commission and the Local Church: A Modest Proposal,” in *Great*, 26.

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰R. Albert Mohler, Jr., “The Future of the Southern Baptist Convention” in *The Great Commission Resurgence: Fulfilling God’s Mandate in Our Time*, ed. Chuck Lawless and Adam Greenway (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2010), 95.

⁸¹H. Al Gilbert, “The Big Picture of the Great Commission” in *The Great*, 143.

⁸²Jerry Rankin, “To All Peoples: The Great Commission and the Nations” in *The Great*, 222.

thinking that by sending and supporting missionaries they have fulfilled their role in the mission.⁸³ Rankin believes churches “rationalize away this mandate” when they “assume it only applies to an elite few who are called as missionaries.”⁸⁴ He reiterates, “It is not the responsibility of the International Mission Board to do missions on behalf of Southern Baptists; the Great Commission was given to every believer and every church.”⁸⁵

Proponents of the Resurgence call for an awakening in churches. Russell D. Moore suggests that “a church that does not long for the expansion of the name of Christ to the nations is at cross-purposes with the Father God (Ps 2:8).”⁸⁶ Rankin asks, “Why should we expect God to bless us and prosper our church programs if it is not for the sake of proclaiming His salvation among the nations?”⁸⁷ Moore charges, “A congregation that is not ignited for the salvation of the nations doesn’t know what time it is. The New Testament concept of the church is not that of a place to encourage one another in discipleship and to pool together missions offerings. It is a declaration of war.”⁸⁸

Associations are poised for mobilization. Akin asserts, “Agencies and entities exist to assist the churches in fulfilling the Great Commission” and should strive to see “every church a church-planting church and every church a Great Commission church.”⁸⁹

⁸³Jerry Rankin, “The Great Commission and International Missions,” in *Great*, 57.

⁸⁴Ibid., 61.

⁸⁵Ibid., 57.

⁸⁶Russell D. Moore, “Theology Bleeds: Why Theological Vision Matters for the Great Commission, and Vice Versa” in *The Great*, 117-18.

⁸⁷Rankin, “To All Peoples,” 219.

⁸⁸Moore, “Theology Bleeds,” 118.

⁸⁹Daniel Akin, “The Future of the Southern Baptist Convention” in *Southern Baptists, Evangelicals, and the Future of Denominationalism*, ed. David S. Dockery (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2011), 274.

Associations can sway church leaders. Akin insists that pastors “must be seized by a vision for the strategic importance of their calling,” viewing their churches as “ground zero for the *missio dei*.”⁹⁰ Mohler stresses, “We must discover where local churches urgently and passionately understand the mission of God and wish to be deployed.”⁹¹ Associations can best accept that challenge. Mohler suggests that churches which have long made “giving money the first and only logic of the passion of missions” can extend the passion to “believing, being, going, sending, praying, suffering, and sacrificing.”⁹²

SBC Associations and Missions Today

The history of SBC associations traces structural and methodological changes made in missions and how churches have responded to them. Graves contends, “The association should continuously evaluate the kind and effectiveness of their organization in light of the stated or implied purposes of the association.”⁹³ Thus, he reminds, “The only valid reason for the existence of an association is its ability to meet needs the churches could not meet as well without it.”⁹⁴ Stripling cites Bradley’s prediction in 1994 that “associations will find their existence dependent upon the effectiveness with which they deliver the desired benefits to the churches. Originally, associations were invented by churches to meet their needs, and they will be reinvented as needs change.”⁹⁵

⁹⁰Ibid., 274-75.

⁹¹Mohler, “The Future,” 98.

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³Ibid., 73.

⁹⁴Ibid., 59.

⁹⁵Stripling, *Turning Points*, 83.

The Quest for Relevance

Changing environments mandate periodic evaluation. Graves observes that “the ‘system’ in which an association operates contains more variables and uncertainties than any group of associational leaders can comprehend, predict, or control at any one time.”⁹⁶ Thus, he urges leaders to “be prepared to reform, reshape, or even reject whatever organizational structures are no longer viable as they find more effective ways of proclaiming the gospel.”⁹⁷ Graves recognizes, “The problem faced in church and denominational life is the pervasive human temptation to canonize as essential or even as sacred the organizational relationships that were developed to meet needs of a past era but that are no longer responsive to needs of the present.”⁹⁸

The perceived value of SBC associations will be determined in the future by the strength of the relationships they provide. Watson points out that even the word “association” itself implies relationships.⁹⁹ He asserts that the association functions in a world of interconnecting relationships necessitated by “common objectives and concerns.”¹⁰⁰ He adds, “It is good to be aware of the groups with which the association relates, why they relate, what they relate about, how they relate and when, because relations must be continually planned for and maintained.”¹⁰¹

⁹⁶Graves, *Principles*, 65.

⁹⁷Ibid., 76.

⁹⁸Ibid., 77.

⁹⁹Watson, *The Baptist Association*, 63.

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

¹⁰¹Ibid.

The relevance of the SBC association has been debated as its context has changed. Watson explains, “Changes in the life-style of Americans have had tremendous effect on the life of the church. This is no less true of the association. The total effect of these changes has led some people to ask seriously: Is the association needed in a day like this? The question must not be taken lightly.”¹⁰² Others wonder aloud if associations can serve a purpose that could not be better served by churches or other denominational entities.¹⁰³ Watson concedes that the questions are raised “by people who wish to face the future thoughtfully and constructively.”¹⁰⁴ He concludes, “If the questions are in the minds of many people today, they have the force that requires a careful analysis of the life of the associations. If they cannot be distinctive, if they cannot be helpful, if they cannot be effective, it would not be good spiritual economy to keep them.”¹⁰⁵

An SBC association must seek relevance while remaining true to its purpose. Watson reasons, “If the perpetuation of the association as a viable unit in Baptist life can be justified, the justification will be found in its mission. The mission of the association is seen in its purpose and objectives.”¹⁰⁶ The enduring purpose for the association must be to mobilize churches for their mission. It should be specific, in writing, and reiterated as church needs and paradigms evolve over time. Graves concurs, “If leaders of the association can remember the basic reason for the existence of the association, they will

¹⁰²Ibid., 47

¹⁰³Ibid, 73.

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 47

be better able to adapt frequently as circumstances change.”¹⁰⁷ In a list of lessons learned from history, Bradley affirms that “associations must accept responsibility for determining their own basic directions and priorities if they are to be faithful to their nature and purpose.”¹⁰⁸ In the same list, he identifies the importance of “missions concern” in the nature and function of the association as demonstrated throughout SBC associational history.¹⁰⁹

A New Generation of Leaders

An SBC association’s relevance depends partly on its ability to relate to a new generation of church leaders. Associational leaders are obliged to earn their trust and friendship. Associational ties, like other denominational relations, must be cultivated and not assumed. Ed Stetzer and Philip Nation contend, “Be it right or wrong, young leaders do not possess the same sense of duty toward the denomination as past generations. But remember, they are going to drive – something. To try to stop them does more harm than good. Engaging them and learning together can make all the difference.”¹¹⁰

The new breed of church leaders merits some study. Daniel Akin observes, “A younger generation wants a leaner, quicker, and more missional convention that pursues the unreached and underserved in our nation and around the world.”¹¹¹ Stetzer and Nation are encouraged that “younger leaders are increasingly ready to respond” to their inclusion

¹⁰⁷Graves, *Principles*, 77.

¹⁰⁸Bradley, *A Baptist Association*, 37.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 36.

¹¹⁰Ed Stetzer and Philip Nation, “Ready or Not, a New SBC is Coming: Partnering with Our Sons and Daughters for a Great Commission Future” in *The Great*, 366.

¹¹¹Daniel Akin, “The Future,” 272.

in associational work, with a bent “more toward kingdom and cooperation than you might realize.”¹¹² They claim that younger leaders “care deeply about the gospel mission of the church and are willing to resource its global advancement.”¹¹³

The new crop of leaders may in fact be key to the mission of SBC churches and their associations. R. Albert Mohler, Jr. notes, “They are a generation of global responsibility. They have unprecedented connectivity and access to transportation. They understand that they can be anywhere in the world by tomorrow afternoon. As such, our prayer is that they will be a generation willing to go anywhere for the cause of the gospel.”¹¹⁴ Stetzer and Nation conclude, “God is raising missionaries who will be able to comfortably navigate technology and leverage it for His purposes,” insisting that young leaders are “an incredible asset to His Great Commission.”¹¹⁵

Associations join other SBC entities at the crossroads of generation and mission. Jeff Iorg explains both the opportunity at hand and the risk at stake:

The coming generation of leaders needs the blessing of the waning generation to explore and develop new models of evangelism. Young leaders will find ways to fulfill the Great Commission. They are too passionate not to do this. The real question is will we be flexible enough to assimilate the changes they introduce and enjoy the benefits of their efforts.¹¹⁶

The new breed of church leaders has little use for activity impertinent to the church’s mission or for meetings they perceive as more talk and little action. Akin states flatly that

¹¹²Stetzer and Nation, “Ready or Not,” 367.

¹¹³Ibid., 383.

¹¹⁴R. Albert Mohler Jr., “Southern Baptists, Evangelicals, and the Future of Denominationalism,” in *Southern Baptists*, 288.

¹¹⁵Stetzer and Nation, “Ready or Not,” 385.

¹¹⁶Jeff Iorg, “Accelerating the Great Commission in North America,” in *Great*, 48.

the mission “is where younger people are going, and our leadership at every level will either get on board or be left behind.”¹¹⁷

Today’s associational leaders are challenged to yield to a promising but dissimilar future for the mission as it is passed off to a new generation. Stetzer and Nation caution, “We must be careful not to alienate the young leaders who love Christ and His gospel but practice ministry differently from previous generations.”¹¹⁸ They predict that institutions already in decline will continue their plunge if, “the most competent begin to leave,” having “become convinced that the effort is not worth the hassle.”¹¹⁹ The authors warn that as young leaders “perceive the current leaders defending systems with what they see as ineffectual means to the missional task of the church, they rightly feel like an outsider and walk away disaffected.”¹²⁰ For healthy relationships going into the future, Stetzer and Nation prescribe “dynamic understanding rather than sterile compromise. Rather than pandering to one generation or another, we should seek a way for all leaders to engage in mission and relationships together.”¹²¹

Networks as a New Model for Missions

Perhaps the most attractive carrot the SBC association offers is relationships in ministry and the mission. While acknowledging the significance of relationships for church leaders of every age, Stetzer and Nation stress their value for the new generation:

¹¹⁷Akin, “The Future,” 272.

¹¹⁸Stetzer and Nation, “Ready or Not,” 367.

¹¹⁹Ibid.

¹²⁰Ibid.

¹²¹Ibid., 382.

This is certainly the case for younger leaders. Relationships are what keep them coming back to anything. You seldom speak to young leaders that place a high value on institutionally sponsored training and resources. They may take advantage of these offerings but they can find events and financial support through many avenues. Southern Baptists are just one of many opportunities for such resources. But the perceived value of the denomination for young leaders is the relationships.¹²²

If this is true for an affiliation with a national body, it is even more applicable for a more localized partnership. The primacy of relationships becomes a key tenet for any SBC association seeking a structure that appeals to younger church leaders.

Co-authors Michael Pocock, Gailyn Van Rheenen, and Douglas McConnell write of a dramatic shift in missions effected by global changes occurring at the end of the twentieth century.¹²³ Along with a new wave of short-term missions volunteers, “majority world missionary movements emerged as a significant force for the global spread of the gospel.”¹²⁴ The authors recognize a global phenomenon, “a movement toward greater collaboration among agencies, churches, and other mission-minded organizations,” resulting from “efforts to expand the impact of the gospel by building on the strengths of shared resources.”¹²⁵ The movement has been facilitated by networking:

In short, networking is a means of intentionally connecting people to other people beyond the realm of their known contacts. The practice of networking was not so much a new discovery as it was a helpful way to think about an age-old practice. These insights, however, enabled new developments in the way networking can be used more strategically by Christian missions.¹²⁶

¹²²Ibid., 379.

¹²³Michael Pocock, Gailyn Van Rheenen, and Douglas McConnell, *The Changing Face of World Missions: Engaging Contemporary Issues and Trends* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 248.

¹²⁴Ibid.

¹²⁵Ibid.

¹²⁶Ibid., 251.

The concept of networking is no novelty for SBC associations. History shows that in their genesis, Baptist associations in general consisted of churches relating together with stated objectives. In kind, the SBC association evolved into an informal network for local missions. Pocock, Van Rheenen, and McConnell point out that now “a network approach to missions has grown beyond local initiatives. Building on the same insights, missions and church leaders have discovered a multitude of opportunities to network with those who share similar concerns in a broad response to world missions.”¹²⁷

Pocock, Van Rheenen, and McConnell point to the case made by globalization for networks. “The rise of global transportation and technology-driven communication has created an environment in which specialized networks flourish.”¹²⁸ The network is an accommodating model for today’s SBC association as it assists, encourages, and resources churches for missions. The authors suggest, “Global networks bring together churches, agencies, and individuals with a broad vision to affect the entire world through alliances and partnerships.”¹²⁹ They trumpet the wealth of voluntary participation created by networks, “for the sake of achieving a stated purpose based on the open participation of like-minded people.”¹³⁰ The authors evaluate the positives and negatives of a network:

Strengths of network strategies are their accessibility and their broad-based participation. Weaknesses include a varying degree of commitment and the difficulty in creating a sustainable identity. On the whole, from the perspective of network initiatives, it is possible to mobilize a variety of groups and individuals to participate in a strategy to influence a city or even the globe.¹³¹

¹²⁷Ibid., 258.

¹²⁸Ibid., 260.

¹²⁹Ibid., 260-61.

¹³⁰Ibid., 261.

¹³¹Ibid., 261-62.

Associational leaders are wise to note the rise, the appeal, and the success of the network model in missions. David S. Dockery sees networks as an alternative to denominations for many leaders and maybe “the most significant change in the religious landscape for the twenty-first century.”¹³² He suggests that denominational entities that endure will be “working and exploring ways to partner with affinity groups and networks, moving out of their insularity.”¹³³ Dockery forecasts, “For many people, networks will replace denominational structures altogether. That need not be the case if we respond in the right way to this change in the twenty-first century landscape. Networks can strengthen and augment established entities and structures in an auxiliary way.”¹³⁴

The STARS Network

The STARS Network serves as a vehicle for mobilizing churches to participate in the Great Commission. SFBA initiated the Network to capitalize on the relationships naturally formed between churches and missions connections during short-term missions trips. The Network compounds the options for missions projects for both SFBA churches and Network affiliates as the connections multiply. It also provides the platform for training and encouraging church leaders in the best missiological methods.

The purpose of the STARS Network is to supply the structure and assistance for churches to engage the mission, “to advance the cause of Christ globally through

¹³²David S. Dockery, “So Many Denominations: The Rise, Decline, and Future of Denominationalism,” in *Southern Baptists*, 25.

¹³³Ibid.

¹³⁴David S. Dockery, “Convictional Yet Cooperative: The Making of a Great Commission People,” in *The Great*, 400.

Great Commission connections.”¹³⁵ The idea for the Network evolved from the identification of six core values for the Association in 2006.¹³⁶ Three of the values became linchpins in forming a network: Kingdom growth, strategic relevance, and innovation. The Association resolved to “promote the growth of God’s Kingdom in our area and among the nations of the earth.”¹³⁷ In addition, SFBA envisioned developing strategies “relevant to 21st century challenges of fulfilling the Great Commission and the two Great Commandments.”¹³⁸ A new era called for an innovative approach. Thus, high value was placed on creativity in the mission.¹³⁹

Association leaders developed the Network through discussions held over several months in 2011 and presented it to the SFBA Executive Board as a missions model for the future. The discussions began as leaders recognized the existence of key connections in international locations for several SFBA churches. Those connections would later become some of the first STARS Network affiliates.

The Priorities of the STARS Network

The priorities of the STARS Network frame the vision of SFBA leaders in addressing the mission. They include strategizing for lostness, training leaders, assisting connections, reproducing churches and leaders, and strengthening churches.¹⁴⁰ Each

¹³⁵San Felipe Baptist Association, *Constitution of the San Felipe Baptist Association*, 2011, 3.

¹³⁶San Felipe Baptist Association, *San Felipe Baptist Association: 2010 to 2014 Prospectus* (Rosenberg, TX: SFBA, 2010), 11.

¹³⁷Ibid.

¹³⁸Ibid.

¹³⁹Ibid.

¹⁴⁰San Felipe Baptist Association, *Constitution*, 3.

priority targets a missiological objective in mobilizing churches to engage the mission. SFBA leaders encourage churches to adopt an expanding scope according to Acts 1:8, pursuing their mission locally, domestically, and internationally.

The Association employs the Network in assisting churches with basic steps in advancing the Great Commission. SFBA leaders seek to mobilize church leaders by suggesting options for missions connections and by introducing them to opportunities through personal experiences on missions trips. An emphasis is placed on the two components of the Great Commission (Matt 28:19-20), evangelism (“baptizing them”) and training (“teaching them”). SFBA offers church leaders the equipping and personal consultation for developing evangelism strategies in their immediate contexts and in mission projects. They also receive training in equipping new converts in Scriptural teachings and indigenous pastors for church leadership. The expected fruit of such an emphasis is the strengthening and reproduction of churches locally and internationally.¹⁴¹

The Strengths of the STARS Network

The strengths of the STARS Network lie in its key features. The Network respects the autonomy and responsibility of SFBA churches in the mission, as it basically consists of their missions connections. Furthermore, each SFBA church is also a Network affiliate. Churches and ministries must be recommended by an SFBA church to qualify as a STARS Network affiliate.¹⁴² The Association does not seek affiliates; it only responds to applications submitted and recommendations made by its churches. Thus, the Network is decentralized. Its operation and expansion are driven by the efforts of SFBA churches.

¹⁴¹Ibid.

¹⁴²Ibid.

The Network is designed to accommodate numerous and diverse alliances and missions connections. With relationships shaped by vision and affinity for the Great Commission, and not limited by geography, the Network includes both domestic and international churches and ministries.¹⁴³ In contrast to SFBA member churches, who subscribe to any version of the Baptist Faith and Message, STARS Network affiliates endorse a broader statement of faith, that of the National Association of Evangelicals.¹⁴⁴ In addition, as SFBA church leaders work in other cultures, they are urged to distinguish between real doctrinal differences and what are simply divergent styles of worship.

The Network embraces non-Baptist churches and ministries committed to the Great Commission, cultivating a focus on God’s Kingdom rather than on a denomination. In differentiating between Association members and Network affiliates, SFBA avoids compromising Baptist doctrinal distinctions while encouraging its churches to cooperate with other evangelicals for the sake of the mission.¹⁴⁵ This facet of the Network structure was key to enlisting the support of traditional Baptists. The STARS Network is not designed to replace CP missions, only to complement them. In fact, whenever possible, SFBA churches are urged to collaborate with SBC IMB missionaries.

The STARS Network is a web of loosely connected churches and ministries with a common mission, but with no expectation of financial support either to or from SFBA. The Network is “sponsored by and accountable to SFBA.”¹⁴⁶ However, SFBA leaders consciously avoid creating a dependency by affiliates on American resources.

¹⁴³Ibid.

¹⁴⁴Ibid.

¹⁴⁵Ibid.

¹⁴⁶Ibid.

Conclusion

The history of SBC associations establishes their enduring commitment to the Great Commission and to facilitating the involvement of churches in the mission.

Associations have been uniquely positioned to encourage their participation by calling them to the mission, providing resources, and coordinating collaborative efforts.

The Great Commission Resurgence adopted by the SBC calls for a renewal of the responsibility of each local church in the mission. Denominational leaders are exhorting churches toward active participation in addition to their support for SBC Cooperative Program missions. The IMB invites churches to join their missionaries in short-term and long-term missions projects.¹⁴⁷ In this new day of opportunity, SBC associations are poised for significant influence. They may emerge as mobilizing forces to remind churches of their duty and to show them how to begin to engage the mission.

As today's SBC associations are presented with fresh opportunities, they are nevertheless challenged to stay relevant for a new generation of church leaders. Younger leaders look beyond SBC affiliations for connections that count for Kingdom growth. Associations can appeal to them by providing the relationships and resources they need for their mission. One way is by creating networks. The network structure serves as an appropriate associational model for addressing needs in contemporary church missions.

SFBA created the STARS Network to mobilize its churches to discover their particular roles in the Great Commission. It magnifies the elements of the mandate while providing the connections and training for churches to take part. It helps them to become participants according to Acts 1:8, active locally, domestically, and internationally.

¹⁴⁷International Mission Board, "Embrace the Ends of the Earth," <http://www.imb.org/main/lead/embracedefault.asp?StoryID=9651&LanguageID=1709> (accessed October 27, 2013).

CHAPTER 4

A DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

This project was designed to evaluate the STARS Network's effectiveness in mobilizing SFBA churches to participate in missions at the end of the Network's first two years. The project named five goals to determine the Network's success. The goals were pursued through research within the churches that have been involved in missions through connections in the STARS Network. The research employed questionnaires to survey church leaders, adult team members on STM teams, adult church members, church leaders of RTM projects, and their project connection partners.

During the first week of September 2013, a list was compiled of SFBA churches involved in any active missions participation (Appendix 1). The list included all active churches, regardless of whether they worked with STARS Network affiliates. The churches and leaders recognized as actively participating through the Network would be the ones to be surveyed in research for the first four goals.

Steps Taken for the First Goal

The first goal sought to demonstrate that the STARS Network provides opportunities for introducing church leaders to active participation in missions. A questionnaire was prepared to submit to pastors and other STM leaders in the churches on the list. The leaders were chosen from those who have personally served on at least one STM team while in their present capacity. The Questionnaire for Church Leaders with

Short-Term Missions Experience (Appendix 2) was administered to the leaders over the course of September and October. Some leaders were asked to complete the questionnaire upon encountering them at SFBA meetings and other events. Others received it by email or by personal appointments. All questionnaires were collected by the second week of November, and the results were compiled in Table A2 in Appendix 3.

The first three statements of the questionnaire were designed to gain insight into the missions activity of SFBA church leaders. The statements identified those whose first STM experience came during their present ministry position, those whose first international STM trip was in their current position, and those who have served on at least one STM trip connected with a STARS Network affiliate. The fourth statement narrowed the respondents to a particular group of leaders who would complete the questionnaire. The group consisted of those who received their first active experience in international missions through a short-term project with a STARS Network affiliate.

The group that continued the questionnaire would provide the basis for proving or disproving the first goal. The questionnaire continued with two more statements calling for agreement or disagreement. Respondents were asked to indicate whether they were introduced to STARS Network-connected missions while serving on a team with other ministers and whether they began on a mission team to train indigenous leaders in ministry. The responses to these statements would be used for insight and conclusions regarding the Network's effectiveness in mobilizing church leaders for missions.

The final four statements probed the personal impact missions participation made on the church leaders and the degree to which the STARS Network was a factor. The statements used a six-point Likert agreement scale. The first two statements checked

respondents for an increased understanding of missions and for a greater vision of their churches' roles in missions as a result of their participation. The last two statements of the questionnaire probed the influence of the STARS Network, whether it had been a factor in their participation and whether they intended to participate in future Network-connected STM opportunities.

Steps Taken for the Second Goal

The second goal attempted to confirm that the STARS Network stimulates the active participation of members of SFBA churches in missions. From the list of SFBA churches actively participating (Appendix 1), ten churches were identified as working with STARS Network affiliates. All of the partner affiliates are international connections.

In the first week of September, a questionnaire was given to the pastors of the ten churches for copying and distributing to adults in their churches who had served on STM teams with Network affiliates. The Questionnaire for Adult Members of Short-Term Mission Teams (Appendix 5) was accompanied by an instruction page (Appendix 4). The instructions suggested the pastors contact the adults in their churches who had served on STM teams and ask them to complete the questionnaire in their presence. The pastors were instructed to have no names written on the questionnaires. During the first two weeks of November, the questionnaires were collected from the pastors. The responses were compiled by respondent and by church in Table A3 in Appendix 6.

The questionnaire presented ten statements for mission team members to consider. The pivotal statements for the second goal were the first and the last ones. The first statement checked whether respondents first participated in missions while a part of

their current church. The tenth statement used a six-point Likert scale to analyze their inclination to continue to participate in future STM trips with their current churches.

The first three statements were intended to classify the correspondents according to their STM experience. The statements called for each respondent to indicate whether he first experienced missions in general, whether he first experienced international missions, and whether he had served on two or more international teams from his current church. Their responses to these three statements would be used for insight into the respondents' answers to the other statements.

Statements numbered 4-9 used a six-point Likert agreement scale to explore the personal impact STM trips made on the lives of adult team members. The statements checked the degree to which respondents had grown in their appreciation for other cultures, in their understanding of missions, in their commitment to missions, and in their understanding of their church's mission at home. The statements also investigated whether team members had grown spiritually and in their understanding of God's purpose for their lives.

Steps Taken for the Third Goal

The third goal endeavored to show that the STARS Network elevates the understanding of and commitment to missions within churches that are active in missions through the Network. The same ten churches pinpointed in the second goal were targeted again, this time to determine the internal impact of their participation.

During the first week of September, a second questionnaire was handed to the pastors of the ten churches. This one was for them to copy and distribute to adults at large in their churches. The instruction page used for the second goal (Appendix 4) also

contained directions to be followed for The Questionnaire for Adult Members of Churches Involved in Short-Term Missions (Appendix 7). The pastors were asked to administer the questionnaire to as many church members as possible in order to obtain the most accurate results reflective of the churches.

The instruction page suggested that the questionnaire could be given easily at the beginning or end of a church meeting, especially on a Sunday or Wednesday night. An ideal was stressed for the group to include a mix of adults who had been on mission trips, some who had never been on mission trips, and others who had been team leaders for trips. Again, only adults were to complete this questionnaire, and no names were to be supplied. The questionnaires could be administered internally or by inviting the project author to attend a church meeting and personally administer them to those in attendance. All of the pastors chose to handle them internally. During the first three weeks of November, the questionnaires were collected from the pastors. The responses were compiled by respondent and by church in Table A4 in Appendix 8.

The questionnaire consisted of ten statements. The first two were used to classify the respondents who were personally involved in the church's mission activity. They called for respondents to indicate if they currently serve in a staff ministry position and if they had served on at least one STM team from their current churches. A particular point of interest would be the responses given by random adult members who were not part of church staff and who had never personally experienced an STM trip.

Statements numbered 3-10 used a six-point Likert agreement scale to analyze the respondents' interpretation of the impact of their church's active STM participation on their lives personally and on the congregations as a whole. The key statements for

determining the success of the third goal were the last two, numbered 9 and 10, which tested respondents for an increase in their own understanding of and commitment to missions due to their churches' active participation.

The other statements, numbered 3-8, were designed to provide specific insight into the impact of STM participation on the churches. Statements numbered 3 and 4 tested the encouragement and support given those serving on STM teams from their congregations and from the respondents themselves. Statements numbered 5 and 6 evaluated the effect of the churches' active missions participation on their support for SBC cooperative missions and on their focus on their local mission at home. Statements numbered 7 and 8 checked the growth in understanding and commitment to missions within the churches as a result of their active participation.

Steps Taken for the Fourth Goal

The fourth goal sought to establish the STARS Network as a catalyst for RTM projects between SFBA churches and Network affiliates. A questionnaire (Appendix 9) was administered to leaders of SFBA churches that are committed to RTM projects within the Network.

The questionnaire included nine questions. It was either emailed, hand delivered, or administered orally with each of eight church leaders. Six of the leaders were pastors, one was a church staff member serving as missions leader, and one was a lay leader who leads mission teams from his church. Their answers were obtained individually and summarized in Tables 9 and 10.

The questions asked church leaders about the number of years in which they have been involved in long-term projects, which countries in which they are engaged, and

the types of projects on which they have worked. The questions also inquired whether the leaders had clearly defined goals, whether their congregations were generally supportive of the projects, and whether a local connection such as a pastor or missionary had played a major role in assisting them in the project. Finally, the questionnaire touched on the role the STARS Network had played in their long-term projects. Specifically, two of the last three questions asked if the Network had assisted their churches in making connections and in developing strategies for their long-term projects. The final question invited respondents to offer suggestions for improving the effectiveness of the Network in mobilizing and assisting churches with long-term mission projects.

Another list of seven questions (Appendix 10) was composed and given to three Network international partners of churches engaged in RTM projects. The partners included pastors and missionaries who served as local connections for the projects. The questionnaire was administered by emailing the questions to the partners or by delivering them in person if the partner was available. All of their answers were collected either by email or in person by the second week in November and were included in Table 11.

The questionnaire asked the partners how many years they had been involved in long-term projects with SFBA churches and Network affiliates and how many churches and affiliates they were helping. Partners were also asked about the types of projects with which they were assisting and if they had agreements with the churches and other affiliates on clearly defined goals for the projects. As with the church leaders, partners were also asked if the STARS Network had assisted their churches with connections and mission strategies. They were also asked to suggest any improvements to the Network to more effectively mobilize and assist churches with RTM projects.

Steps Taken for the Fifth Goal

The data collected for the previous four goals yielded enough information to form conclusions regarding the effectiveness of the STARS Network after its first two years. The results of the research also provided insight to determine any necessary adjustments to the Network to enhance the engagement of SFBA churches and the participation of their members in short-term and long-term missions. Through the surveys conducted, specific improvements were identified that should advance the impact of the Network in missions mobilization.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

This project will be evaluated beginning with an assessment of its purpose. Following that, each of five goals will be appraised according to its respective measure of success set forth at the beginning of the project. With each goal, other insights and observations of significance emerging from the research will also be noted.

The evaluation will identify the strengths and weaknesses of the project. It will also include adjustments that would make the project stronger. Finally, the evaluation will add personal and theological reflections from the project, along with a conclusion.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The project successfully accomplished its purpose as stated at the beginning. It was to evaluate the STARS Network as a model for mobilizing churches in San Felipe Baptist Association for participation in missions. Employing specific goals, the project yielded a favorable assessment for the Network in stimulating church missions activity.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

The five goals of the project inspected the impact of the STARS Network on the participation of individuals and churches in the Great Commission. The goals looked for the introduction and continuation of church leaders and members in active missions participation. They also checked for personal growth in church members as a result of

their church’s active participation. The particular areas of interest included both their understanding of and commitment to missions. The Network’s role in long-term missions projects was evaluated through one goal, and improvements were considered for the STARS Network in another. Altogether, the goals appraised the Network and advanced it as a valid associational structure for mobilizing churches and individuals for missions.

Evaluation of the First Goal

The first goal aimed to demonstrate that the STARS Network introduces SFBA church leaders to opportunities for active participation in missions. A questionnaire (Appendix 2) was administered to 22 church leaders who were known to have personally served on at least one STM team while in their current ministry position. The responses of all of the leaders are compiled in Table A2 in Appendix 3. The first four statements of the questionnaire were designed to gain insight into the experience of all SFBA church leaders who are active missions participants. These results are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. STM experience of actively participating church leaders

<i>STM experience</i>	Number of leaders
First STM trip during present ministry position	5
First international trip during present ministry position	6
At least one trip connected to a STARS Network affiliate	17
First international trip was with STARS Network affiliate	5

The fourth statement narrowed the respondents to those whose first active experience in international missions was through a Network-related STM project.

The results show that 5 of 22 church leaders responded affirmatively to the fourth statement. The responses of those 5 respondents to the fifth and sixth statements yielded additional insight into the value of the Network for church leaders. Four of the 5 leaders confirmed that they were introduced to STARS Network-connected missions by serving on an STM team with other ministers. Two of the 5 revealed that their first active experience with a Network affiliate involved training indigenous leaders.

A few observations can be made from the responses to the first six statements of the questionnaire. First, a strong majority of SFBA church leaders actively participating in missions has been involved with a Network affiliate. Seventeen of the 22 respondents, 77 percent of them, indicated their connection to the Network. This is certainly due in part to contacts some of them had with certain affiliates prior to the launch of the Network. Nevertheless, the high percentage of activity after only two years serves as a reminder of the organic manner in which the STARS Network evolved.

A second observation is that a fair percentage of church leaders who are active participants first experienced international missions while collaborating with Network affiliates. A sub-group of 5 leaders, 23 percent of them, was introduced to international missions this way. In most cases, they began by serving with other ministers. Thus, it appears that forming STM teams of ministers for training indigenous leaders can be an effective method for mobilizing church leaders for international missions.

Other observations arise from the answers given by the narrowed group of 5 respondents to the last four statements. They reflected how the leaders were personally affected by their active participation in STM and by the opportunities presented by the Network. Table 2 summarizes their responses to the four statements of personal impact.

Table 2. Responses of sub-group to statements of personal impact

<i>Personal impact statements</i>	Mean responses
Understanding of missions increased through STM	5.6
Received a greater vision for his church's role in missions	5.4
Confirmed STARS Network as a factor in STM participation	5.4
Likely to turn to STARS Network connections in the future	5.2

An observation emerges from the mean responses given to the first two statements of personal impact. The 5 respondents who received their first international missions experience through the STARS Network gave strong verification of spiritual growth in regard to missions. They confirmed that they grew both in their understanding of missions and in their vision for their church's role in missions. Thus, it appears that the Network's mobilization includes educational and spiritual dimensions for its participants.

The responses of the sub-group of leaders to the last two statements assured the success of the first goal. The 5 leaders confirmed that the Network has played a role in their participation. They also certified that they were likely to turn to STARS Network connections for future missions service. Their answers met the test of a statistical mean of at least 5.0 for responses to both statements for at least 30 percent of them.

The findings of the first goal underscore the Network's value in mobilizing church leaders as a first step in stimulating the participation of their churches. It appears that for many pastors and other leaders, one chance to actively participate can spark their passion and propel them and their churches into missions engagement. Mission trips often become unexpected vision trips for them. Thus, a key strategy for SFBA should be to target the leaders of inactive churches and enlist them for an initial STM experience.

Evaluation of the Second Goal

The second goal intended to show that the STARS Network facilitates the active participation of members of SFBA churches in missions. The goal employed a questionnaire (Appendix 5) that was given to STM team members from 10 churches. The churches were those known to be active missions participants within the Network. A total of 61 individual responses is compiled by church in Table A3 in Appendix 6.

The first three statements of the questionnaire researched the STM experience of the respondents while serving on teams from their current churches. Their responses are presented in Table 3. They show that almost one-half, 43 percent, of the respondents first actively participated in missions while members of their current churches. More than one-half of them had their first international missions experience during their current church membership. And 50 percent of them claim to have participated in international missions on more than one occasion.

Table 3. Missions experience of adult team members with their churches

<i>Missions experience on teams from their current churches</i>	Number of team members	% of respondents
First participation in missions	26	43
First experience in international missions	24	56
Served on two or more international teams	30	50
First participation in missions and first experience in international missions	21	34
First participation in missions, first experience in international missions, and repeated international trips	8	13

More than one-third, 34 percent, of the adult team members had both their first experience in any active missions participation and their first experience in international

missions with their current churches. A few of these, 13 percent, have participated in multiple international trips. These statistics suggest that SFBA churches that are active within the STARS Network are introducing their members to missions involvement in general and are giving them repeated opportunities to partake in international missions in particular. It is reasonable to conclude that the Network facilitates these efforts on the part of churches and advances the personal responsibility of adults in the biblical mission.

The succeeding six statements of the questionnaire, numbered 4 through 9, explored the personal growth of adult team members of churches participating within the STARS Network. Table 4 summarizes their responses to these six statements. In each area, the respondents as a whole responded affirmatively, ranging from agreement to strong agreement that they have personally grown from their participation in missions. The subjects of strongest agreement seem to be in the areas of general spiritual growth and appreciation for other cultures. Although the areas of growth calling for personal action, understanding, and commitment to missions were not as strongly confirmed, the respondents nevertheless agreed that they had been challenged by their experiences.

Table 4. Summary of personal growth of adult team members

<i>Areas of personal growth</i>	Mean responses
Growth in appreciation for other cultures	5.6
Spiritual growth in general	5.7
Growth in understanding of missions	5.5
Growth in commitment to missions	5.5
Growth in understanding of their church's mission at home	5.3
Growth in understanding God's purpose for their lives	5.2

The number of international experiences in missions appears to be related to the personal growth of adult participants. Table 5 compares the responses of adults who have taken only one international trip with those of repeat participants, those who have taken two or more. The responses of those who served on two or more international teams were more positively affirming of the questionnaire statements.

The table reveals that the answers of repeat participants were consistently stronger in agreement than those who had not yet taken their second international trip. The increases range from 4 to 8 percent on responses to statements numbered 4 through 9. Those who had taken multiple international trips were also more resolute regarding their future participation, as probed by the tenth statement. Their responses were 7 percent stronger in agreement. However, it is inconclusive as to whether additional international trips influenced or resulted from greater personal growth and commitment.

Table 5. Comparison of one-time and repeat international participants' responses

<i>Areas of personal growth or commitment</i>	Mean responses		
	One trip	Repeat trips	% higher
Growth in appreciation for other cultures	5.4	5.7	6
Spiritual growth in general	5.5	5.9	7
Growth in understanding of missions	5.5	5.7	4
Growth in commitment to missions	5.3	5.7	8
Growth in understanding their church's mission at home	5.1	5.4	6
Growth in understanding God's purpose for their lives	5.1	5.4	6
Likely to join in future trips with their current church	5.4	5.8	7

The questionnaire was administered seeking to determine whether the adult team members' participation in missions began with their churches' Network projects and whether they intended to continue as active participants. The goal was considered to

be successful if at least 50 percent of the respondents affirmed the first statement and responded to the second one with a statistical mean of at least 5.0. The first part of the goal fell short of the bar, with only 43 percent indicating that their first missions participation came with their current church. The second part of the goal was met, with respondents registering a mean response of 5.6, leaning toward strong agreement that they would be inclined toward future participation with their current church.

The findings of the second goal confirm that believers who actively participate in the Christian mission are blessed spiritually and discover genuine discipleship. Since the Great Commission was given to believers as well as to churches, SFBA should explore ways to resource churches that emphasize the responsibility of their members in the mission. This may include developing discipleship materials for STM teams.

Evaluation of the Third Goal

The third goal sought to establish that the STARS Network helps advance the understanding of and commitment to missions within churches participating through the Network. A questionnaire (Appendix 7) was used to survey random members of the 10 churches identified as active in missions through the Network. Respondents included church leaders, mission team members, and non-participating church members. The results from a total of 151 respondents are listed by church in Table A4 in Appendix 8.

The first two statements of the questionnaire explored the background of the respondents related to any church staff positions and STM experience with their current churches. A summary of their responses is presented in Table 6. They show that almost two-thirds of the respondents, 62 percent, are adult church members who neither serve in church staff positions nor have been active participants in the STM trips of their church.

Table 6. Involvement background of adult church member respondents

<i>Background of adult respondents</i>	Respondents	
	Adults	%
Serve in staff ministry position in their current church	15	10
Served on at least one STM team with their current church	49	32
Neither staff position nor STM team with their current church	94	62

The third and fourth statements of the questionnaire probed adult members for their personal encouragement and their perception of congregational support for their church's missions participation. The last six statements called for responders to reflect upon the impact of the participation within the congregation and in their own lives. The responses to these eight statements can be isolated into two groups of respondents, as shown in Table 7. A comparison is made between the responses of staff members and mission team members versus the adult church members who were uninvolved, having played little or no role in the planning, promoting, and execution of the missions activity of their churches.

The table shows that the responses of church staff personnel and mission team members were significantly stronger in agreement than those of other adults in the areas of encouragement and support for active missions participation. The responses relative to personal encouragement of others are especially noteworthy. Those personally involved were 24 percent stronger in agreement than were non-participants that they had actually encouraged others to serve on STM teams. In contrast, the disparity in responses to the question of congregational support between those involved and those uninvolved was only 2 percent. It appears that the lower the degree of personal responsibility in question, the more alike were their responses.

Table 7. Comparison of responses of adult church members by involvement

<i>Questionnaire statements</i>	Mean responses		
	Staff/team members	Other adults	All adults
<i>Areas of encouragement and support</i>			
Personally encouraged others to serve in STM	5.2	4.2	4.6
Congregation supportive of church's participation	5.5	5.4	5.4
<i>Areas strengthened by church's participation</i>			
Church's commitment to denominational missions	5.2	5.1	5.2
Church's focus on the local mission at home	5.1	5.0	5.0
Congregation's general understanding of missions	5.3	5.1	5.2
Congregation's general commitment to missions	5.2	5.1	5.2
Responder's personal understanding of missions	5.5	5.1	5.3
Responder's personal commitment to missions	5.5	4.7	5.0

The two groups of respondents were more in sync in responding to the four statements probing church strengthening from active missions participation. All adults on average agreed that their churches were stronger in their commitment to denominational missions, in their focus on the mission at home, and in their understanding and commitment to missions. The responses of those personally involved in their church's missions activity were slightly more affirmative than those of non-participants, averaging 2 percent more for each statement. The survey revealed a general consensus among adults that active participation in missions had strengthened their churches.

There was a greater variance in the responses of the two groups in regard to their own understanding of and commitment to missions. The difference may be attributed to the personal and challenging nature of the last two statements. The responses of church staff and mission team members were considerably stronger in agreement that they had grown in relation to missions by their church's active participation. They exceeded the responses of non-participating adults by an average of 12 percent for the

two statements. It appears that the greater the number of personal participants within a church, the greater the church is strengthened as a whole by its missions activity.

The adult members who identified themselves as either serving on church staff or having served on STM teams were consistently in agreement to strong agreement that their church’s participation had positively affected their lives and their congregations. The uninvolved adults agreed with statements exploring the impact on the congregations. However, they were significantly less affirming of statements probing the influence of their church’s activity on themselves. Their answers were not as strong in encouraging others to participate and in their growth in understanding and commitment to missions.

The third goal was deemed successful if at least 30 percent of respondents agreed with the last two statements regarding growth in their personal understanding of and commitment to missions. Table 8 shows a distribution of their responses according to the strength of their agreement and disagreement.

Table 8. Responses of adults in areas of missional growth

<i>Responses</i>	Areas of missional growth			
	Understanding of missions		Commitment to missions	
	Adults	%	Adults	%
Strongly agree (6)	59	39	51	34
Agree (5)	67	44	56	37
Slightly agree (4)	18	12	31	21
Any agreement (4-6)	144	95	138	91
Any disagreement (1-3)	3	2	9	6
No response	4	3	4	3

The table shows that a total of 95 percent of all adult church members responded in agreement that they had grown in their personal understanding of missions

as their church was actively participating. Those affirming the statement enthusiastically, with strong agreement, amount to 39 percent. Only a few of them, 5 percent, either disagreed with or declined to respond to the statement.

The table reveals that a slightly lower percentage of respondents verified that they had grown in their personal commitment to missions. Yet, the response remained strong, with 91 percent affirming the last statement to any degree. One observation emerges from the difference in the two majorities. It appears that 4 percent of adult church members failed to grow in their commitment to missions although they admitted that their understanding of missions had increased.

The third goal successfully met the bar that was set at the beginning of the project. With respect to both statements, more than 30 percent of adult church members agreed that they had grown in understanding and commitment to missions. In fact, more than three times the standard indicated they had experienced personal growth in missions.

The findings of the third goal confirm the positive impact of active missions participation on a church. The benefits have been verified both by church members who were involved and by those who were detached from the projects. Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that active participation in missions actually strengthens a church rather than depleting its resources, as many have feared. This is a critical discovery for Association leaders to reveal as they urge churches to find their roles in the Great Commission.

Evaluation of the Fourth Goal

The fourth goal was to demonstrate that the STARS Network serves as a catalyst for RTM projects between SFBA churches and Network affiliates. This goal was evaluated through questionnaires administered to both church leaders and their RTM

partners. The partners consisted of pastors and missionaries in international locations, although they could have potentially resided in domestic settings.

Leaders of eight churches with RTM projects were asked the questions listed in Appendix 9. The data in Table 9 reveal that most of their partnerships originated prior to the launch of the STARS Network and continued with international connections after they became Network affiliates. The most common length of RTM partnerships has been two or three years. One has extended longer, for five years. The countries in which churches have been working most frequently through repeat trips are Belize, Cuba, and Peru, where key connections have existed for SFBA churches for years. The Network incorporates and makes official the pre-existing relationships that had been informal and limited in connections.

Table 9. General data relating to RTM projects of SFBA churches

<i>RTM data</i>	SFBA churches with RTM projects							
	CCC	FBCB	FBCR	NLBC	RBBC	SGBC	TBC	WECC
<i>Duration of RTM projects</i>								
Years involved	3	5	2	2	3	3	2	3
<i>Locations of RTM projects</i>								
Countries	BZ SZ	BZ IN	PE	CU MX	BZ	PE	CU CR	BZ
<i>Types of RTM projects</i>								
Missions activities	CON CP OC	CON DRT EVG	PT	CP PT	CON CP PT EVG VBS	CP DP EVG	CON CP EVG VBS	SNM

The most frequent types of RTM projects for churches include construction, evangelism, and church planting. Each is claimed by four of eight churches. The other

common projects are Vacation Bible School and pastor training. A few of the churches focus on one particular venture. However, most have been involved in multiple projects.

The responses of the eight church leaders to questions relating to mission strategy are shown in Table 10. All eight churches confirmed congregational support and local connections, signaling potentially key elements in RTM. A majority of churches, 75 percent, claim clearly defined goals. All of them indicated they had been assisted by the Network with connections, and 50 percent received help with their missions strategy.

Table 10. Responses to strategy-related questions for church RTM projects

<i>RTM questions</i>	SFBA churches with RTM projects							
	CCC	FBCB	FBCR	NLBC	RBBC	SGBC	TBC	WECC
<i>Key elements in RTM</i>								
Clearly defined RTM goals	√	--	√	√	√	√	--	√
Congregation supportive	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Local connections	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
<i>STARS Network assistance</i>								
With connections	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
With strategy	√	--	√	√	--	√	--	--

Most of the church leaders responded to the last question with suggestions for improving the effectiveness of the Network in mobilizing and assisting churches for RTM projects. The most common pleas were for more chances to make connections and for more assistance and training in strategy development. Other suggestions related to improving Network promotion, publicizing resources, and helping pastors with vision.

Three RTM international partners were given a questionnaire using the seven questions in Appendix 10. The questions were almost identical to those submitted to the

eight church leaders. The partners are located in Belize, Costa Rica, and Peru. Two of them are missionaries, and one is a pastor. Their responses are summarized in Table 11.

Table 11. Responses of international partners to RTM questionnaire

<i>RTM questions</i>	Network partners with RTM projects		
	Belize	Costa Rica	Peru
Years involved in RTM projects with SFBA churches	9	4	3
Number of churches and affiliates currently assisting	4	4	5
Types of RTM projects	CON CP EVG SNM VBS	CON EVG	CON CP EVG PT
Agreement on clearly defined goals	√	--	√
<i>STARS Network Assistance</i>			
With connections	√	√	√
With missions strategy	√	--	√

Each of the international partners has been working with SFBA churches longer than the two years the STARS Network has been in existence. Each currently assists four or five churches with RTM projects. The most common projects include construction, evangelism, and church planting. Of the three major Network affiliates currently connecting with SFBA churches on RTM projects, two claim to have clearly defined goals. The same two partners, missionaries in Belize and Peru, credit the Network with assisting them with their missions strategies. All three partners affirm that they have received assistance in making connections for RTM projects.

The success of the fourth goal hinged upon the agreement of both groups of respondents that the STARS Network has assisted them with making connections and

with developing their mission strategy for RTM projects. Table 12 shows the combined responses of eight SFBA church leaders and three international partners. The first part of the requirement met the bar, with all respondents confirming that they have been assisted with making connections. In addition, 55 percent of them certified that they have received help from the Network with their missions strategy. Therefore, this goal was successful, meeting the requirement of at least 50 percent of the total respondents responding positively to both questions.

Table 12. Responses to statements of STARS Network assistance for RTM

<i>STARS Network assisted</i>	Church leaders		International partners		All respondents	
	Agree	%	Agree	%	Agree	%
With making connections	8	100	3	100	11	100
With strategy development	4	50	2	67	6	55

The results found in the fourth goal suggest that RTM projects can be a viable option for churches seeking progressive accomplishments with enduring relationships. For those cases, SFBA leaders should continue to develop resources offered through the STARS Network for churches to maximize their RTM effectiveness.

Evaluation of the Fifth Goal

The fifth goal was to diagnose any helpful adjustments to the STARS Network that would advance the engagement of SFBA churches and the participation of their members in STM and RTM. The goal is considered successful by the identification of specific improvements to advance the impact of the Network in missions mobilization.

The observations and conclusions reached in the first four goals serve as sources for any needed adjustments. Suggestions take into account the early life of the Network at two years of existence and assume its natural evolution in time into a strengthened and more expansive structure. Nevertheless, a few intentional moves can be made in the short-run to enhance its success.

The success of the STARS Network hinges on the interest and participation of SFBA church leaders, especially the pastors. Most SBC pastors are accustomed to giving slight attention to missions by showing occasional support for IMB missionaries. The STARS Network was begun first to introduce church leaders to active participation in missions. The hope is that their interest and vision will trigger the mobilization of their churches. Since it appears that almost two-thirds of SFBA church leaders have had no active experience in international missions, an emphasis should be placed on providing them first-time opportunities. An intentional strategy would include budgeted financial resources to assist church leaders with travel expenses on their initial trips.

The Network should offer more assistance with strategies to pastors and other leaders for their missions locally and globally. Specific training could be given in defining their mission target, researching their context and demographics, and developing a plan for evangelism, church planting, and training leaders. The training should be made available in both group settings and individual consultation.

Promotion of the STARS Network must certainly be strengthened. Periodic newsletters, blogs, and the Network web site should be used to publicize new affiliates, missions opportunities and needs, and the activity of SFBA churches. The potential of social media to catapult the Network's success in mobilization cannot be overstated.

Strengths of the Project

The strengths of this project lie in the evaluation of its goals. The project establishes that the STARS Network does in fact introduce SFBA church leaders to missions opportunities and international missions in particular. It also demonstrates that churches which actively participate in missions can expect adult participants to grow spiritually and missionally. In fact, those should anticipate an overall positive impact on their membership and on their mission at home.

The project gives church leaders who completed questionnaires the opportunity to reflect upon their missions experiences, assess the benefits to their churches, and contemplate future participation. Adult team members are afforded the chance to process their growth and consider God's purpose for their lives in missions. Adult church members who completed questionnaires were challenged to recognize the spiritual impact of active missions participation on their church and in their lives.

Weaknesses of the Project

Although the weaknesses of this project fail to diminish its findings, they should still be acknowledged. They begin with the evaluation of the STARS Network after only two years of existence. Despite the value of early research and conclusions, a follow-up appraisal after five years is recommended. A later assessment would aim to corroborate the findings of this project. It would more strongly substantiate the success of the Network in mobilizing churches and individuals for missions. Presumably, the activity of more churches, leaders, members, and affiliates could be examined, strengthening the observations made and conclusions formed in this project.

A second weakness resulted from the limited cooperation received from some of the church leaders. While most of them obtained a good number of responses from church members to the church questionnaire, a few seemed to expend little effort. Their meager responses are noted in Table A4 in Appendix 8. Although more responses could have strengthened the results, enough research was gathered for concrete conclusions.

A third weakness could be the few Network affiliates available to survey as RTM partners with SFBA churches. As domestic and international connections multiply with time, future research will be strengthened. For now, the results from three affiliates supply enough findings to validate the Network's role in RTM projects.

What I Would Do Differently

The major change I would make to this project if given the chance would be to wait at least another three years before evaluating the STARS Network. The research would probably be broader, with greater sample sizes from the list of participating churches and their members. The observations and conclusions reached after five years of existence would be more helpful in strengthening the Network toward its purpose of mobilizing churches and individuals in missions.

Another change to the project might involve pursuing the reasons behind some of the answers given by respondents to the questionnaires. Rather than simply using a Likert-scale questionnaire, I could use questions calling for more specific answers. I would especially take interest in the reasons some respondents denied a positive impact in their churches and in their own lives while others strongly agreed to both statements.

A different approach to surveying church leaders might include questions probing their understanding of the biblical mission and to what degree they are

committed to fulfilling that mission. Follow-up questions would address their interest in learning how their churches can reconcile their missions activity with Christ's mission. I would want to know which leaders want to effectively advance the Great Commission.

Theological Reflections

This project has fortified some theological principles related to missions. First, the examination made in chapter 2 makes clear the biblical basis for the mission of each local church. In that regard, the STARS Network acknowledges both the autonomy and the responsibility of each church to engage the mission. The evaluation of the Network in this project reveals the broad range of responses made by churches and their leaders to the mandate. Some of them are responding by prioritizing the mission both locally and globally. Others give token attention to the mission, either from a lack of understanding or for other reasons. Often, the pastor's response determines the response of his church.

The project also supports the principle that Christ first assigned his mission to individual disciples. The Great Commission became the duty of every believer, as well as the driving purpose for bodies of believers. Christians, though, struggle against their sin nature, including their tendency to exchange the mission of God for a diluted, self-centered church experience. By neglecting their call to be a witness to the world, they mirror the disobedience of Israel recorded in the Old Testament. Churches that engage the mission offer their participating members the chance to overcome their indifference and find their place in the Great Commission.

The project has implications for the church's task of making disciples. New believers should certainly be trained in the teachings of the Scriptures, in prayer, and in personal evangelism. Yet, individual discipleship must also include teaching them to

partake in the mission Christ left for every Christian. The research conducted confirms that adult believers who become active players in missions advance notably as Christ's followers. As they are drawn to the mission, they learn by experiences in sacrifice that a genuine disciple must "deny himself" and "pick up his cross daily" (Luke 9:23).

A final proposition reiterated in the project is the continual work of the Holy Spirit. The STARS Network is wholly dependent on the Spirit to arrange the connections between churches and mission partners and to call individuals to join in the work. As God leads churches into missions activity, partnerships are formed with missionaries and pastors which often become Network affiliates. Thus, the Holy Spirit orchestrates the timing and locations for the future missions engagement of churches. The Network simply follows the paths carved out by the Spirit.

Personal Reflections

This project has also reinforced some of the author's personal convictions regarding missions participation. The first underscores the inherent blessing received by churches that adopt the Great Commission and accept responsibility in the mandate. The unity and commitment most pastors seek for their congregations are natural by-products of engaging in the biblical mission. Once a church clarifies its mission to its community and to the world as its priority in preaching, promotion, activity, and finances, the congregation typically unites around their mission. Internal issues are minimized as the focus of the church is directed outward to fulfilling its purpose.

Another observation strengthened in the project relates to effective missions participation. As more churches become active in missions, leaders and laymen are expressing a growing desire for meaningful participation. While some of the projects

conducted by churches may provide for needs, they do not necessarily advance the specifics of the Great Commission. The mandate calls for making disciples in every ethno-linguistic group by evangelizing them and maturing them in the faith. The STARS Network emphasizes pastor training and church planting as two RTM projects churches can adopt that advance the elements of the mission given by Jesus Christ.

A final thought relates to the future of SBC associations. Each one must now evaluate its relevance within its context. Like the churches they serve, their own vitality is essentially tied to their focus on missions. An association's ability to adapt to the changes within its churches, mobilizing and accommodating their passion for personal involvement in missions, will ensure its long-term relevance and endurance. For some associations, the answer will be found in a structure similar to the STARS Network.

Conclusion

This project establishes the STARS Network as an effective structure for mobilizing and supporting the missions work of churches in the San Felipe Baptist Association. The evaluation demonstrates that after two years of existence the Network is successfully introducing church leaders to missions opportunities. Consequently, SFBA churches and their members are finding their roles in actively participating in the Great Commission.

As associational leaders, we must continue to seek ways to educate and motivate church leaders to pursue God's calling for their churches in the mission. We should provide opportunities for them to explore the options and missions needs. Once they discover their assignment, we are compelled to assist, encourage, and resource them and their churches to most effectively accomplish the mandate set forth by Christ.

APPENDIX 1

SFBA CHURCHES INCLUDED IN THE PROJECT

Table A1. List of SFBA churches actively participating in missions

Church and project ID	Leaders with STM experience surveyed (Goal 1)	Adult team members surveyed (Goal 2)	Adult church members surveyed (Goal 3)	RTM project interviews (Goal 4)
Brazos Bend Baptist Church (BBBC)	√	√	√	--
Christian Life Fellowship (CLF)	√	--	--	--
Creeside Community Church (CCC)	√	√	√	√
El Buen Pastor Baptist Church (EBPBC)	√	--	--	--
First Baptist Church, Alief (FBCA)	√	--	--	--
First Baptist Church, Bellville (FBCB)	√	√	√	√
First Baptist Church, Rosenberg (FBCR)	√	√	√	√
First Baptist Church, Sealy (FBCS)	√	--	√	√
Fort Bend Fellowship (FBF)	√	--	--	--
Houston Praise Community Church (HPCC)	√	--	--	--
Iglesia Segunda Bautista, Rosenberg (ISBR)	√	--	--	--
New Life Baptist Church (NLBC)	√	√	√	√
Pecan Grove Baptist Church (PGBC)	√	--	--	--
River Bend Baptist Church (RBBC)	√	√	√	√
Second Chance Community Church (SCCC)	√	--	--	--
Sovereign Grace Baptist Church (SGBC)	√	√	√	√
The Bridge Fellowship (TBF)	√	--	--	--
Trinity Baptist Church (TBC)	√	√	√	√
Waters Edge Community Church (WECC)	√	√	√	√
West End Baptist Church (WEBC)	√	√	√	--

APPENDIX 2

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CHURCH LEADERS WITH SHORT-TERM MISSIONS EXPERIENCE

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to determine the influence of the STARS Network in introducing church leaders to short-term mission opportunities. This research is being conducted by Sam Waltman for purposes of project research. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.* By completing this questionnaire, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Please circle the answer that is most accurate.

1. My first experience in serving on a short-term mission trip came during my present position in ministry.

YES NO

2. My first experience in serving on an international short-term mission trip came during my present position in ministry.

YES NO

3. I have served on at least one short-term mission team in connection with an affiliate of the STARS Network.

YES NO

4. My first active experience in international missions came through a short-term project in connection with a STARS Network affiliate.

YES NO

If you responded to statement #4 by circling "NO," please STOP HERE.

If you responded to statement #4 by circling "YES," please CONTINUE.

5. I was introduced to STARS Network-connected missions by serving on a mission team with other ministers.

YES NO

6. I was introduced to STARS Network-connected missions by serving on a mission to train indigenous leaders in ministry.

YES NO

Please circle the number on the scale that most closely corresponds to your feelings.

7. My understanding of missions increased by participating in short-term missions.

strongly disagree disagree slightly disagree slightly agree agree strongly agree
----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6----

8. I received a greater vision of my church's role in missions through my participation.

strongly disagree disagree slightly disagree slightly agree agree strongly agree
----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6----

9. The STARS Network has been a factor in my participation in short-term missions.

strongly disagree disagree slightly disagree slightly agree agree strongly agree
----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6----

10. I am likely to turn to STARS Network connections in the future as I participate in short-term missions opportunities.

strongly disagree disagree slightly disagree slightly agree agree strongly agree
----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6----

APPENDIX 3

RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRES FOR CHURCH LEADERS WITH STM EXPERIENCE

Table A2. Results of questionnaires for church leaders with STM experience

Respondent	Responses to questionnaire statements									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
BBBC1	N	N	Y	N	--	--	--	--	--	--
CLF1	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
CCC1	N	N	N	N	--	--	--	--	--	--
CCC2	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
EBPBC1	Y	Y	Y	N	--	--	--	--	--	--
FBCA1	N	N	Y	N	--	--	--	--	--	--
FBCB1	N	N	N	N	--	--	--	--	--	--
FBCR1	N	N	Y	N	--	--	--	--	--	--
FBCS1	N	N	Y	N	--	--	--	--	--	--
FBCS2	N	N	Y	N	--	--	--	--	--	--
FBF1	N	N	N	N	--	--	--	--	--	--
HPCC1	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
ISBR1	Y	Y	N	N	--	--	--	--	--	--
NLBC1	Y	N	Y	N	--	--	--	--	--	--
PGBC1	N	N	N	N	--	--	--	--	--	--
RBBC1	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	6.0	5.0	6.0	5.0
SCCC1	N	N	Y	N	--	--	--	--	--	--
SGBC1	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	6.0	6.0	5.0	5.0
TBC1	N	N	Y	N	--	--	--	--	--	--
TBF1	Y	Y	Y	N	--	--	--	--	--	--
WECC1	N	N	Y	N	--	--	--	--	--	--
WEBC1	Y	Y	Y	N	--	--	--	--	--	--
Statistical means							5.6	5.4	5.4	5.2

APPENDIX 4

INSTRUCTIONS FOR ADMINISTERING QUESTIONNAIRES FOR RESEARCH ON SHORT-TERM MISSIONS

Thank you for your assistance with gathering data for researching the influence of short-term mission trips in your church. Attached are two separate 2-page questionnaires, one for surveying adult mission team members and the second for surveying adult church members in general in your church. Some instructions are provided for each one:

1. Questionnaire for Adult Members of Short-Term Mission Teams

This questionnaire should be copied and given to every adult you can think of in your church who has served on a short-term mission team. Tip: make a list of these adults and go to them personally with the questionnaire. They can complete it in two minutes and give it back to you, so ask them to do it on the spot rather than trusting them to do it later. They should **not** put their names on their questionnaires.

2. Questionnaire for Adult Members of Churches Involved in Short-Term Missions

This questionnaire can be copied and administered easily at the beginning or end of a church meeting, especially on a Sunday or Wednesday night. Ideally, the group should include some who have been on mission trips, some who have never been on mission trips, and some who have been leaders on trips. Please survey only adults. The questionnaires can be administered one of two ways. You or someone else in your church can administer them internally or you can give me a forum at a church meeting, and I will personally administer them. I am open to either way, according to your preference. Again, they should not put their names on their questionnaires.

When you have collected the questionnaires, I can pick them up or you can mail them to:

Sam Waltman
San Felipe Baptist Association
1105 San Jacinto
Rosenberg, TX 77471

I will appreciate it if you can help me complete this research by October 1st.

Thanks again,
Sam Waltman

APPENDIX 5

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ADULT MEMBERS
OF SHORT-TERM MISSIONS TEAMS

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to determine the impact of short-term missions service on participants. This research is being conducted by Sam Waltman for purposes of project research. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this questionnaire is completely voluntary, and you are free to cease with your responses at any time.* By completing this questionnaire, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Please circle the answer that is most accurate.

1. My first participation in missions came on a mission team with my current church.

YES NO

2. My first experience in international missions came in serving on a team from my current church.

YES NO

3. I have served on two or more international mission teams with my current church.

YES NO

Please circle the number on the scale that most closely corresponds to your feelings.

4. My appreciation for other cultures has grown by serving on international teams.

strongly disagree slightly disagree slightly agree strongly agree
-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----

5. I have grown spiritually by serving on short-term missions teams.

strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree
---1-----	2-----	3-----	4-----	5-----	6---

6. My understanding of missions has grown by serving on short-term missions teams.

strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree
---1-----	2-----	3-----	4-----	5-----	6---

7. My commitment to missions has grown by participating in short-term missions.

strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree
---1-----	2-----	3-----	4-----	5-----	6---

8. My understanding of my church's mission at home has increased as a result of my participation in short-term missions.

strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree
---1-----	2-----	3-----	4-----	5-----	6---

9. My understanding of God's purpose for my life has been clarified as a result of my participation in short-term missions.

strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree
---1-----	2-----	3-----	4-----	5-----	6---

10. I am likely to participate in future short-term mission trips with my current church.

strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree
---1-----	2-----	3-----	4-----	5-----	6---

APPENDIX 6

RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRES FOR
ADULT MEMBERS OF STM TEAMS

Table A3. Results of questionnaires for
adult members of STM teams

Respondent	Responses to questionnaire statements									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<i>Brazos Bend Baptist Church</i>										
BBBC1	N	Y	N	2.0	5.0	4.0	5.0	2.0	3.0	6.0
BBBC2	N	Y	N	6.0	6.0	4.0	6.0	6.0	5.0	6.0
BBBC3	Y	Y	Y	6.0	6.0	5.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
Statistical means				4.7	5.7	4.3	5.7	4.7	4.7	6.0
<i>Creeside Community Church</i>										
CCC1	Y	N	N	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
CCC2	N	Y	Y	5.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
CCC3	N	N	Y	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
CCC4	Y	Y	Y	5.0	6.0	5.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	6.0
CCC5	Y	Y	N	6.0	6.0	6.0	5.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
CCC6	N	Y	Y	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
Statistical means				5.5	5.8	5.7	5.7	5.7	5.7	5.8
<i>First Baptist Church, Bellville</i>										
FBCB1	N	N	Y	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	4.0	5.0	6.0
FBCB2	N	Y	Y	5.0	5.0	5.0	4.0	4.0	5.0	3.0
FBCB3	Y	Y	Y	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	6.0
FBCB4	Y	Y	N	6.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	4.0	5.0
FBCB5	N	Y	Y	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	4.0	6.0
Statistical means				5.6	5.4	5.4	5.2	4.8	4.6	5.2
<i>First Baptist Church, Rosenberg</i>										
FBCR1	N	N	N	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	6.0
FBCR2	Y	Y	N	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	5.0	6.0	6.0
FBCR3	Y	Y	N	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	5.0	3.0
FBCR4	Y	Y	N	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	4.0	6.0	6.0
FBCR5	N	N	Y	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	5.0	6.0
FBCR6	Y	Y	N	6.0	5.0	5.0	6.0	5.0	4.0	4.0
Statistical means				5.7	5.5	5.5	5.7	4.8	5.2	5.2

Table A3 continued

Respondent	Responses to questionnaire statements									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<i>New Life Baptist Church</i>										
NLBC1	N	N	N	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	6.0
NLBC2	N	Y	--	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
NLBC3	N	N	Y	5.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
NLBC4	N	N	Y	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
NLBC5	N	N	Y	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
NLBC6	N	Y	Y	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
Statistical means				5.3	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.7
<i>River Bend Baptist Church</i>										
RBBC1	N	N	Y	5.0	6.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	5.0
RBBC2	N	Y	N	6.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
RBBC3	N	N	N	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
RBBC4	N	N	N	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
RBBC5	N	Y	Y	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
RBBC6	N	Y	Y	6.0	6.0	5.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
RBBC7	N	Y	N	6.0	6.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	6.0
RBBC8	N	N	N	--	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
RBBC9	N	N	N	5.0	5.0	5.0	4.0	5.0	5.0	4.0
RBBC10	Y	Y	Y	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	6.0
RBBC11	N	N	N	--	5.0	5.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
RBBC12	Y	Y	N	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
RBBC13	Y	N	N	4.0	5.0	4.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
Statistical means				5.5	5.7	5.3	5.2	5.2	5.2	5.4
<i>Sovereign Grace Baptist Church</i>										
SGBC1	Y	Y	N	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	4.0	5.0
SGBC2	Y	Y	Y	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
SGBC3	N	N	Y	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
SGBC4	Y	Y	Y	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
SGBC5	N	N	Y	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
Statistical means				5.8	5.8	5.8	5.8	5.8	5.6	5.8
<i>Trinity Baptist Church</i>										
TBC1	Y	Y	N	5.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
TBC2	Y	Y	Y	6.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	4.0	4.0	6.0
TBC3	Y	N	N	5.0	6.0	5.0	4.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
TBC4	N	N	Y	6.0	6.0	6.0	5.0	4.0	3.0	6.0
TBC5	N	N	Y	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	5.0	6.0	6.0
TBC6	Y	Y	Y	5.0	6.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	6.0	6.0
TBC7	Y	Y	Y	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
Statistical means				5.6	6.0	5.7	5.3	5.0	5.1	5.9

Table A3 continued

Respondent	Responses to questionnaire statements									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<i>Waters Edge Community Church</i>										
WECC1	N	N	Y	6.0	6.0	5.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
WECC2	N	N	Y	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
WECC3	N	N	N	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
WECC4	Y	Y	Y	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
WECC5	Y	Y	N	6.0	5.0	6.0	6.0	4.0	5.0	6.0
WECC6	N	N	N	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	6.0	4.0	5.0
WECC7	Y	Y	N	5.0	5.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	4.0	6.0
WECC8	Y	Y	N	6.0	6.0	6.0	--	6.0	6.0	6.0
Statistical means				5.8	5.6	5.8	5.9	5.6	5.3	5.8
<i>West End Baptist Church</i>										
WEBC1	N	N	N	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
WEBC2	Y	N	N	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	5.0	--	6.0
Statistical means				6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	5.5	6.0	6.0
Total statistical means				5.6	5.7	5.5	5.5	5.3	5.2	5.6

APPENDIX 7

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ADULT MEMBERS
OF CHURCHES INVOLVED IN
SHORT-TERM MISSIONS

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to determine the internal impact of a church's involvement in short-term missions within the STARS Network. This research is being conducted by Sam Waltman for purposes of project research. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this questionnaire is completely voluntary, and you are free to cease with your responses at any time.* By completing this questionnaire, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Please circle the answer that is most accurate.

1. I currently serve in a staff ministry position in my church.

YES NO

2. I have served on at least one short-term missions team with my current church.

YES NO

Please circle the number on the scale that most closely corresponds to your feelings.

3. I have encouraged others in my church to serve on a short-term missions team.

strongly disagree disagree slightly disagree slightly agree agree strongly agree
-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----

4. The congregation as a whole has been generally supportive of my church's participation in short-term mission trips.

strongly disagree disagree slightly disagree slightly agree agree strongly agree
-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----

5. My church's active participation in missions has strengthened the congregation's commitment to praying for and giving to denominational cooperative missions.

strongly disagree disagree slightly disagree slightly agree agree strongly agree
 ----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6----

6. My church's participation in international missions has strengthened its focus on its local mission at home.

strongly disagree disagree slightly disagree slightly agree agree strongly agree
 ----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6----

7. The congregation's general understanding of missions has grown as a result of the church's participation in short-term mission trips.

strongly disagree disagree slightly disagree slightly agree agree strongly agree
 ----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6----

8. The congregation's general commitment to missions has grown as a result of the church's participation in short-term mission trips.

strongly disagree disagree slightly disagree slightly agree agree strongly agree
 ----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6----

9. My personal understanding of missions has grown as a result of my church's participation in short-term mission trips.

strongly disagree disagree slightly disagree slightly agree agree strongly agree
 ----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6----

10. My personal commitment to missions has grown as a result of my church's participation in short-term mission trips.

strongly disagree disagree slightly disagree slightly agree agree strongly agree
 ----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6----

APPENDIX 8

RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRES FOR ADULT MEMBERS
OF CHURCHES INVOLVED IN STM

Table A4. Results of questionnaires for adult
members of churches involved in STM

Respondent	Responses to questionnaire statements									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<i>Brazos Bend Baptist Church</i>										
BBBC1	Y	N	1.0	1.0	4.0	5.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
BBBC2	N	N	6.0	6.0	6.0	--	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
Statistical means			3.5	3.5	5.0	5.0	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5
<i>Creekside Community Church</i>										
CCC1	Y	N	4.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
CCC2	N	N	4.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	5.0	5.0
CCC3	N	N	2.0	2.0	2.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	4.0	4.0
CCC4	N	Y	6.0	6.0	5.0	4.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
CCC5	N	N	5.0	5.0	5.0	--	6.0	5.0	6.0	6.0
CCC6	Y	N	3.0	6.0	5.0	4.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	4.0
CCC7	Y	Y	6.0	6.0	4.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
CCC8	N	N	6.0	6.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
CCC9	N	N	2.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
CCC10	N	Y	5.0	5.0	5.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	5.0	5.0
CCC11	N	N	6.0	6.0	4.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	4.0
CCC12	N	N	5.0	6.0	3.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	--	5.0
CCC13	N	N	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
Statistical means			4.5	5.5	4.7	5.2	5.5	5.4	5.3	5.8
<i>First Baptist Church, Bellville</i>										
FBCB1	N	N	5.0	6.0	6.0	4.0	4.0	5.0	5.0	4.0
FBCB2	N	N	5.0	4.0	5.0	4.0	--	4.0	5.0	4.0
FBCB3	N	N	4.0	6.0	5.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
FBCB4	N	N	--	5.0	5.0	4.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
FBCB5	N	N	4.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
FBCB6	N	N	4.0	--	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
FBCB7	N	N	3.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	3.0
FBCB8	N	N	4.0	5.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
FBCB9	N	N	4.0	5.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0

Table A4 continued

Respondent	Responses to questionnaire statements									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
FBCB10	N	N	5.0	5.0	5.0	4.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
Statistical means			4.2	5.2	5.3	4.7	4.8	4.8	4.9	4.5
<i>First Baptist Church, Rosenberg</i>										
FBCR1	N	Y	5.0	4.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	4.0
FBCR2	N	Y	5.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
FBCR3	N	N	5.0	6.0	--	--	5.0	5.0	5.0	4.0
FBCR4	N	N	3.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
FBCR5	N	N	3.0	6.0	6.0	4.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
FBCR6	N	N	3.0	1.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	5.0	3.0	3.0
FBCR7	N	Y	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	6.0	6.0
FBCR8	N	N	5.0	6.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
FBCR9	N	N	4.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	4.0	4.0	5.0	5.0
FBCR10	N	N	6.0	5.0	--	5.0	--	--	6.0	6.0
FBCR11	N	N	4.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	5.0
FBCR12	N	N	6.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	4.0	4.0
FBCR13	N	Y	5.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	6.0	6.0
FBCR14	N	N	6.0	5.0	6.0	5.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
FBCR15	N	N	6.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
FBCR16	N	N	5.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	6.0
FBCR17	N	N	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
FBCR18	N	Y	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	6.0	5.0	6.0	6.0
FBCR19	N	N	5.0	5.0	4.0	4.0	5.0	5.0	6.0	5.0
FBCR20	N	N	2.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
FBCR21	N	Y	5.0	5.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	4.0	6.0	5.0
FBCR22	N	N	5.0	6.0	--	5.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
Statistical means			4.7	5.3	5.2	5.0	5.1	5.1	5.4	5.2
<i>First Baptist Church, Sealy</i>										
FBCS1	N	Y	5.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
FBCS2	Y	N	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	4.0	5.0	4.0	5.0
FBCS3	N	Y	5.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
FBCS4	N	N	4.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	4.0
FBCS5	N	N	6.0	6.0	5.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	6.0	5.0
FBCS6	N	Y	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
FBCS7	N	N	4.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
FBCS8	N	N	4.0	5.0	4.0	3.0	4.0	4.0	5.0	2.0
FBCS9	Y	Y	6.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
Statistical means			5.0	5.4	4.9	4.9	4.7	5.0	5.1	4.7
<i>New Life Baptist Church</i>										
NLBC1	Y	N	5.0	6.0	5.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	5.0	6.0
Statistical means			5.0	6.0	5.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	5.0	6.0

Table A4 continued

Respondent	Responses to questionnaire statements									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<i>River Bend Baptist Church</i>										
RBBC1	N	Y	5.0	5.0	--	--	--	--	--	--
RBBC2	N	N	2.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	4.0	3.0	2.0	2.0
RBBC3	N	N	3.0	5.0	5.0	4.0	4.0	6.0	5.0	5.0
RBBC4	N	N	3.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
RBBC5	N	N	3.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	5.0	6.0
RBBC6	N	N	1.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	6.0
RBBC7	N	Y	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
RBBC8	N	Y	5.0	5.0	4.0	4.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
RBBC9	N	N	1.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	4.0	6.0	4.0
RBBC10	N	N	1.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	5.0	4.0
RBBC11	Y	N	3.0	6.0	6.0	5.0	6.0	5.0	6.0	4.0
RBBC12	N	Y	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
RBBC13	N	Y	6.0	5.0	5.0	4.0	5.0	5.0	6.0	5.0
RBBC14	N	Y	5.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
RBBC15	N	N	3.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	4.0	4.0	5.0	5.0
RBBC16	N	Y	5.0	6.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	6.0	6.0
RBBC17	N	Y	6.0	6.0	4.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	5.0	4.0
RBBC18	N	N	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	4.0
RBBC19	N	N	1.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
RBBC20	Y	N	2.0	6.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	4.0	4.0
RBBC21	N	N	4.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	5.0	6.0	6.0	5.0
RBBC22	N	N	--	--	6.0	6.0	6.0	--	5.0	5.0
RBBC23	N	N	4.0	5.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	6.0	5.0	--
RBBC24	N	N	4.0	6.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	6.0	5.0
RBBC25	N	N	2.0	5.0	4.0	4.0	5.0	5.0	4.0	4.0
RBBC26	N	N	3.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
Statistical means			3.6	5.3	5.2	5.0	5.2	5.2	5.1	4.8
<i>Sovereign Grace Baptist Church</i>										
SGBC1	N	Y	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
SGBC2	N	Y	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
SGBC3	N	Y	6.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
SGBC4	N	Y	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
SGBC5	N	N	2.0	6.0	5.0	6.0	6.0	5.0	6.0	4.0
SGBC6	N	N	3.0	5.0	6.0	5.0	6.0	6.0	5.0	5.0
SGBC7	N	N	5.0	6.0	6.0	5.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	4.0
SGBC8	N	Y	6.0	5.0	6.0	4.0	5.0	5.0	6.0	4.0
Statistical means			4.9	5.6	5.6	5.3	5.8	5.6	5.8	5.5

Table A4 continued

Respondent	Responses to questionnaire statements										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
<i>Trinity Baptist Church</i>											
TBC1	N	N	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
TBC2	Y	Y	5.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
TBC3	N	N	3.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	4.0
TBC4	N	N	5.0	6.0	5.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	5.0	5.0
TBC5	N	N	6.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.0
TBC6	N	Y	5.0	4.0	6.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	6.0	6.0
TBC7	N	N	5.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	5.0
TBC8	N	N	6.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	4.0
TBC9	Y	Y	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
TBC10	N	Y	3.0	6.0	5.0	4.0	4.0	5.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
TBC11	N	Y	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
TBC12	N	N	2.0	5.0	5.0	4.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	4.0
TBC13	N	Y	6.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
TBC14	N	Y	6.0	6.0	5.0	4.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
TBC15	N	N	4.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
TBC16	N	N	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
TBC17	N	Y	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	--	--	--
TBC18	N	N	4.0	--	5.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
TBC19	N	N	3.0	5.0	--	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	3.0
TBC20	N	N	2.0	1.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
TBC21	N	Y	6.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	6.0	5.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
TBC22	N	N	6.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	6.0
TBC23	N	N	5.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
TBC24	N	Y	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	4.0	6.0	6.0
TBC25	N	N	5.0	5.0	5.0	4.0	5.0	5.0	6.0	5.0	5.0
TBC26	N	N	4.0	5.0	4.0	4.0	5.0	5.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
TBC27	N	N	4.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
TBC28	N	Y	6.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
TBC29	N	N	6.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
TBC30	N	N	3.0	5.0	5.0	4.0	5.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.0
TBC31	N	N	6.0	6.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
TBC32	N	N	5.0	5.0	6.0	5.0	4.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
TBC33	N	N	4.0	5.0	4.0	3.0	4.0	5.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
TBC34	N	N	6.0	6.0	5.0	4.0	5.0	5.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
TBC35	N	Y	5.0	6.0	4.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
TBC36	N	N	3.0	6.0	4.0	5.0	4.0	--	--	--	--
TBC37	N	N	5.0	6.0	6.0	5.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
Statistical means			4.8	5.4	5.1	4.9	5.1	5.0	5.1	5.0	5.0

Table A4 continued

Respondent	Responses to questionnaire statements									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<i>Waters Edge Community Church</i>										
WECC1	N	Y	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
WECC2	N	N	4.0	5.0	4.0	2.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	5.0
WECC3	Y	Y	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
WECC4	N	N	6.0	6.0	4.0	5.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	5.0
WECC5	N	Y	6.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	6.0	6.0
WECC6	N	N	6.0	5.0	4.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
WECC7	N	N	5.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	5.0
WECC8	N	N	4.0	5.0	4.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	4.0	4.0
WECC9	N	Y	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
WECC10	N	Y	5.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	6.0	6.0
WECC11	N	Y	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
WECC12	N	N	2.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	2.0
WECC13	N	Y	5.0	6.0	6.0	5.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	6.0
WECC14	N	Y	5.0	6.0	6.0	5.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	6.0
Statistical means			5.0	5.6	5.1	5.1	5.3	5.1	5.1	5.1
<i>West End Baptist Church</i>										
WEBC1	Y	Y	6.0	6.0	5.0	2.0	4.0	3.0	4.0	3.0
WEBC2	Y	N	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
WEBC3	N	Y	6.0	6.0	4.0	5.0	3.0	3.0	6.0	6.0
WEBC4	N	N	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
WEBC5	N	N	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
WEBC6	N	N	3.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	5.0	4.0	5.0	4.0
WEBC7	Y	Y	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
WEBC8	N	N	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
WEBC9	N	N	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
Statistical means			5.7	5.8	5.4	5.2	5.3	5.1	5.7	5.4
Total means			4.6	5.4	5.2	5.0	5.2	5.2	5.3	5.0

APPENDIX 9

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CHURCH LEADERS IN REPEAT-TRIP MISSIONS PROJECTS

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to determine the influence of the STARS Network in repeat-trip missions projects. This research is being conducted by Sam Waltman for purposes of project research. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this survey is completely voluntary, and you are free to cease with your responses at any time.* By providing this information, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

1. How many years has your church been involved in a repeat-trip missions project through the STARS Network?
2. In what countries is your church actively engaged in repeat-trip missions projects?
3. In what types of repeat-trip projects is your church participating?
(i. e. construction, evangelism, VBS, church planting, children, social ministry, etc.)
4. Does your church have clearly defined goals for your repeat-trip missions project?
5. Is your church membership generally supportive of your repeat-trip missions projects?
6. Has a local connection with a pastor or missionary been a major factor in beginning and sustaining your repeat-trip missions project?
7. Has the STARS Network assisted your church in making connections for repeat-trip missions projects?
8. Has the STARS Network assisted your church in developing your missions strategy?
9. What suggestions would you make for improving the effectiveness of the STARS Network in mobilizing and assisting churches with repeat-trip missions projects?

APPENDIX 10

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR NETWORK PARTNERS IN REPEAT-TRIP MISSIONS PROJECTS

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to determine the influence of the STARS Network in repeat-trip missions projects. This research is being conducted by Sam Waltman for purposes of project research. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this survey is completely voluntary, and you are free to cease with your responses at any time.* By providing this information, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

1. How many years have you been involved in repeat-trip missions projects with churches and affiliates in the STARS Network?
2. How many STARS Network churches and affiliates are you currently assisting with repeat-trip projects?
3. With what types of repeat-trip projects are you assisting churches and affiliates?
(i. e. construction, evangelism, VBS, church planting, children, social ministry, etc.)
4. Do you have an agreement with the churches and affiliates on clearly defined goals for their repeat-trip projects?
5. Has the STARS Network assisted you in making connections with churches and affiliates for repeat-trip missions projects? If so, in what ways?
6. Has the STARS Network assisted you in developing your own strategy for evangelism, training leaders, and planting churches? If so, in what ways?
7. What suggestions would you make for improving the effectiveness of the STARS Network in assisting missionaries and pastors with repeat-trip partnerships?

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ABSTRACT

AN EVALUATION OF A MODEL FOR MISSIONS MOBILIZATION OF CHURCHES IN SAN FELIPE BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

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This project seeks to evaluate the STARS Network as a model for mobilizing churches in San Felipe Baptist Association for participation in missions. The first chapter presents a preamble setting forth the Network, followed by the purpose, goals, context, rationale, definitions, limitations, and research methodology of the project.

The second chapter explains the biblical and theological foundations for the Great Commission and its assignment to the church. Old Testament passages are shown to preview the New Testament mission. Four statements of Jesus in the Gospels are examined, and the mandate is set forth as the mission of the early church.

The third chapter advocates the Baptist association as a key mobilizer of churches for engagement in the mission. The fourth chapter describes the project in detail, including the steps taken to achieve each of three goals. The fifth chapter evaluates the project goals, identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the STARS Network, and reflects on the future mobilization of churches for missions.

VITA

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Diploma, Spring Branch Senior High School, Houston, Texas, 1974

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