

Copyright © 2014 Joshua Adam Landrum

All rights reserved. The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary has permission to reproduce and disseminate this document in any form by any means for purposes chosen by the Seminary, including, without limitation, preservation or instruction.

ESTABLISHING AN EVANGELISTIC CHILDREN'S MINISTRY  
AT KNOXVILLE BAPTIST CHURCH,  
WILLIAMSTOWN, KENTUCKY

---

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

---

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Ministry

---

by  
Joshua Adam Landrum  
May 2014

**APPROVAL SHEET**

ESTABLISHING AN EVANGELISTIC CHILDREN'S MINISTRY  
AT KNOXVILLE BAPTIST CHURCH,  
WILLIAMSTOWN, KENTUCKY

Joshua Adam Landrum

Read and Approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Adam W. Greenway (Faculty Supervisor)

\_\_\_\_\_  
William D. Henard III

Date \_\_\_\_\_

To Cassie,  
my support, my love, my encourager and  
my helpmate for life and ministry.

To Luke,  
my super hero.

To Colby,  
my loving comic relief.

To Reece,  
my sweetheart.

To Gentry,  
my surprise.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES .....	iv
PREFACE .....	v
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
Purpose .....	1
Goals .....	1
Ministry Context .....	3
Rationale .....	9
Definitions and Limitations .....	11
Research Methodology .....	12
Conclusion .....	13
2. BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL SUPPORT FOR THE EVANGELISM OF CHILDREN.....	14
General Christian Call to be Witnesses .....	14
General Christian Call to make Disciples .....	18
Who and Where to Fulfill the Great Commission .....	22
Theological Foundation to make Children into Disciples of Christ .....	26
The Questions of Age, Belief, Salvation, and Baptism .....	31
Conclusion .....	35

Chapter	Page
3. THEORETICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR CHILD EVANGELISM AND CHILDREN’S MINISTRY .....	36
Children’s Cognitive Abilities Requires a Contextualized Gospel .....	36
Historical Gospel Contextualization .....	42
Helpful and Unhelpful Gospel Presentations .....	48
Cultural Change Requires Ministry Change and Contextualization .....	59
Conclusion .....	68
4. BUILDING AN EVANGELISTIC CHILDREN’S MINISTRY .....	69
Phase 1: Participant Enlistment and Survey .....	71
Phase 2: Curriculum Development and Adjustment .....	72
Phase 3: Sermon Series .....	73
Phase 4: Group Training .....	75
Phase 5: Flyer Distribution .....	81
Phase 6: Evangelistic Children’s Ministry Practicum .....	82
Phase 7: Group Evaluation, Survey, and Data Analysis .....	83
Conclusion .....	84
5. EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT.....	85
Evaluation of the Project’s Purpose .....	85
Evaluation of the Project’s Goal .....	86
Strengths of the Project .....	98
Weaknesses of the Project .....	99
Proposed Modifications .....	101
Theological Reflections .....	102
Personal Reflections .....	105
Conclusion .....	106

Appendix	Page
1. KNOXVILLE BAPTIST CHURCH STATISTICS .....	107
2. FOUR-WEEK TRAINING FOR EVANGELISTIC CHILDREN’S MINISTRY – TEACHING OUTLINE .....	108
3. FLYER FOR DISTRIBUTION AT SHERMAN MOBILE HOME PARK .....	122
4. MEETING OUTLINE BEFORE FLYER DISTRIBUTION .....	123
5. FIRST SERMON OUTLINE, PROJECT PHASE 3.....	124
6. SECOND SERMON OUTLINE, PROJECT PHASE 3.....	130
7. FOUR-WEEK TRAINING SESSIONS, LEARNER GUIDE .....	134
8. PEER REVIEW BOARD CURRICULUM SURVEY .....	143
9. PRE- AND POST-TRAINING PARTICIPANT SURVEY.....	145
10. RAW PARTICIPANT SURVEY DATA .....	149
11. PEER REVIEW BOARD SURVEY RAW DATA.....	151
12. THE A, B, C’S OF SALVATION .....	152
13. CHANGES MADE TO CURRICULUM DUE TO PEER REVIEW BOARD .....	153
14. T-TEST RESULTS FROM PARTICIPANT SURVEY .....	155
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	156

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
A1. Table of Knoxville Baptist Church statistics .....	107
A2. Table of raw participant survey data.....	149
A3. Table of peer review board surveys raw data.....	151
A4. Table of T-test results from the participant surveys.....	155



## PREFACE

This project was made possible only because of the encouragement, love, and prayers from several important people. God providentially surrounded me with godly men and women who supported and challenged me throughout every stage of this project.

I would be remiss if I did not begin by thanking God for my wife and her encouragement through the long hours of reading and writing. Without her support and encouragement I would not have completed the coursework or the project. Her willingly giving me time and freedom to spend countless hours in reading and writing are evidence of her care and loving support for this endeavor. In addition to my wife, our children have been an encouragement to me in this process. Both of our sons' mentalities to never give up have encouraged me more than they will ever know.

I am grateful for my cohort group, particularly Derek Wilson, who continued to encourage, pray, and offer suggestions for this project and for ministry in general. I am also grateful for other friends like T. J. Francis and Ben Brown who pushed me to pursue the Doctor of Ministry degree. I do not believe that I would have pursued this degree without their well-meaning, ruthless banter that encouraged me to apply and complete the coursework.

Finally, I am thankful for the guidance, friendship, and mentorship of my faculty advisor, Adam Greenway. God providentially allowed me to serve on Adam's staff at The Baptist Church at Andover in Lexington, Kentucky. Adam's help and guidance throughout the Doctor of Ministry program and this project have been invaluable, and I cannot express my gratitude for him.

Josh Landrum

Dry Ridge, Kentucky

May 2014

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to establish an evangelistic children's ministry at Knoxville Baptist Church, enabling the children's ministry volunteers to reach children with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

#### **Goals**

The first goal for this project was to evaluate the children's ministry volunteers' attitude and confidence level in child evangelism. This goal was measured by a survey given before any specific child evangelistic training was done with the church. The survey measured the participants' knowledge of basic evangelism and specific child evangelism concepts. This goal was deemed accomplished when no fewer than ten volunteers completed the survey.

The second goal for this project was to develop curriculum to teach the volunteers about child evangelism and how to perform child evangelism. The curriculum was developed through Scripture study, cognition development research, historical child evangelism techniques, and children's ministry models. The curriculum is the outworking of chapters 2 and 3 of this project. After the curriculum was developed five ministers or pastors reviewed the curriculum, completed a survey, and were asked to

provide input in order to improve the curriculum. As the peer reviewers provided insight and suggestions, the desire was to continually adjust, change, and correct the curriculum until the average rating was 4 out of 5. This rating was achieved after the first draft of the curriculum, therefore the development of the curriculum was deemed accomplished.

The third goal for this project was to equip the children's ministry workers with basic and scripturally sound child evangelism techniques.<sup>1</sup> This goal was achieved through sermons, equipping sessions, and practicum. This goal was measured by two surveys upon which the answers and attitudes of the worker was compared through statistical analysis. One survey was given on week 1 of the project before training occurred. The same survey was given on week 15 of the project after the teaching, training, and practicum occurred. The survey measured the participants' knowledge of basic concepts and components of child evangelism. This goal was deemed accomplished when no fewer than ten volunteers completed the survey and the practicum.

The fourth goal of this project was to utilize a Backyard Bible Club, as part of Knoxville Baptist Church's children's ministry, in order to provide practical child evangelism opportunities. This goal was measured through comparing the pre- and post-project survey answers. Specifically, this goal was evaluated through comparing the number of children that the volunteers evangelized before the training to those they had evangelized following the training. Ideally, there would be an increase of no less than 25

---

<sup>1</sup>J. D. Payne, *Evangelism* (Colorado Springs: Biblica, 2011), 5.

percent of the number of evangelistic conversations upon comparison of pre- and post-surveys.

The fifth goal for this project was for the children's ministry workers to be more confident in their ability to evangelize children and to lead children to salvation.<sup>2</sup> This goal was achieved through sermons, training, and practicum. After the training and practicum portions of the project were complete, participants were asked to complete the post-training and practicum survey to determine their attitude change toward child evangelism. This goal was deemed successful if 50 percent of evangelistic action and attitude questions improve to be more biblical and confident.

### **Ministry Context**

Knoxville Baptist Church has a history of evangelistic zeal; however, in the past years the evangelistic focus of the church has waned. In the past ten years, there has been a lack of evangelistic training and a lack of evangelistically focused children's events in the community, which has created a lack of organizational desire to take the message of the gospel to those without Jesus. This section will explain what has been done in the recent past in terms of evangelistic training and events, as well as provide evidence of the lack of organizational desire to take the message of the gospel to the lost and particularly lost children.

I have been at Knoxville Baptist Church since February 2010 serving as the pastor. Prior to my ministry beginning here, however, there is little, if any evangelistic

---

<sup>2</sup>Chuck Lawless, *Discipled Warriors* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002), 107. Lawless explains that one of the primary goals of the church is to prepare believers to do something in ministry of the church.

training evidenced in the church. There are no records of evangelistic training, no evangelistic training books around the church (like FAITH or Evangelism Explosion), and no one in the church can remember the last evangelistic training prior to my coming as pastor. In large part, the evangelistic training came from and continues to be the Women's Missionary Union (WMU), which at Knoxville, is focused upon teaching children from kindergarten through middle school and older ladies about different national and international missionaries. Knoxville does not utilize the men's curriculum produced by WMU because there is no specific men's ministry, however the women utilize the adult ladies' WMU curriculum. Knoxville holds Sunday school, but it is focused more upon discipleship and knowledge than evangelism.

Since I have been at Knoxville serving as pastor, evangelism has been taught in three ways, but that teaching has been focused upon adult evangelism. The first is through preaching; almost every sermon explains and re-explains the gospel because the gospel is central to preaching.<sup>3</sup> Upon reading sermons from the past, however, the gospel and evangelism were not preached from the pulpit continually. More specifically, the many sermons from the past were topical and were focused more upon good works than the gospel of grace found in Jesus Christ. The second way evangelism has been taught was through a three-week series entitled Testimony on Sunday night. This series focused upon the importance of personal testimony in sharing the gospel. Those who attended were equipped with and instructed in the way to craft their personal testimony. The attendance at the series was lower than hoped, around ten, but those who did attend stated

---

<sup>3</sup>J. D. Greer, *Gospel* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2011), 222.

that they learned much through the training. The third way evangelism was taught was through a six-week Sunday night sermon series titled *What is the Gospel?*, adapting Greg Gilbert's book by the same title.<sup>4</sup> This series was attended much better than the Testimony series, with twenty attendees. The series taught the basics of the gospel: God created, humanity sinned, Jesus came, and one must trust and believe. Obviously, these points need much explanation for someone to use to share the gospel, but this outline gave church members something short with which to work that could be memorized and explained simply. Overall, in the past ten years, the lack of evangelistic training in general has forced the church to avoid evangelism and outreach because they simply did not know how to do evangelism<sup>5</sup> nor was evangelism kept in the forefront of the church as a main goal for the church.

The lack of evangelistically focused community events is also an area of concern for Knoxville. The church conducts many events, but only a few are truly focused on evangelism. The church events that are held are typical of a smaller rural church like a fall festival that is focused on games and prizes for the church family instead of making a concerted effort to include non-church members. Also, children's choir is a children's event that is not evangelistic because its singular goal is to learn songs and sing the songs in specials or during Vacation Bible School. Further, Knoxville participates in Bible Drill which is built more upon Scripture memorization than evangelism or even truly understanding the Scripture they are memorizing. Lastly, the

---

<sup>4</sup>Greg Gilbert, *What is the Gospel?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010).

<sup>5</sup>Mark Dever, *The Gospel & Personal Evangelism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 20.

church has participated in the City of Williamstown Christmas parade. The primary reason Knoxville participates in this event is because the church must focus on repairing the church's reputation in the community. Another event that Knoxville has been a part of is the Kentucky Baptist Convention's Kentucky Changers. For many years the church has participated, however, the stated goal of Knoxville's trip leader is to "get the job done on the house to show the love of Jesus," admitting evangelism is the distant second goal. The church sees evangelism, in large part, as being part of the Southern Baptist Convention and giving money or goods to others who share the gospel. The church equates giving money to the Cooperative Program (10 percent of the church's undesignated receipts are given to the program), Crittenden Baptist Association (3 percent of undesignated receipts), praying for a missionary couple in South Asia who is related to a church member, and filling shoeboxes for Samaritan's Purse: Operation Christmas Child (we collected the highest number of shoeboxes in our history in 2011, 2012, and 2013; further we served as a shoebox drop-off location) as evangelistic effort, showing the lack of understanding of evangelism.<sup>6</sup> All of these activities are good, but none are frontline, person to person evangelism. The activities are all "let someone else do it" type evangelistic effort.

There are two events though, that the church participates in that are focused on child evangelism inside and outside our church family.<sup>7</sup> The first is Vacation Bible School. The second is a Halloween outreach where we serve hot chocolate and present

---

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 126.

<sup>7</sup>Robert Lewis, *The Church of Irresistible Influence* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 99.



the gospel through puppet ministry during a local government parks and recreation event. At both events, anyone who wants to know more about Christ is instructed to talk to the pastor instead of the laity sharing the gospel. Many of those who want to talk with someone about the gospel are children, but they are passed directly to the pastor instead of the laity talking with the child themselves. Passing these children to the pastor is not necessarily bad, but it shows the lack of evangelistic training and knowledge by the laity.

Because of the lack of evangelistic training and the lack of evangelistic outreach, a lack of desire to reach out evangelistically had manifested itself in some people in the church, particularly in children's ministry. Without evangelistic training and outreach events, hearts can turn cold toward those outside the church and result in a lack of love, care, compassion, and evangelistic zeal for the lost.<sup>8</sup> Three examples should suffice to prove this point. First, in Vacation Bible School 2012, Knoxville was blessed to set a record for the average number of children in attendance in its history. As excited as people were, the two most common statements from trained workers were, "If we have this many children next year I am not going to help out. These children aren't all our children, and I don't want to work with children that aren't ours," and "These children don't know anything about the Bible. I have no idea how to talk to them about Jesus or the cross or anything like that."<sup>9</sup>

Second, in the months following Vacation Bible School 2012, the church van expenses had gone up dramatically because the children who rode to church on the van

---

<sup>8</sup>Ronnie Floyd, *Our Last Great Hope* (Nashville: Nelson, 2011), 32-33.

<sup>9</sup>This statement and other similar statements were made by multiple people, three of whom have been teaching in Knoxville Baptist Church's Children's ministry for many years.

wanted to continue coming on Sunday morning, Sunday evening, and Wednesday nights. The van driver, therefore, was using more gas each week, which caused fuel costs to increase sharply. In a business meeting, there was a proposal made that the church limit the number of times the van could pick up the children each week because the church could not afford to continue this type of ministry.<sup>10</sup> I stated that we could not afford to stop picking them up and teaching them about Jesus. Reluctantly, the church decided to allow the van to continue running all week to pick up the children.

Third, Knoxville uses a Wednesday night each Christmas season to go caroling to the elderly in the church. I proposed that we take two Wednesday nights and go caroling, one to go to the mobile home park where the children are picked up by the church van and the second to go to the church's elderly. Upon hearing that proposal, some protested, openly stating that they were going to boycott going to the mobile home park because "we don't need to go there; we need to take care of our own." The church decided to go both nights and to allow people to choose for themselves which to attend or to attend both activities. Thankfully, more people who went caroling at the mobile home park than to the elderly of our church.

To be clear, I am extremely blessed to be serving at Knoxville Baptist Church. This section has shown though, the church is not inclined to evangelism and particularly child evangelism. There is no one place or person place blame for the lack of evangelistic training and focus, but in reality placing blame is neither relevant nor

---

<sup>10</sup>Mike Minter, *A Western Jesus* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2007), 32-35. Minter describes this type of thinking as "doing church" which he describes as an incorrect ideological mindset for the church.

helpful. The fact remains Knoxville is not an evangelistic church, and this situation must change.

### **Rationale**

The rationale for this project was that Knoxville Baptist Church needed evangelistic training, opportunity to use that training, and answer God's call for gospel ministry. As explained in the ministry context, the church had not been trained in evangelism enough nor had the church been put into opportunities to be evangelistic. The church's baptism, attendance, and membership numbers have been in decline for years.<sup>11</sup> The church, without a serious effort about the gospel and the Great Commission, would continue to struggle financially and numerically, but more importantly it could not be considered to be fulfilling the evangelistic mandate in Scripture.

Furthermore, the second rationale for this project was that God had opened doors that were previously closed for gospel ministry opportunities to children at a local mobile home park.<sup>12</sup> No other churches were focused upon this area of the county or upon these families. Another pastor whose church is close to the park said his deacon board refused to do any ministry there because "the children don't know how to act in church and the people are too poor to help us."<sup>13</sup> As evidence for God's providential plan

---

<sup>11</sup>Appendix 1 shows statistics of Knoxville Baptist Church membership, attendance, etc.

<sup>12</sup>Ed Stetzer and David Putnam, *Breaking the Missional Code* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2006), 16-28. Stetzer and Putnam explain that churches must "break the missional code" and reach the people God has gifted them to reach with the message of the Gospel. This concept is the same as taking advantage of open doors for ministry opportunities.

<sup>13</sup>This quote is from a pastor whose church is in the local Baptist association, Crittenden Baptist Association, who asked to remain anonymous.

for Knoxville to be involved in the mobile home park where our van picks up children,<sup>14</sup> the manager of the park tragically died. As a result of that sad event, I was asked to conduct the graveside service for this man, which allowed me to meet the park owner and many of the families who live in the park. The church, therefore, had to take advantage of the door that God has opened to share the gospel there. One of the easiest ways to share the gospel is to use something that is familiar to the families, and at the same time allows the church to have fun and do Bible stories with the children.<sup>15</sup> The focus for this project was to use the Backyard Bible Club as an avenue to begin changing our children's ministry towards being more evangelistic. In order to get the gospel to parents we needed to explain the gospel to the children. Sharing the gospel with the rest of the family then becomes a natural gospel progression.<sup>16</sup> These situations seemed to show that God was opening doors for Knoxville to minister to those at the mobile home park; therefore, the church must be obedient to God's call.

Knoxville benefited from this project because it taught evangelism to the volunteers, showed the entire church the need for children's ministry adjustments and outreach into the community, and followed God's open doors for ministry.

---

<sup>14</sup>Thom Rainer, *Effective Evangelistic Churches* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1996), 141-42. Rainer writes that bussing children into the church is a good outreach opportunity for smaller churches, but the church must realize they cannot send busses to each and every part of the city.

<sup>15</sup>Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, New American Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 295.

<sup>16</sup>Roy E. Zuck, *Precious in His Sight* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 19.

## Definitions, Limitations, and Delimitations

The first definition needing explanation is a “Backyard Bible Club.” A Backyard Bible Club, simply put, is a scaled down version of Vacation Bible School done at a community site, not at the church. The most common components of a Backyard Bible Club are games, songs, crafts, snacks, and Bible stories. All aspects and resources for the Backyard Bible Club are brought by the people conducting the club so that all the children need to do is come and participate. We used Backyard Bible Club material that was already developed and was focused upon evangelism rather than simply having fun and spending time with children. In other words, we intended to focus upon evangelism throughout the entire program, rather than simply teaching biblical truths or stories and only make a passing reference to the gospel at the end of each Bible story.<sup>17</sup>

The second definition that needs clarification is the term “child evangelism.” Child evangelism refers to an adult or peer sharing the gospel with a child in the hope that the child will follow Christ. Child evangelism is not necessarily referring to children doing evangelism.

The project was limited to fifteen weeks to meet the requirements for the Doctor of Ministry in Evangelism and Church Growth at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. This limitation required a limited amount of evangelistic training and hands on preparation in order for the volunteers to acquire hands on experience.

---

<sup>17</sup>For instance a Backyard Bible Club curriculum found at [www.riversedgecurriculum.com](http://www.riversedgecurriculum.com) follows this outline: Day 1: God created everything and made me in his image. After that day, everything centers around when I take care of the Earth I am; Day 2: obeying God, Day 3: I am showing gratitude to God; Day 4: I am showing respect for others; Day 5: I am taking care of the needs of others.

Another limitation was that participants were expected to be children's ministry workers in some aspect. A participant's ministry may be with the WMU, children's choir, Sunday School, or in Vacation Bible School, but each participant had to be in some form or fashion, an active participant in leading the children's ministry of Knoxville Baptist Church.

The project's age range of participants was also a limitation. Participants allowed were those entering sixth grade and above, there was however, no age maximum for participants. Anyone, therefore, who desired to participate in this project who was entering the sixth grade or older was welcome to participate.

### **Research Methodology**

The research methodology included pre- and post-project surveys, sermons, specified teaching nights, and practicum. The pre- and post-project surveys were used to determine the volunteer's knowledge of child evangelism, evangelistic activity, and evangelistic attitude. I was able to determine these and other measurements by comparing the pre- and post-project surveys.

During the fifteen weeks, volunteers completed the pre-project survey, received a learner guide and an explanation of the schedule. In the first week, each participant attended Sunday morning worship during weeks 2 and 3, as well as the training sessions during weeks 4 through 8. Following the training sessions, the volunteers participated in the practicum, weeks 9 through 13. In week 14, the volunteers completed a post-project survey and were interviewed. In the last week, I compiled the data and performed a statistical analysis of the data.

The statistics that were helpful in determining the effectiveness of this project included the following:

1. Overall population average for each question. This statistic allowed comparison between the participants' views between pre- and post-project.
2. Average increase in correct answer or attitude per question. This data showed what topics were taught well versus what was not understood well.
3. Standard deviation for each question or topic of questions. This statistic showed the average spread of opinion for each question, the larger the standard deviation, the wider range of opinion for the answer.
4. A t-test of overall answers. This test was used wherever necessary to judge statistical difference between the pre- and post-project averages.

### **Conclusion**

This project was designed to offer a biblically based approach to children's ministry that is focused upon the gospel of Jesus Christ. Even though the surveys, sermons, trainings, and practicum are all structured to fit within a fifteen-week calendar, all of them contributed to the goal of establishing an evangelistic children's ministry.

## CHAPTER 2

### BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL SUPPORT FOR THE EVANGELIZATION OF CHILDREN

Evangelism was and is at the heart of Jesus' mission. At the appointed time, Jesus stepped into humanity in order to, through his life death and resurrection, redeem lost and sinful people to himself. Those who follow Jesus, therefore, are called and instructed to follow Jesus' model of missions and evangelism in their own lives. Jesus' model includes the evangelization of people of all ages, races, ethnicities, and geographical location. This model is based upon Jesus' actions and his last instructions to his disciples. The purpose of this chapter is to explore the biblical and theological support for evangelism with particular interest and focus upon the evangelization of children, who must not be overlooked as people in need of a Savior, in order to fulfill Jesus' evangelical model.

#### **General Christian Call to be Witnesses**

Jesus' last words to his disciples before his ascension to heaven are recorded in Scripture: "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

After giving this instruction, Jesus ascended into heaven, leaving the disciples to follow and fulfill his directions. The disciples immediately obeyed Jesus by giving themselves to prayer (Acts 1:14) and waiting for the Holy Spirit to come upon them. On



the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came upon them and all the believers who were with them in that room (Acts 2:4). Immediately following the Holy Spirit's entrance into their lives, the disciples began to fulfill Jesus' last command to be his witnesses (Acts 5-13). The disciples and others who were filled with the Holy Spirit began to understand Jesus' vision of evangelism. These disciples eventually would become the model for how believers today should fulfill Jesus' vision for the church. Jerry Rankin writes about this vision, "The vision that guides each individual who serves God must be shaped by a commitment to fulfilling God's will and purpose. It is God's purpose for all the world to have an opportunity to know and worship Him."<sup>1</sup>

What the apostles came to understand and today's believer must now understand is that, for those who claim Christ as Savior, they must be his witnesses. To be a witness to the world means Jesus' followers must tell others about him through their words and actions. This call to become a witness must carry forward into today's time because even today those who are without Christ are regarded, scripturally, as unforgiven sinners (Rom 3:23), lost,<sup>2</sup> separated (Eph 4:18), and they will spend eternity in hell (Matt 25:46) if they do not repent and believe in Christ. Jesus Christ came to Earth as a missionary to lost people in order to redeem a people for himself who are damned by sin yet can be forgiven only by the love, forgiveness, and grace found in the cross (John 3:16). Believers today, therefore, must understand that evangelism is the only way lost people can be found (Rom 10:14) and brought into a right relationship with God (Rom 5:10). Without being a witness and evangelizing those who do not have personal faith in Jesus Christ, Christians are disobeying Christ's directive. The result in their disobedience is sin in the believer and the lost not hearing about God's greatness and plan of salvation.

---

<sup>1</sup>Jerry Rankin, *To the Ends of the Earth* (Richmond, VA: Broadman and Holman, 2005), 15.

<sup>2</sup>Throughout all of Luke 15, Jesus uses illustrations to describe things as lost and found. He speaks about a lost sheep, a lost coin, and then a lost son. In each story there was celebration at the finding of the lost item.

For Christians, being a witness to the world as Jesus instructed in Acts 1:8 is the foundation for how to live life. The Greek transliteration for the word witness is rendered as *martus*, which means “to give witness literally or figuratively be a martyr giving witness through life or death.”<sup>3</sup> As MacArthur points out in his commentary about being a witness, “There is a sense in which believers do not even choose whether or not to be witnesses. They are witnesses and the only question is how effective their witness is.”<sup>4</sup> What MacArthur is saying here is that believers will be a witness to the world in either a godly way or a bad way, simply because they are a believer and that witness will be based upon their words and actions. Mark Dever furthers this idea when he wrote, “Our lives, individually and as church congregations, should give credibility to the gospel we proclaim. God is glorified not just by our speaking the message but by our actually living consistent with it.”<sup>5</sup> In order for Christians to have a consistent witness, they must understand that they are always giving a witness to the world. Jesus calls believers to be a witness for his salvation, glory, and the cross so that people can come to know him as Lord and Savior. John Gill writes in his exposition of Acts 1 that “To be a witness for Christ is to tell about Jesus’ person, deity, sonship, work, incarnation, miracles, suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension in a way as to avoid the temporal kingdom trappings that will give witness to sin.”<sup>6</sup>

In a different but important and compelling way, another few definitions of the word *witness* must be at least mentioned in order to provide a deeper understanding of

---

<sup>3</sup>Richard N. Longenecker, *Acts*, in vol. 9 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 256.

<sup>4</sup>John MacArthur, *Acts 1-12, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1989), 21.

<sup>5</sup>Mark Dever, *9 Marks of a Healthy Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 129.

<sup>6</sup>John Gill, *John Gill’s Exposition on the Entire Bible* (London: Matthews Leigh, 1810), e-Sword.

this call to all believers in Jesus. To be a witness has been described as follows: “to be a witness is to see something and tell others about it”;<sup>7</sup> “to be witnesses to tell what they saw and heard, not to be lawyers and focus upon forcing changed minds, which is the Holy Spirit’s job”;<sup>8</sup> and “to be missionary, responding to Jesus’ gospel call, acting on Jesus’ behalf in ministry, focusing on the proclamation of the gospel in a guided and empowered way by the Spirit.”<sup>9</sup> Being a witness is obviously commanded in Scripture and is much more intertwined with everyday life than walking an aisle, saying a prayer, attending church services, being a member of a church, and then continuing life as though nothing ever happened.

Sadly, there seems to be some level of misunderstanding in today’s believers as to what it means to be a witness for Christ. Mark Dever writes in his book entitled *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism*, “The early disciples, having become apostles, took Jesus’ Great Commission to heart. They evangelized constantly. But again, the question some are now asking is who is supposed to do this today?”<sup>10</sup> According to this assertion by Dever, many Christians do not believe the call to be a witness for Christ applies to them specifically or personally. Dever’s belief that there is a conceptual witness misunderstanding is evidenced by statistics showing the lack of evangelism by Christians in the world today. In a 2011 Barna Research survey, only 38 percent of Christians believed they have a personal responsibility to evangelize.<sup>11</sup> Further, in 2003 a Barna

---

<sup>7</sup>MacArthur, *Acts 1-12*, 21.

<sup>8</sup>John Phillips, *Exploring Acts, The John Phillips Commentary Series* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1986), 20.

<sup>9</sup>Longenecker, *Acts*, 256.

<sup>10</sup>Mark Dever, *The Gospel Personal Evangelism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 47.

<sup>11</sup>The Barna Group. *Barna Study of Religious Change Since 1991 Shows Significant Changes by Faith Group*, accessed April 28, 2013, <http://www.barna.org/faith-spirituality/514-barna-study-of-religious-change-since-1991-shows-significant-changes-by-faith-group>.

Research study found that only 23 percent of Christians had shared their faith with a non-Christian in the past twelve months.<sup>12</sup> In other words, these statistics are showing that 62 percent of Christians do not believe evangelism is a personal responsibility and 77 percent of Christians have not shared their faith in the past twelve months. For the Christian witness, these are alarming statistics to say the least. As Dever implied above, this type of non-involvement with the Great Commission would have been incomprehensible in the early church because they “took the Great Commission to heart.”<sup>13</sup> Christians today must realize and recognize that in order to be obedient to Jesus, they must fulfill Jesus’ vision by being a witness to the world through both word and action. John Stott’s words are helpful in the importance of personal witness for Christ and evangelism:

“[This] commission. . . . is binding upon every member of the whole church. . . . Every Christian is called to be a witness to Christ in the particular environment in which God has placed him. Further, although the public ministry of the Word is a high office, private witness or personal evangelism has a value which in some respects surpasses even that of preaching, since the message can be adapted more personally.”<sup>14</sup>

### **General Christian Call to Make Disciples**

The call to be witnesses in Acts 1 is normally paired with the Great Commission as given in Matthew 28:18-20, where Jesus tells his apostles: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

---

<sup>12</sup>The Barna Group. *49 Million Born Again Adults Shared Their Faith in Jesus in the Past Year*, accessed April, 28, 2013, <http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/5-barna-update/125-49-million-born-again-adults-shared-their-faith-in-jesus-in-the-past-year>.

<sup>13</sup>Dever, *The Gospel Personal Evangelism*, 47.

<sup>14</sup>John Stott, *Personal Evangelism* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity; 1949), 3-4.

teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” These two passages are usually paired together because Acts 1:8 tells people to be witnesses, which is the only way to make disciples (as Matt 28 instructs). In other words, for someone to make a disciple they must be converted; to be converted someone must be acting as a witness through evangelism. Thom Rainer writes that “separating evangelism from discipleship has no New Testament foundation. Early believers were always disciples or else they were not really part of the church.”<sup>15</sup> The overarching idea is that both verses convey the same message, for believers to be witnesses and evangelistic. There are, however, distinctions in the two verses. In Acts 1 the apostles are called to be witnesses, to tell what they have seen. In Matthew 28 the apostles are called to “go to all nations,” signifying a command to seek out the lost by being witnesses (Acts 1). Furthermore, Matthew 28:19 records Jesus’ words as to “make disciples” meaning to teach them to observe all of Jesus’ teachings. The disciples therefore, are instructed to go to non-believers as authorized by Jesus’ own authority, to live as witnesses, and to make disciples and followers of Him.<sup>16</sup> By logical conclusion, to be a follower of Christ someone must be converted from another religion or from the lack of religion to being a follower of Christ himself. This command to believers must be understood as a directive to be a witness to the lost in order for people to convert into Christ followers. Those new converts are then to be taught everything Christ has commanded.

Believers today must understand that Jesus’ authoritative command<sup>17</sup> to spread the gospel and make disciples was primarily given to the apostles but has been passed to

---

<sup>15</sup>Thom Rainer, *Effective Evangelistic Churches* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1996), 170.

<sup>16</sup>Albert Barnes, *Barnes’ Notes on the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), e-Sword.

<sup>17</sup>Stuart K. Weber, *Matthew*, Holman New Testament Commentary, vol 1 ed. Max Anders,

their successors.<sup>18</sup> Jesus' vision for his followers to go into the entire world in order to make disciples did not die out with his apostles. The disciples in their day and believers today can take comfort in these words because Jesus alone is the only one who can order the undertaking of such a great task. John Calvin writes in his commentary that "Without the command given under Jesus' authority the apostles would not have had the confidence to undertake the Great Commission."<sup>19</sup> This same confidence in Christ's authority must be part of believers thought today as they seek to fulfill the Great Commission. The key to Jesus' authority is found in the word "all" as rendered in Matthew 28:16-20. Jesus states he has all authority in heaven and in earth, meaning everything is under his feet, in a way that he controls, guides, or allows every happening in some way. Jesus followers should take heart in Jesus' authority as the Ruler and King over everything including evangelism. The book *The Challenge of the Great Commission* argues for the importance of Jesus authority in the following way:

Understanding Jesus' authority in the Great Commission mandate is vital. Often I hear the Great Commission quoted from Matthew's Gospel. . . . beginning in verse 19, therefore go...but the Great Commission does not begin with verse 19; it begins with verse 18 where Jesus affirms "All authority on heaven and on earth has been given to me. As we go out to share, we are not doing so just because we think it is a good idea. We have the authority of the Creator and Ruler of the universe! We are ambassadors for Christ – ones sent in his name with his message and his authority."<sup>20</sup>

Jesus' authority therefore should encourage and instruct believers to fulfill the evangelism mandate in Acts 1 and Matthew 28.

---

(Nashville: Holman Reference, 2000), 484.

<sup>18</sup>Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight, eds., *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 52.

<sup>19</sup>John Calvin, *Harmony of Matthew, Mark, Luke; John 1-11, Calvin's Commentaries*, vol. 17 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 382.

<sup>20</sup>Chuck Lawless and Thom Rainer, eds., *The Challenge of the Great Commission* (Bemidji, MN: Pinnacle, 2005), 125.

Further evidence of the believer's call to evangelism is the idea that Jesus told the apostles to actively go to the world. The Greek word is transliterated as *poreuomai*, meaning an active movement that is not passive or sedentary.<sup>21</sup> John MacArthur explains that the statement "go" is less of a command and more of an assumption by Jesus, because his disciples who have been changed by the cross will naturally go and tell others about his life, death, and resurrection.<sup>22</sup> In other words, Jesus' instruction to go and make disciples is to be focused on those who do not know about his life, death, and resurrection. The believers must actively go to the lost because Jesus has made such a difference in their lives. John Gill and Matthew Henry both write about going as an important part of being a follower of Christ. Both writers explain that the disciples were called to disperse according to Jesus' command in order to have the most effective witness for the gospel to spread.<sup>23</sup> This dispersion is what the disciples were instructed to do earlier in the gospels; therefore they inherently knew these were the instructions once again.<sup>24</sup>

Furthermore, in Matthew 28:19, Jesus instructions tell his apostles not just to go but also what they must do while they were going, which is to make disciples. Making disciples encompasses the idea of both conversion and learning,<sup>25</sup> which is what Jesus instructs the apostles to do in Matthew 28:20, "to teach them to observe everything he had taught." Jesus was clear here, the disciples are not to be converting people to

---

<sup>21</sup>Clinton E. Arnold and Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), e-Sword.

<sup>22</sup>John MacArthur, *Matthew 24-28, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1989), 342.

<sup>23</sup>Gill, *John Gill's Exposition on the Entire Bible*.

<sup>24</sup>Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1961), e-Sword.

<sup>25</sup>MacArthur, *Matthew 24-28*, 340.

Judaism,<sup>26</sup> they are not to be acting as Old Testament prophets announcing God's judgment,<sup>27</sup> they were not to be gaining followers for themselves, nor were they to be converting and dropping people without teaching them.<sup>28</sup> In these verses, Jesus is teaching the apostles that evangelism occurs when believers present the gospel to those who do not know him, to rely upon the Holy Spirit's conviction, resulting in conversion and then to instruct and teach all the statutes of Jesus. Jesus' disciple is not to leave a new convert to learn on his own, but rather to help and teach the new convert how to follow Christ more obediently so that they can reproduce more disciples through their lives.<sup>29</sup> This disciple making process is the heart of the Great Commission, disciples making disciples who reproduce more disciples.<sup>30</sup>

### **Who and Where to Fulfill the Great Commission**

Jesus gives the disciples more than just a command to follow in Matthew 28, he also instructs the apostles in where and who they are called to take the gospel. Jesus says to take the gospel to all the nations. Again, combining Matthew 28 with Acts 1, where Jesus instructs the disciples to take the gospel to Jerusalem and then to the ends of the Earth, the mandate is clear. The gospel is to be taken around the world to all nations. The Greek term here is *panta ta ethne*, which means all nations or all ethnicities of all the world.<sup>31</sup> Jesus is proclaiming that the gospel must be taken to every tribe, tongue,

---

<sup>26</sup>A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville: Holman Reference, 1958), e-Sword.

<sup>27</sup>Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary*.

<sup>28</sup>MacArthur, *Matthew 24-28*, 340.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, 341.

<sup>30</sup>I. Howard Marshall, *New Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 194.

<sup>31</sup>Weber, *Matthew*, 484.



people, and language without any barrier or limitation. The Great Commission call must not be viewed as simply nations as drawn on a map, but rather that Jesus is instructing his disciples to take the gospel to all people groups and around the world.<sup>32</sup> John Piper, following an in-depth explanation of what *panta ta ethne* means, writes,

The singular use of *ethnos* in the New Testament always refer to a people group. The plural use of *ethnos* sometimes must be a people group and sometimes must refer to Gentile individuals but usually can go either way. The phrase *panta ta ethne* must refer to Gentile individuals only once (in the New Testament) but must refer to people groups nine times (in the New Testament). The remaining eight uses may refer to people groups. The combination of these results suggests that the meaning of *panta ta ethne* leans heavily in the direction of all the nations (people groups).<sup>33</sup>

As a result, Jesus is telling his followers to take the gospel to all people groups without boundary lines or any other delineation. Jesus even goes to the point of explaining to his disciples how he desires them to expand and spread his message. In Acts 1:8 Jesus says, "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." In these words, Jesus is guiding his disciples into evangelism that starts locally, but is continually working to evangelize people everywhere until the whole world hears about him.<sup>34</sup> Most scholars are in agreement in how to interpret Jesus' words here, which is that the disciples are to take the gospel around the world to all people. Further, most scholars agree that Acts 1:8 is an explanation of Matthew 28:19, with Jesus telling his disciples specifically where to go into Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. According to Phillips, Jesus is telling the apostles to go to their own communities (Jerusalem), their own country

---

<sup>32</sup>Ed Stetzer and David Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2006), 34.

<sup>33</sup>John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad!* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 166-67.

<sup>34</sup>Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown, *Matthew – Revelation, A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishing, 1997), e-Sword.

(Judea), their own continent (Samaria), and to the regions beyond (ends of the earth).<sup>35</sup> Barnes agrees with Phillips when he writes, “The disciples were charged with reaching all the world starting with those closest to them.”<sup>36</sup> Some scholars interpret these exact instructions and locational examples differently, though they agree with the principle of taking the gospel around the world. For example, three different commentaries believe Jesus is dissecting the world into three classes of people: the Jews (Jerusalem and Judea), the Samaritans (Samaria), and the Gentiles (ends of the earth), therefore the entire earth must hear the gospel.”<sup>37</sup> All these writers agree the gospel is to be taken to all three classes; therefore, the major interpretation is retained. John Gill understands Jesus’ locational illustration to be teaching about populations, writing that “Jesus separates the world into metropolitan (Jerusalem), suburb (Judea), countryside (Samaria), and everywhere else (the ends of the earth), making clear that everyone was to hear the message of the gospel.”<sup>38</sup> Finally, the Broadman Commentary explains that Jesus’ use of location was referring to religious sections of the world: “The apostles were to begin in Jerusalem where there was regular religion, move outward towards Judea and Samaria where there was irregular religion (syncretism), and finally move outwards to the ends of the earth where there was no true worship of the living God.”<sup>39</sup>

The best way to understand Jesus’ teaching here is to know relate each area to the location, ethnicity, and compassion shown upon the group by Jews. What Jesus is

---

<sup>35</sup>Phillips, *Exploring Acts*, 22.

<sup>36</sup>Barnes, *Barnes’ Notes on the Old and New Testaments*.

<sup>37</sup>D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, vol. 8 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 257. This point is also agreed by Kenneth O. Gangel, *Acts*, Holman New Testament Commentary, vol. 5 (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2000), 10.

<sup>38</sup>Gill, *John Gill’s Exposition on the Entire Bible*.

<sup>39</sup>T. C. Smith, *Acts*, in vol. 10 of *The Broadman Bible Commentary*, ed. Clifton J. Allen (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1971), 19.

saying therefore, is that his followers will take the gospel to those closest to them (Jerusalem), those who are removed but are of similar background (Judea), those who are extremely different and possibly in conflict with them (Samaria), and those who are they have not even met yet (ends of the earth). Regardless of the exact way Jesus separated these areas out, the principle remains, Jesus prescribes his followers to tell people across the entire world about his gospel.

Jesus not only told his disciples to go to the lost around the world, he told them to take the gospel to every people group regardless of their current religion. John Calvin writes in his commentary that Jesus' evangelistic command was to be taken to the ends of the earth and to all ethnicities. He wrote that "Jesus destroys any thought that only ethnic Israel could be saved. All people of all religions must be confronted with Jesus. This work would take much more time than simply a day, and therefore Jesus was calling the apostles to a lifetime of service."<sup>40</sup> In the same way the Holman commentary explains that, not only were the disciples to take the gospel to all people, but also all of Jesus' followers were to take the gospel to the lost: "The call to witness is not limited to any select group of people as it spreads from the apostles to the 120 believers and on throughout the pages of Acts. There are no restrictions to only service in own churches or of professional ministers. Every Christian has this call."<sup>41</sup> In fact, the apostles were now called to take the gospel to the Samaritans and to the Gentiles; both groups were people Jesus had told the apostles to avoid in Matthew 10:5-6.<sup>42</sup> At that time Matthew records the events: "These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, 'Go nowhere among

---

<sup>40</sup>John Calvin, *John 12-21, Acts 1-13, Calvin's Commentaries*, vol. 18 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 47.

<sup>41</sup>Gangel, *Acts*, 10.

<sup>42</sup>M. R. Vincent, *Vincent's Word Studies in the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1985), e-Sword .

the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matt 10:5-6).” Gill notes the importance of removing ethnic barriers stating, “Jesus destroys the sociological and ethnic gospel thinking of the apostles by telling them now to go to the Samaritans and Gentiles, two groups that they were forbidden to go to earlier. There are no ethnicities in the kingdom of God.”<sup>43</sup> The disciples fully understood the directive after experience (Acts 8:26-40), a vision (Acts 10), and after a council of churches in Acts 15. Lastly, Paul wrote in three separate sections of Scripture to reinforce the fact that there are no ethnicities in God’s kingdom, by writing that “there is now no Jew or Greek” (Rom 10:12, Gal 3:28, Col 3:11). Clearly, Jesus’ authoritative call to the apostles and believers today is to take the message of the gospel to all ethnicities in all lands because people are lost without Him.

### **Theological Foundation to Make Children into Disciples of Christ**

Jesus’ words in Matthew 28:18-20 and Acts 1:8 clearly show that the Great Commission call is a call to evangelism. The gospel is to be taken to all people and all ethnicities around the world by those who believe in Jesus. Further, this call is not a suggestion but is an assumed command because all barriers in sharing the gospel have been removed via the cross of Christ. Jesus’ evangelistic call, therefore, is not limited by ethnicities, nationalities, current religion, or any other barrier, therefore, the barrier of age must also be broken down. Scripturally, children are people born in iniquity (Ps 51:5), who are known in their mother’s womb by God himself (Ps 139:13) and are in need of a savior like adults (Rom 3:23-24). In the Old Testament, there is a scriptural mandate for children to be taught and told to respond to God’s call and commandments. One section

---

<sup>43</sup>Gill, *John Gill’s Exposition on the Entire Bible*.

of Scripture that records these instructions is in Deuteronomy 4:5-10. Largely these Old Testament passages direct parents to teach the ways of the Lord with the same idea being repeated in the New Testament in Mark 10:13-16:

See, I have taught you statutes and rules, as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon him? And what great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today? Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. Make them known to your children and your children's children, how on the day that you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, the LORD said to me, Gather the people to me, that I may let them hear my words, so that they may learn to fear me all the days that they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children so. (Deut 4:5-10)

This passage should be clear to parents that they are to know and believe the statutes of the Lord in order to teach their own children the same statutes. The idea is that parents teach their children at a young age, as the child grows; prayerfully the child will not depart from God (Prov 22:6) and will in turn teach their own children about God. In other words, parents' hearts must know the Lord's grace and mercy so that the Lord's goodness is passed from generation to generation raising up people committed to the Lord and the things of the Lord. Ronnie Floyd writes as much in *Our Last Great Hope*:

The example you set is your child's first gospel. Your actions, your reactions, your emotions, your values, and everything in you should tell a consistent story of walking with Christ. If your children believe what they see, they will read the true Bible. They will begin to follow its Author. Love God with all your heart, soul, and strength. It is the most important parenting skill of them all.<sup>44</sup>

Floyd is simply restating what Deuteronomy 4 teaches, explaining that a parent's responsibility is to raise children as Christ-centered children and the only way to do that is to be Christ-centered as a parent. Deuteronomy 6 also teaches this a similar concept.<sup>45</sup>

---

<sup>44</sup>Ronnie Floyd, *Our Last Great Hope* (Nashville: Nelson Publishing, 2011), 81.

<sup>45</sup>This Scripture passage begins by telling parents they must check their hearts to make sure they are following God. Upon cleansing their own hearts, parents are charged with the job of telling their

This type of Christ centered parenting philosophy is continued into the New Testament. Adam Clarke writes about to whom the early disciples would have taken the gospel first when he writes, “The first natural people the apostles would have gone to were adults, but there is no argument against the evangelization and eventual baptism of children. In fact, based on the circumcision in the Old Testament of the Jewish boys the apostles probably thought they must go to children in the same way with the message of the Gospel.”<sup>46</sup> What Clarke writes, in essence, is that the early disciples would have gone to adults and children alike. Ronnie Floyd writes to parents about the evangelism of their own children when he says, “Don’t leave it to chance or other people. We should want to evangelize our own children.”<sup>47</sup> In other words, there is no evidence that children would have been ignored evangelistically by the early disciples; rather most probably the disciples witnessed to adults and children alike, especially their own children.

Furthermore, Jesus’ own words and actions as recorded in the gospels show that children hold a special place in Jesus’ life. In Mark 10:13-16, people were bringing their children to Jesus but the disciples tried to keep the children away from him. Jesus tells the disciples to let the children come to him. After the disciples began to fully understand the mission Jesus gave to them, this incident must have shed some light on their call. Mark explains,

And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them. (Mark 10:13-16)

---

children about God and His statues, in hopes of seeing the child’s heart changed, just like the parent’s heart is changed.

<sup>46</sup>Adam Clarke, *Clarke’s Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Nashville: Cokesbury, 1977), e-Sword.

<sup>47</sup>Floyd, *Our Last Great Hope*, 83.

This short account of Jesus' interaction with children provides an in-depth look at how Jesus desires his followers to treat and consider children. The Greek word that is translated into the English word children is the word *paidon*, which means a diminutive or younger child that does not exclude children or infants.<sup>48</sup> For a deeper understanding, this same word as used in other passages in Scripture denotes "children up to age of 12"<sup>49</sup> and "one under the age of 12; because Jairus' daughter was under 12 and called a *paidon*; possibly much younger than that because Jesus took them into his arms; it is unlikely though he is talking about toddlers or infants."<sup>50</sup> Upon deep consideration of this word, it seems likely that Jesus took children into his arms that were under the age of twelve. As Jesus loved on these children, he laid his hands upon them, showing how much he loved, cared, and had compassion upon them.

With children holding a special place in Jesus' life, his actions towards these children are worth noting. As Jesus laid hands upon the children and blessed the children, Jesus' actions show his overflowing divine love for children<sup>51</sup> and that, because of that love children are too important to be hindered from coming to him.<sup>52</sup> John Calvin believed that the disciples tried to rebuke the people from bringing children to Jesus because it was "unworthy of his character to receive children."<sup>53</sup> Jesus, however, as Scripture records, was indignant with his apostles at this incorrect assumption. The word

---

<sup>48</sup>John Phillips, *Exploring The Gospel of Mark, The John Phillips Commentary Series* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2004), 215.

<sup>49</sup>Henry E. Turlington, *Mark*, in vol. 8 of *The Broadman Bible Commentary*, ed. Clifton, J. Allen (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1971), 347.

<sup>50</sup>Walter E. Wessel, *Matthew*, in vol. 8 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 713.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, 714.

<sup>52</sup>Phillips, *Exploring The Gospel of Mark*, 215.

<sup>53</sup>Calvin, *Harmony of Matthew, Mark, Luke*, 389.

indignant in the original language is a strong word that means he was greatly afflicted,<sup>54</sup> and upset mentally or physically.<sup>55</sup> Jesus, as the caring and compassionate Savior of the world does not turn the children away, allowing the disciples error to rule, rather he asks for the children to be brought to him. In other words, Jesus is showing, by using little ones, that no one is unimportant in the kingdom of God regardless of age, ethnicity or any other possible divider.<sup>56</sup> The result of this situation is that Jesus teaches his followers that all people are important enough to be told the gospel, including children.

This account with Jesus and the children does not stop with the children coming to Jesus. Rather, Jesus is recorded to have laid his hands upon the children and said that people must become like a little child to enter the kingdom of heaven. The idea of laying on of hands is the Greek word *katalogein* or “to bless fervently.”<sup>57</sup> The proper understanding is not that Jesus’ blessing or prayer over the children was salvific, but rather was a prayer of thanksgiving for each individual child. Calvin writes, “The desired laying on of hands signifies asking for a blessing in prayer for the children. It is the ascribing to Jesus the highest honor and power of a prophet by those bringing the child.”<sup>58</sup> Jesus, as the great high priest, does not stop at praying over the children; rather he continues and uses this action as an illustration of faith based salvation. When Jesus said people must be like little children to enter the kingdom, he was describing the heart attitude that people must have to be saved, one like a child in “receptivity and dependence”<sup>59</sup> to the gospel. Further, people must “receive the gift of the kingdom like a

---

<sup>54</sup> Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary*.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> Wessel, *Matthew*, 713.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 714.

<sup>58</sup> Calvin, *Harmony of Matthew, Mark, Luke*, 389.

<sup>59</sup> Wessel, *Matthew*, 713.



child receives a gift, full of anticipation, joy, thanksgiving, and acknowledging they did nothing to earn that gift.”<sup>60</sup> Finally, people must receive Christ in “simplicity, sincerity and eagerness like a child.”<sup>61</sup> Jesus, therefore, is saying that the kingdom of heaven is reserved for people who trust in him completely, just as a child trusts in adults. He is being extremely clear by stating that the kingdom is not reserved for those who have wealth or status (Mark 10:17-31), or are a certain age; rather it is for those who trust in him alone without basing salvation on their own merit, just like a child trusts. Receiving the kingdom of heaven like a child seems to show that Jesus’ intent in coming as the Messiah was to bring men and women, boys and girls, regardless of age to himself, through the proclamation of the gospel.

### **The Questions of Age, Belief, Salvation, and Baptism**

Jesus challenged his apostles with the Great Commission and the Acts 1:8 mission in order to spread the gospel to everywhere and to all people, including children. The question that is inevitably raised therefore is, “How old does someone need to be to be able to believe in Jesus as their Lord and Savior?” The key to understanding this question is to remember that those who follow Christ must have the ability to understand, believe, and trust in Christ for salvation.<sup>62</sup> For example, being able to understand, believe, and trust is shown in Romans 10:9-10: “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” The ability to understand, believe, and trust in Jesus, therefore, is needed to be

---

<sup>60</sup>Rodney L. Cooper, *Mark*, Holman New Testament Commentary, vol. 2 (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2000), 165-66.

<sup>61</sup>Phillips, *Exploring The Gospel of Mark*, 216.

<sup>62</sup>Robert B. Selph, *Southern Baptists and the Doctrine of Election* (Harrisonburgh, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1996), 99.

able to be saved. Interestingly, in Matthew 18 Jesus says that all people must become (convert or turn) like children to enter the kingdom. The word is rendered as “become” can mean to convert or turn. The word is the aorist passive tense of the Greek word *strepho*.<sup>63</sup> The entire passage is recorded as follows:

At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them and said, Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea. (Matt 18:1-6)

In this passage, Jesus is turning the disciples away from a focus on power towards what is required to believe in him. John MacArthur explains this idea when he writes, “Conversion is the expression of will that fully turns from sin to the Lord. Further, because *strepho* is in the passive voice it means that someone else had to do it for them, requiring them to be simple, dependent, helpless, unpretentious and unambitious in their salvation.”<sup>64</sup> In other words, Jesus is telling the disciples that, in order for someone to become a believer in him, they must become like a child and be totally dependent on him. As a by-product they must be able to believe before they are counted with the kingdom.<sup>65</sup> John Wesley continues the idea and explains it deeper when he writes, “The first step of conversion is having humility like children, being lowly in heart, knowing that you are ignorant and helpless, fully trusting and relying on the Father for salvation. One must be converted into a child to be saved!”<sup>66</sup> In other words, believers are to share the gospel with all ages and, if someone believes, then they have been saved.

---

<sup>63</sup>MacArthur, *Matthew 24-28*, 98.

<sup>64</sup>John MacArthur, *Matthew 16-23, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1989), 96.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid.

<sup>66</sup>John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the Old and New Testament* (Nicholasville, KY:

Followers of Christ must be careful, however, with young children who profess Christ as Lord. Without a proper, biblical, salvific belief in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, the church could proclaim false salvation for a child. The church then must baptize and accept people of all ages into the church upon credible statement of faith, showing an understanding belief and trust in Christ alone for salvation.

As clear as this passage seems to be, there is some dispute in theological understandings about children becoming believers. John Calvin writes in his commentary about Mark 10:13-16, “Jesus, when he blesses the children he is extending grace to those even of that age. This passage is used against the Anabaptists and those that refuse infant baptism showing that infants can join the kingdom.”<sup>67</sup> Calvin’s problem, however, is that there is no evidence of baptism taking place with any of these children, only the Lord’s blessing being given. Matthew Henry agrees with Calvin, writing, “Jesus blessed them with spiritual blessings but did not baptize them because in this event it was before the resurrection. Nonetheless, the children were made part of the body of Christ.”<sup>68</sup> Again, Henry’s problem is that nowhere in Scripture are these children said to be part of the body of Christ, rather they are said to be given some level of blessing or prayer. As previously considered in this chapter, one must have faith to become part of the body of Christ and to be baptized regardless of age. When compared to the totality of Scripture already examined, the question of age should not be considered when deciding who should or should not be evangelized or baptized. Jesus’ statement in John 6:37, “all those to come to me will be saved” is given without age restrictions. Christians must teach, instruct, evangelize, and trust in the Holy Spirit to draw to himself

---

Schmul Publishing, 1958), e-Sword.

<sup>67</sup>Calvin, *Harmony of Matthew, Mark, Luke*, 390.

<sup>68</sup>Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary*.

people, regardless of age, and then examine them to see if they are in Christ (2 Corinthians 3:15). The questions evangelical Christians should ask instead is, “Who can I get to listen to the message and what is the best way I can share?” Philip baptized the Ethiopian after belief, based on profession and Holy Spirit action in his life (Acts 8:27-38) and the men who asked what must we do to be saved were baptized after they believed (Acts 3:37-41). The goal, therefore, is to see lost people come to Christ through believe and receive a new heart.<sup>69</sup> As Mark Dever writes in *Believer’s Baptism*, “The subject of baptism should be someone who, as far as the local church has good reason to believe, desires to follow Christ and be baptized and who lives consistently with an earnest confession of sin and repentance and a faith in Christ’s life, death and resurrection for him.”<sup>70</sup>

Phillips believes that the example of Moses may be the best child-conversion example in all of Scripture when he writes,

A child’s heart is tender and impressionable, therefore they make great believers. Moses is a perfect example of child conversion. He was kept at home until he was unable to be hidden any longer; Pharaoh’s daughter finds him and assigns his mother to raise him; She rooted and taught him the ways of the Lord so that he remembered who were his people and who was his God; this rooting, teaching, and raising in the statutes of the Lord allowed him to avoid the temptations he faced once he joined Pharaoh’s family.<sup>71</sup>

Without Moses’ mother teaching him the ways of the Lord, Moses would likely have not been able to withstand the worldly temptations of Pharaoh’s household. Furthermore, without a faith in God instilled in him by his mother he may not have been able to trust God to be able to be used to free the nation of Israel from Egypt’s hands. I believe

---

<sup>69</sup>M. J. Wilkins, “New Birth,” in *Dictionary of Later New Testament & Its Developments*, ed. Ralph P. Martin and Peter Davids (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 793.

<sup>70</sup>Mark Dever, *Baptism in the Context of the Local Church*, in *Believer’s Baptism*, ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Shawn D. Wright (Nashville: Broadman Holman, 2006), 333.

<sup>71</sup>Phillips, *Exploring The Gospel of Mark*, 216.

Phillips may take Moses' child-conversion too far. Moses ran from Pharaoh, lived in the wilderness for many years before he saw the burning bush. It was at the experience, the burning bush that I believe God's calling for him was clear and his conversion occurred. With that said, however, Moses needed deeply the foundational truths about his ethnicity and heritage to fully understand what God was calling him to do in the burning bush call. Moses, therefore, is a great example of what believers today must do with children, raise them in the faith and statutes of the Lord and when God moves in their lives to be ready to share the gospel with them.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, Jesus gave the Acts 1:8 witnessing instruction to the apostles in conjunction with the Great Commission call. These two instructions both call the disciples to witnessing, discipleship, and evangelism, insisting they go to all nations, ethnicities, tribes, and tongues in order to tell the message of Jesus the Messiah. This call extends to all age groups as well, including both children and the elderly. When someone professes Christ as Savior and Lord, the church must not confer a possible false salvation upon that person; they should rather instruct, teach, and examine the life of the new believer to make sure of true conversion.

In other words, all believers in Christ are called to be witnesses for Christ in order to make disciples of all people. All people includes all ethnicities, all geographies, all ages. Upon a believable profession of faith and showing an understanding of the gospel, they are to be baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER 3  
THEORETICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS  
FOR CHILD EVANGELISM AND  
CHILDREN’S MINISTRY

As established in the last chapter, all believers in Jesus Christ have been given and are expected to obey the Great Commission. In the Great Commission, believers are instructed to take the gospel message to all peoples regardless of tongue, tribe, or nation. Each of these people groups holds to specific cultural distinctives, therefore, the wise witness for Christ will consider these distinctives when sharing the Gospel message. In the same way, age groups within people groups hold to cultural distinctives as well. These cultural distinctions must affect how the Gospel is explained, taught, and understood. In other words, children have their own set of cultural distinctives that separate them from adults and thus require the gospel presentation to be contextualized so that these children can understand the message clearly. The wise witness for Christ understands that children are still developing mental capabilities and cultural likings, therefore, both evangelists and children’s ministries must contextualize the gospel presentation and the methodology utilized in ministries to children.

**Children’s Cognitive Abilities Requires  
a Contextualized Gospel**

Few people would deny the fact that children and adults are different. These differences run much deeper than simply size and stature. Children are not simply miniature versions of adults, because children are at a very different level with their mental and cognitive abilities than adults. Studies pertaining to child cognitive development have shown that children mentally develop through stages or phases as they

age, with each stage developing a different cognitive ability.<sup>1</sup> The researchers carefully note that each individual child is different but there remain some general or broad similarities spanning across gender, age, and experiences. This research, therefore, means that inside children's ministries, cognitive abilities are important to understand for planning and preparation but most importantly for gospel presentations. Cognitive abilities, therefore, are important for children's ministry workers to understand when trying to share the gospel.<sup>2</sup> Understanding the concept of cognitive abilities is important because, as adults share the gospel with children, the gospel must be presented using terms, vocabulary, and methods children can understand. This practice will inherently be different than when sharing with adults. To be clear, the gospel message of repentance and faith must not change.<sup>3</sup> The methodology and theological explanation, however, should be done in specific ways to help children comprehend the gospel correctly. The following section is an extremely short summary of psychological and cognitive child development theory that will help adults understand how to share the gospel with children more clearly.

Cognitive development is the theoretical idea that "children's faculties by which knowledge is acquired or manipulated is changing continually, affecting what and how they process that knowledge."<sup>4</sup> In a similar way but writing from a Christian perspective, Ivy Beckwith writes, "Through the various stages of childhood children

---

<sup>1</sup>David F. Bjorklund, *Children's Thinking: Cognitive Development and Individual Differences* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2005), 14.

<sup>2</sup>Tedd Tripp, *Shepherding a Child's Heart* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 1995), 132-33.

<sup>3</sup>Billy Graham, *How to be Born Again* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1977), 11. Graham writes, "However much the theologians may disagree about fine points of doctrine, the central truth of the new birth is clear: Man apart from God is spiritually dead. He needs to be born again. Only by God's grace through faith in Christ can their new birth take place."

<sup>4</sup>Bjorklund, *Children's Thinking*, 3.

relate to God and understand God in ways that are different from adults.”<sup>5</sup> In other words, children understand and think about God, their world, and spiritual things differently than adults because their cognitive thinking is in the process of development. Scripture even hints at this type of development process in 1 Corinthians 13:11 where Paul writes, “When I was a child, I spoke like a child; I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways” (1 Cor 13:11). It seems there must be some level of cognitive development in humans, which therefore means the gospel must be contextualized differently for a child than an adult.

In order to take a deeper look into secular psychology about cognitive development, one must look deeper into the above definition. Cognitive development is the belief that children have bidirectional influences that they are acting upon and that are acting upon them, including biological propensities, biological dispositions, and context they find themselves in.<sup>6</sup> When these factors are combined, causing the person to go through growth stages, the result is called the developmental contextual model, coined by R. M. Lerner. This model is explained by the statement: “All parts of the organism interact dynamically with the contexts within which the organism is embedded.”<sup>7</sup> What secular psychology theorizes is that “one must consider the child and the contexts it interacts with as one unit, which all affect the cognitive development of the child.”<sup>8</sup> In other words, as adults interact with children, the adult would be wise to consider as many contextual variables in the child’s life as possible in order to understand the individual

---

<sup>5</sup>Ivy Beckwith, *Postmodern Children’s Ministry: Ministry to Children in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 41.

<sup>6</sup>Bjorklund, *Children’s Thinking*, 41.

<sup>7</sup>R. M. Lerner, *Developmental Psychology* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 1991), 27.

<sup>8</sup>Bjorklund, *Children’s Thinking*, 9.



child. This theory, as a general rule, runs throughout most contemporary theories of child cognitive development.<sup>9</sup>

Whether this secular psychological understanding of children's cognitive development is fully accurate is not within the purview or special limitations of this chapter. What can be learned from this theory, though is that there are measurable influences upon a child's cognitive development. Those influences affect children's ability to learn and process knowledge, including the ability to understand the gospel, believe in Jesus, and trust in him for salvation. When considered theologically, children's ministry workers must take into consideration the ability of their children to cognitively understand the gospel as they teach, share and organize. Some of the factors that will affect the cognitive ability of children to understand the gospel include whether the environment at home is loving or not, the educational level of the child, parental or guardian educational level, nourishment and food available at the home, experiences such as divorce or death of a parent, emotional stability, emotions shown at home, culture, and gender.<sup>10</sup> A few examples of the ability of these factors to influence a child's understanding of the gospel will help explain this point.

A child may be hindered from fully understanding the gospel and the nature of God if they are being raised in a fatherless home simply because they have no idea what a loving father truly is. For some fatherless children to understand God as the ultimate loving father, which a children's ministry should teach, the adult must explain what the father's role is in child rearing and what he is to do from a biblical perspective.<sup>11</sup> If the adult who is sharing about God does not explain the biblical father, the child may

---

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 10.

<sup>10</sup>Tripp, *Shepherding a Child's Heart*, 126.

<sup>11</sup>Russ Knight, "The Home as a Ministry Base," in *A Heart for the City*, ed. John Fuder (Chicago: Moody, 1999), 464-66.

associate God with negative feelings by connecting him with their missing earthly father. This concept is important for those being evangelized to understand, because ideas like unconditional love, forgiveness, and adoption can lead to salvation.

Another example of an outside influence affecting cognitive abilities is the child's education. Specifically, the level of learning and type of learning the child has encountered impacts children. If a child's school classifies the child as a slower learner or somehow not smart, then many times the child thinks he or she cannot learn, resulting in a diminished learning at church and in life in general.<sup>12</sup> A well-organized and thought-out children's ministry, one that considers cognitive abilities, will reinforce again and again concepts that encourage children with understanding that God made them, loves them, and that they can learn about God.

To return to implications of the staged cognitive development theory, children's ministries and those sharing the gospel with children must understand that children think concretely about concepts until about the age of eleven years old.<sup>13</sup> For children to be a concrete thinker means they do not have the ability to think in the abstract, therefore, new information must be learned and presented in terms they have already touched, felt, or seen. In other words, concrete thinking is the ability to only relate the new to things already learned. Thus, children think in terms of concrete items, absolutes, and non-contradiction. David Bjorklund gives a good explanation about concrete thinking when he writes, "Concrete thinking is impressive because children, when given a set of data, can arrive at an answer free of contradictions. They can solve reasonably complex problems as long as the general form of the problem and solution are

---

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 464-66.

<sup>13</sup>Gary Hunt and Angela Hunt, *Too Young to Drive, Too Old to Ride* (San Bernardino, CA: Here's Life, 1992), 28.

previously known to them.”<sup>14</sup> When adults present the gospel to children, the gospel presentation must utilize ideas, concept, and objects known to most children already. Theological concepts that are needed in a gospel presentation like salvation, atonement, propitiation, and forgiveness must be defined and explained in such a way so that children can understand the meaning of the concepts and relate them to something they already know.

Another reason understanding child cognitive development for children’s ministries is so important is because there seems to be a critical period in cognitive development that affects people’s worldview for the rest of their lives. Timothy Beougher makes this apparent as he explains and quotes Richard Baxter, “One of the great hindrances to conversion was parental neglect in raising their children in the things of God. The habit patterns developed in youth were hard to break when one became an adult. If parents would only look around they clearly would see that ‘most of the world is such as they were taught in their childhood to be.’”<sup>15</sup> In particular, according to psychologists, this “critical period” shapes how children see the world, how people process information, and usually lasts until about age eleven for most children.<sup>16</sup> Interestingly, during this critical period even memorization is affected as children age toward eleven years old. Younger children attempt to memorize knowledge and experiences verbatim, which limits true comprehension, while older children try to understand the main idea of the knowledge and experience.<sup>17</sup> These memorization techniques are important when considered with gospel presentations because they explain

---

<sup>14</sup>Bjorklund, *Children’s Thinking*, 100.

<sup>15</sup>Timothy Beougher, *Richard Baxter and Conversion* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2007), 102.

<sup>16</sup>Bjorklund, *Children’s Thinking*, 37.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 297.

why young children can remember yes and no answers but are unable to repeat a list or statement. There is too much information to remember verbatim. Further, this technique used by children in the critical period explains why older children cannot seem to remember things verbatim, because they only focus on general concepts. The attentive reader will recognize that the critical period and time of concrete thinking development occur at the same time, and therefore, both prove to be major impacts upon children's ability to understand the gospel. Churches and children's ministries must take this into consideration as they share the gospel because, according to George Barna, "there is a 32% chance someone accepts Christ during the Birth to 14 year old range. After that age the number drops to 6% during the rest of life."<sup>18</sup> Churches, children's ministries, and evangelists must understand the need to present the gospel to children in a way they can understand, because soon after the critical period, conversion to Christ becomes difficult since ways of thinking have been set.

### **Historical Gospel Contextualization**

Any serious consideration of the impact of children's cognitive development and the gospel forces ministries to contextualize the gospel message to children. In order to prescribe a way to contextualize the gospel, a brief historical study about gospel contextualization is in order. As one author stated, people learn from the past to instruct the future so that they do not repeat its mistakes.

Early in church history, the gospel was contextualized as Jesus taught and spoke with people. Jesus taught the woman at the well the gospel by talking about living water. Jesus, however, spoke to the disciples about vines, fruit, and abiding in him while

---

<sup>18</sup>Sue Miller and David Stall, *Making Your Children's Ministry the Best Hour of Every Kid's Week* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 49-50.

walking past a vineyard. Furthermore, Jesus spoke to the disciples about wheat and chaff as they walked through a wheat field. In these examples, Jesus is utilizing things about which the hearer already knows in order to teach spiritual truths.

Even Paul and the Apostles contextualized their message of the gospel in order for the audience to fully understand. In Acts 2, Peter preaches to a group of Jewish people and shows Jesus as the Messiah through utilizing certain verses in the Old Testament. In Acts 17, Paul utilizes the Greek mythological system to set the Lord as the unknown God who is above all other gods to show and explain the gospel message. These are only a few examples but the evidence is clear. Through the New Testament the Gospel is contextualized by utilizing social cues and what people understood as a way to get to the Gospel message.

These examples show the gospel has been contextualized since the times of Jesus therefore, to reach children today, the gospel must be contextualized as well. Names like Isaac Watts, Matthew Henry, and W. A. Criswell all made professions of faith at 10 years old or younger and came to become giants of the faith. Parents, the church, and children's ministries must recognize the potential salvific opportunities in children's ministry and purpose to present the Gospel to children in ways they can understand and believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior.

The post-biblical history of gospel contextualization, especially to children, is practically nonexistent. The lack of child evangelism's recorded history in early post-biblical times is due to the fact that some church leaders and writings endorsed types of paedobaptism. Early church leaders like Irenaeus,<sup>19</sup> Origen,<sup>20</sup> and Hippolytus of Rome<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup>Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 2.22.4, accessed May 10, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.ix.iii.xxiii.html>.

<sup>20</sup>Jerome, trans., "Origen on Luke XIV" in *Church Fathers*, 65. – "Therefore children are also baptized." In his homily on Romans he writes, "For this reason, moreover, the Church received from the apostles the tradition of baptizing infants too." In his Homily on Leviticus Origen writes, "Baptism is given for the remission of sins; and according to the usage of the Church, Baptism is given even to infants.

endorse paedobaptism in some way in their writings. Interestingly, Tertullian writes that he would rather delay baptism for children rather than to baptize the child at an extremely young age.<sup>22</sup> Naturally, as the church was teaching and practicing paedobaptism, there would be little need for evangelism of children. Because most children were already baptized, already part of the church, and thought to be forgiven of their sin, there would be no need for evangelism. Thus, little to no evidence of child evangelism from that time would be available today.<sup>23</sup> Alvin Reid suggests, “From Augustine’s time (354-430) until the Reformation evangelism in general suffered.”<sup>24</sup> Jones and Stinson add that the evangelistic efforts of the church suffered largely because of the emphasis on paedobaptism.<sup>25</sup>

Once the Protestant Reformation occurred, it seems as though a renewed zeal for child evangelism and discipleship began as people tried to follow Scripture’s model instead of following the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>26</sup> As people began to reclaim faith in

---

And indeed if there were nothing in infants which required a remission of sins and nothing in them pertinent to forgiveness, the grace of baptism would seem superfluous.”

<sup>21</sup>Hippolytus of Rome, *Apostolic Tradition*, 21.33, accessed May 10,2013, <http://www.bombaxo.com/hippolytus.html>. "And they shall baptise the little children first. And if they can answer for themselves, let them answer. But if they cannot, let their parents answer or someone from their family."

<sup>22</sup>Tertullian, *On Baptism*, 18, accessed May 10,2013, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0321.htm>. In this work Tertullian comments on his preference of delaying baptism in deference to the traditional practice of baptizing infants writes, “And so, according to the circumstances and disposition, and even age, of each individual, the delay of baptism is preferable; principally, however, in the case of little children.”

<sup>23</sup>Robert Plummer, “Bring them up in the Discipline and Instruction of the Lord,” in *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical and Practical Perspective*, ed. Timothy Paul Jones and Randy Stinson (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 58-59.

<sup>24</sup>Alvin Reid, *Introduction to Evangelism* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1998), 58.

<sup>25</sup>C. Michael Wren Jr., “Among Your Company at Home,” in *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective*, ed. Timothy Paul Jones and Randy Stinson (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 106, 109.

<sup>26</sup>C. Jeffrey Robinson Sr., “The Home is an Earthly Kingdom,” in *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective*, ed. Timothy Paul Jones and Randy Stinson (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 118-19. These pages mention that there may be some evidence that scholars and pastors like Calvin and Luther either wrote catechisms or moved to age-graded discipleship in

Christ as necessary for salvation, as understood by those in the reformation, child evangelism began to become more widespread. Written history shows that at this time, parents began to take the lead role in the evangelism of their own children. Justo Gonzáles writes in *The Story of Christianity*, “Evangelism, particularly with children, took place in kitchens, shops and in the home.”<sup>27</sup> According to Gonzáles, evangelism took place wherever believers were, and those believers told everyone from young to old, but especially their own families. It seems as though gospel contextualization continued in homes with home evangelism being the preferred method of evangelism until around 1743. In 1743 Jonathan Edwards took some younger folks aside during one of his revivals. Edwards took the children aside because they were asking questions about his preaching and he desired to share the gospel with the children in a way they could understand in a smaller group.<sup>28</sup> This event is significant because, as much as Edwards would have abhorred the idea, this event shows the lack of evangelism in homes and quite possibly marks a continued shift towards a ministry only evangelistic mentality in the church.

From the Reformation to the industrial revolution, child evangelism was largely centered and accomplished within the home. What occurred during the industrial revolution, however, is that fathers were required to work long hours six days per week. Basically, the industrial revolution signaled the end of the rural farming father who was at home and capable to instill and teach biblical ideals to his children as he farmed. Fathers at this time took jobs in city factories and were away from their families for most of the day every day. The lack of fatherhood guidance and spiritual presence in the home

---

the hopes of discipline and evangelizing children with the stated purpose of reinforcing what parents should be teaching in their homes.

<sup>27</sup>Justo Gonzáles, *The Story of Christianity* (San Francisco: Harper, 1984), 2:99.

<sup>28</sup>Robinson, “The Home is an Earthly Kingdom,” 125-27.

took a toll and diminished the spiritual growth of children.<sup>29</sup> Two men recognized the problem and began to organize separate attempts to provide educational and spiritual training for children.<sup>30</sup> One of these men was Robert Raikes, who tried to fill the gap of teaching morals and biblical instruction by creating the Sunday school.<sup>31</sup> Raikes believed that if children were not being evangelized and disciplined in the home, then possibly a different entity could fill the voided gap. Horace Mann, the other man who recognized the void left by the industrial revolution, developed the idea of the common school. This idea and organization began by teaching basic educational principles to the children and eventually grew to today's public school system.<sup>32</sup> The result was that Sunday school began educating children in morals and spirituality while the public school system began educating children in reading, writing, and arithmetic. As the education of mind and spirit were increasingly seceded outside the family, child evangelism seems to have diminished in family homes and was largely practiced in Sunday school only. For example, in 1905 the International Sunday School Commission wrote, "The best and most sustainable way to do child evangelism is in the Sunday School."<sup>33</sup> Over 1900 years of evangelistic history differs with this statement, but there must be a recognized understanding that the local church, through Sunday school, was contextualizing their methods to fit how children were being taught and treated by society in general.

---

<sup>29</sup>W. Ryan Stenborg and Timothy Paul Jones, "Growing Gaps from Generation to Generation," in *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective*, ed. Timothy Paul Jones and Randy Stinson (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 145.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 149. This page explains that Sunday School and Public School systems, among other societies, were created to provide the educational opportunities that were once provided in homes.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, 147.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, 148.

<sup>33</sup>George Merrill and Marion Lawrence, eds., *Development of the Sunday School* (Toronto: International Sunday School Convention, 1905), 6.



Since the 1900's there have been some ministries develop that are focused on child evangelism other than Sunday school. What is evident in the ministries focused at children and are successful is that all contextualized the gospel in some way through mimicking popular culture with their methodology. As these ministries contextualized, they saw children put their faith in Christ. For instance, in the 1950's the Royal Ambassadors and Girls in Action adjusted their curriculum to mimic the Boy and Girl Scouts of America.<sup>34</sup> R. Albert Mohler stated his experience in RA's in a lecture stating, "It was interesting I'd go to RA's one night at the church and then the next night I'd go to the Boy Scout meeting. The only thing that changed was the location and the uniforms. It was the same boys, the same material, just different uniforms. But many children came to profess faith in Christ through the RA ministry."<sup>35</sup> What Mohler is inadvertently saying is that the RA ministry contextualized their methodology to be similar to the secular Boy Scouts in order to reach children with the gospel of Jesus in a way that was popular at the time. What has happened, sadly, is, as the Boy Scouts of America's enrolment has decreased, so has the Royal Ambassador's ministries and participants.<sup>36</sup> Another example of this same idea is that the Sunday school curriculum writers and organizers adjusted format to be modeled after the public school system to include fully

---

<sup>34</sup>Frank Black and Charles Doggett, *Royal Ambassador Campcraft* (Memphis: Brotherhood Commission, SBC, 1972). The R. A. Campcraft book mirrors the Boy Scout manual. The RA activities explained therein includes activities like hiking, how to build a fire, how to pitch a tent, what sleeping bags are appropriate for what weather conditions, and how to tie certain types of knots. These are topics that have nothing to do with the spiritual teachings of Royal Ambassadors, but they mimic the Boy Scout Handbook and activities as evidence of contextualization.

<sup>35</sup>R. Albert Mohler Jr., Lecture at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; "The President's Forum on the Future of the Southern Baptist Convention," August 19, 2009, accessed April 5, 2013, <http://www.sbts.edu/resources/lectures/presidents-forum/video-the-presidents-forum-on-the-future-of-the-southern-baptist-convention/>.

<sup>36</sup>Statistics calculated from Boy Scouts of America's website. The annual report is available at <http://www.scouting.org/About/AnnualReports.aspx>. The year 1972 marked Boy Scouting of America's highest membership enrollment year. In 2012 enrollment was less than half of the enrollment in 1972 while the US population has grown 49.5 percent in the years 1972-2013.

age graded classes and teaching forms. Again what this fact is showing is the methodological utilization of contextualization in order to reach children with the gospel message.

Two observations are important at this point concerning ministry contextualization and child evangelism in history. First, methodological contextualization of evangelism is obvious in Jesus' ministry. When methodological contextualization of the nearer past included mimicking culturally popular organizations, utilizing commonly held knowledge or generally understood themes of society, the results were seemingly positive for the kingdom of Christ. Secondly, the cultural methodological contextualization of the gospel to children can last only for a definite time and should only last as long as the method is being fruitful. In other words, just like the RA's attendance declined during the Boy Scout's attendance decline, the methodological contextualization in children's ministry must be capable of adjustment to meet children where they are mentally, cognitively, socially, and spiritually in order for the children to understand the message of Christ.

### **Helpful and Unhelpful Gospel Presentations**

As presented earlier, both parents and the local church must strive to find ways to share the gospel with children. Regardless of whether it is a parent or a ministry worker, the evangelist must understand the difference in an appropriate gospel presentation and an inappropriate presentation. Above all else, a gospel presentation must aim to tell children about Jesus' death and resurrection.<sup>37</sup> To again be clear, concerning gospel contextualization, the gospel does not change for individual persons or situations but rather the gospel message remains the same. What changes in

---

<sup>37</sup>Beckwith, *Postmodern Children's Ministry*, 128.

contextualization of the gospel is the explanatory wording and the specific method used to explain the gospel. What must never change in an explanation of salvation that is achieved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone, as revealed in Scripture alone. This never changing message, whether contextualized or not, can be told in both unhelpful and helpful ways. The methodology of the gospel presentation in conjunction with the perceived focus or goal and taking into account children's cognitive abilities together, affect whether a gospel presentation is helpful or unhelpful. The following section is an explanation of both helpful and unhelpful gospel presentations given to children.

### **Unhelpful Gospel Presentations**

Gospel presentations can be given while utilizing many different methodologies. Presentations become problematic regardless of the age of the audience but are especially problematic for children when the presenter only focuses upon one part of the gospel without telling the entire story of the gospel. These gospel presentations that focus on ideas like judgment, being on the winning team, and getting rewards are more harmful than helpful for children. This section will explain some of the more harmful gospel presentations someone could give to children.

**Fear presentation.** The gospel presentation that can be called a fear presentation when it is given to a child largely focuses on judgment, hell, and damnation.

<sup>38</sup> When this type of presentation is given to children it becomes unhelpful because the children cognitively focus upon nothing other than the fear of eternity spent forever in torment.<sup>39</sup> This eternal fate for those without Christ is biblically accurate and true. The

---

<sup>38</sup>Reid, *Introduction to Evangelism*, 251.

<sup>39</sup>Beckwith, *Postmodern Children's Ministry*, 63-64.

gospel should not be seen or explained solely as a way to avoid hell. Particularly, when someone is sharing the gospel with a child, he or she should not focus on hell to the extent that the child “gets saved” only because the child do not want to go to hell. Children should be told about needing to believe in Jesus as their Savior in order to get to heaven, but the avoidance of hell should not be the singular focus for a child to become a believer. For example, an unhelpful gospel presentation to children would be to read or play an audio of Jonathan Edwards’ sermon “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.”<sup>40</sup> This type of presentation is simply capitalizing upon the child’s concrete cognitive thinking about hell, fire, and pain to bring about a decision from the child. In reality, this type of presentation is nothing more than mental manipulation, utilizing the child’s inherent desire to avoid fire and the other “bad” things related to hell. This type of presentation results in false faith, false belief, and false salvation because the “new convert” is only seeking self-preservation through the cross and not Jesus himself as the Savior and Lord.

**Rewards presentation.** The rewards based gospel presentation capitalizes upon most children’s desire to receive gifts.<sup>41</sup> An example of this presentation would be an adult telling the children at a ministry event, “If you get saved we will have a birthday party with cake and ice cream for you too.”<sup>42</sup> This presentation therefore promises a party or a new Bible or a chance to get dunked by the preacher if the children would only pray a prayer or ask Jesus into their heart. The reality is that the child does not want Jesus, his forgiveness, mercy, or anything other than the child wants the reward that was

---

<sup>40</sup>Jonathan Edwards, *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God* (Las Vegas: Empire Books, 2012). In this sermon Edwards speaks of the horrible torment and wrath that will be poured out upon sinners in Hell. He preaches that God dangles the lost souls above the rising fires of Hell.

<sup>41</sup>Beckwith, *Postmodern Children’s Ministry*, 64.

<sup>42</sup>The pastor told me that an AWANA worker at his church made this comment.

promised.<sup>43</sup> Giving the worker the benefit of the doubt in the example, the statement was probably not meant to manipulate the children so they could have cake and ice cream. Rather, the worker was trying to communicate that giving one's life to Jesus is a joyful event and something to be celebrated. The problem with this presentation lies once again in the children's cognitive abilities and concrete thinking. The concrete cognitive abilities of children predetermine that, in this type of presentation, most children would relate "getting saved" with having cake and ice cream or other type of rewards. In other words, to the child, the reason to get saved would be to get cake and ice cream. Presumably, any children that got saved through that presentation may have been "saying a prayer" simply because they were hungry. What child would not pray some prayer if he or she were hungry or really liked ice cream? This gospel presentation is problematic and is unhelpful because it trades the Savior for a material good.

**Winning team presentation.** The winning team gospel presentation is used many times in larger groups of children.<sup>44</sup> This presentation explains that everyone in the world is on one of two teams, either with God or against God. Jesus made a similar statement in Matthew 12:30, stating that whoever is not with him is against him. The problem is that the presenter then asks the children which side they want to be on, the loser with Satan or the winner with Jesus. Naturally the children want to be winners with Jesus so the presentation will continue with a statement on the order of, "If you want to be on the winning team repeat this prayer and you will be saved." The children, therefore, pray the prayer in order to be on the winning team as though eternity was almost about runs or goals kicked to be a winner. This gospel presentation is unbiblical

---

<sup>43</sup>Reid, *Introduction to Evangelism*, 251.

<sup>44</sup>Beckwith, *Postmodern Children's Ministry*, 64.

as it reduces the message of the cross to simply wanting to be on the winning team. Again, this method is manipulating the concrete cognitive ability of children because children are asked to make a decision for Christ because they want the ability to say they won. The emotional feeling of winning is greater than the decision to make Jesus their Lord and Savior. This presentation is a classical bait and switch gospel presentation technique. The evangelist gets the child to agree that they want to be on the winning team and then switches from being on the winning team to giving their life to Christ, which is clearly unscriptural.<sup>45</sup> This unhelpful Gospel presentation results in children thinking they are on God's team because they want to be winners.

**Pressure presentation.** The gospel presentation focused on pressure is a technique that posits the children as needing to follow what their peers are doing or to please someone else.<sup>46</sup> That someone else may be the speaker at that time, the leader, or even Jesus. This method is a high pressure technique, presented as, if the children refuse to pray, then they would be letting someone down they know, love, and want to please.<sup>47</sup> An example of this presentation would be saying things like, "Don't you want to make me happy; we are friends, I've been here all weekend with you. Don't you think you can trust me; If you want to make me happy say this prayer after me."<sup>48</sup> Another way this type of presentation is used would be for the ministry teacher to ask the children to sit in a circle and raise their hands if they want to ask Jesus into their hearts. As soon as one child raises a hand, the rest begin to raise their hands in order to be part of the group

---

<sup>45</sup>Reid, *Introduction to Evangelism*, 251.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

<sup>47</sup>Beckwith, *Postmodern Children's Ministry*, 64.

<sup>48</sup>Reported to the pastor at Knoxville Baptist Church in 2012 by a Royal Ambassador Leader.

because they do not want to be left out.<sup>49</sup> Children succumb to peer pressure as they want to be like their peers and desire to avoid being the only one who has not done something. This presentation is not only unbiblical, but it is forcing children to make a decision they are not ready to make on their own. The results are false conversions and many unregenerate children believing they have “gotten saved” simply because they raised their hand and said a prayer like the rest of their class. Mass conversions of this type are, many times, not conversions at all; they are mass confusion about the gospel.

**Pray presentation.** The prayer only focused gospel presentation is one of the most common techniques used in children’s ministry today and has become a hot-button topic in Christianity today.<sup>50</sup> This technique is utilized when a ministry worker says something to this affect: “All you have to do to be saved is to say this prayer; repeat it after me and you will be saved forever.”<sup>51</sup> The problem is that this presentation seems to say that as long as you pray these words then the person will be saved, as though they are some sort of magical incantation. To be clear, everyone must pray and ask for forgiveness, repentance, and ask for Jesus to become their Lord. This idea becomes a problem even more so when ministries place the final goal to be on the children praying a prayer for salvation rather than to focus upon the child’s soul.<sup>52</sup> In other words, the

---

<sup>49</sup>Beckwith, *Postmodern Children’s Ministry*, 64.

<sup>50</sup>A sermon by David Platt in April 2012 entitled “Why the Sinners Prayer is Unbiblical and Superstitious” began a major dispute in some Christian circles about the veracity of the sinners prayer. In this sermon Platt argued that in modern day the prayer is considered and used as an incantation rather than a prayer asking for mercy from a Holy God. Steve Gaines among others then preached and wrote in response to Platt which led to Platt preaching at the SBC Annual Convention in New Orleans about the prayer. In that sermon, Platt apologized for taking his words too far but did not back down from his main issue with the prayer presentation. That main issue is someone presenting the Gospel to another person and then stating “If you say this prayer then you will be saved,” as though the prayer or the words contained in the prayer save the soul and not Jesus Christ himself changing and regenerating the heart.

<sup>51</sup>Beckwith, *Postmodern Children’s Ministry*, 62.

<sup>52</sup>David Staal, *Leading Your Child to Jesus: How Parents Can Talk with Their Children about Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 75.

problem is not with the prayer of salvation but the reckless mentality in believing that, if only people would pray this particular prayer, then they must be a believer and not consider the person's need for repentance and conversion. This type of presentation is so extremely prevalent in children's ministries that Beckwith writes,

Whole educational programs are designed around the goal of getting children "to say the prayer" and cross over the line from lost to saved. Unfortunately, once the prayer is prayed, parents and volunteers often breathe a sigh of relief, saying 'whey! Glad that's taken care of'. It is even to the point where the church evaluates the effectiveness of the children's ministry programming by the number of children who pray the prayer.<sup>53</sup>

If Beckwith is correct, then the prayer technique is only concerning itself with the number of children who pray a certain prayer and not with the spiritual condition of the children. The goal of a gospel presentation must not be for people to recite a prayer but rather to be changed and made new from the inside out due to the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration. The goal of getting people to pray a prayer in order to pronounce them "saved" is not only problematic, but as David Platt stated in a 2012 sermon, "it is superstitious and unbiblical."<sup>54</sup>

### **Helpful Gospel Presentations**

A helpful gospel presentation to children is one that focuses on Christ, his work, and the person's need to trust and obey, while taking into account the cognitive abilities of the hearer. Suffice it to say that a good gospel presentation is going to cover multiple topics such as: sin, forgiveness, the cross, substitution, faith, belief, resurrection, etc, and then would call the child to make a decision.<sup>55</sup> When talking with children, these

---

<sup>53</sup>Beckwith, *Postmodern Children's Ministry*, 62.

<sup>54</sup>David Platt, sermon given at The Church at Brook Hills, "Why Accepting Jesus in Your Heart is Superstitious and Unbiblical," April 12, 2012, accessed March 6, 2013, <http://www.vergenetwork.org/2012/04/12/platt-why-accepting-jesus-in-your-heart-is-superstitious-unbiblical/>.

<sup>55</sup>Massimo Lorenzini, *Child Evangelism: A God-Centered Guide for Genuine Conversion* (Tipton, PA: Frontline Ministries, 2008), 9-10.



concepts, and others like them, must be explained in ways that children can understand. For example, sin can be described as disobedience or doing things wrong against what God has said to do, and confession could be described as admitting you have done wrong.<sup>56</sup> These are just two examples of many words that need to be contextualized to fit a child's cognitive ability level. This section will provide a brief overview of a few helpful Gospel presentation techniques to children.

**Personal testimony with gospel call.** One method of sharing the gospel that is biblical and has been used for centuries is through personal testimony with a gospel call.<sup>57</sup> This type of presentation can be used with children, can be contextualized well, and can be a fruitful gospel tool. The evangelist generally includes a basic description of his or her life before Christ entered their life. The evangelist then tells about their salvation experience and explains what has changed or happened in their lives since. The evangelist concludes with a question of whether the hearer would like to do the same thing.<sup>58</sup> While simply telling their story, the person should not manipulate as would be easy with this method, but must focus upon basic salvation centered concepts, such as: their sin, need of forgiveness, what Jesus did on the cross, what the resurrection means, and what it looked like for them to make Jesus the Lord of their life. The temptation with this type of presentation is to stop with simply telling their story and not ask if the hearer would like to make the same decision to follow Christ. A personal testimony by itself is not evangelism; the evangelist therefore must call the hearer to a decision. This personal testimony may take a little different path for parents as they can utilize life's

---

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 67.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., chap. 2.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 39.

circumstances to share the gospel with their children. George Barna wrote about the use of life situations in gospel presentations by parents stating, “When parents effectively describe a compelling life event that resulted in personal transformation, children are more likely to glean valuable wisdom from the story.”<sup>59</sup> A personal testimony can be a tool used to evangelize children as long as it ends with a call to repent and believe explaining the gospel of Christ.

**Romans 10 presentation.** Another good gospel presentation for children is to utilize Scripture. The Romans 10 presentation is a good gospel presentation, but it should largely be used with a child who has been exposed to gospel concepts and salvation type ideas multiple times<sup>60</sup> because there must be more explanation about salvation concepts than are provided in this particular passage of scripture. This presentation purposes to utilize the Scripture in order to get the person to input themselves into the salvation story by saying their name instead of the word “you” in Romans 10. This gospel presentation was presented by Scott Dawson’s book entitled *The Complete Evangelism Guidebook*.

If you,       (insert name here)      , confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you,       (insert name here)      , will be saved. For with the heart you,       (insert name here)      , believes and is justified, and with the mouth you,       (insert name here)       confesses and are saved.<sup>61</sup>

This presentation utilizes Scripture, connects with the child in a way that is concrete and allows the child to see them in the scope of salvation. The evangelist must be able to explain the theological concepts in the verse such as confession of sin, resurrection, justification, and others. This technique therefore needs to be used by on

---

<sup>59</sup>George Barna, *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions: Why Children Should be Your Church's #1 Priority* (Ventura, CA: Gospel Light, 2003), 86.

<sup>60</sup>Patricia Palau, “Leading a Child to Jesus,” in *The Complete Evangelism Guidebook*, ed. Scott Dawson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 158.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

someone who has heard about Christ before and be used by someone comfortable with exploring theological concepts on the level of a child.

**Walk through the Bible.** The concept of taking a walk through the Bible can be used to present the Gospel through the scriptural metanarrative of salvation in a succinct way.<sup>62</sup> This presentation, therefore is less structured than other outlines and can be contextualized for children easily. Both Will Metzger and Greg Gilbert<sup>63</sup> have written entire books about this style of evangelism. Their books present a metanarrative story that focuses on the concepts that God created everything so he is the King and Ruler, humanity sinned and continues to sin today which separates humanity from God, Jesus came, died and resurrected, therefore we must trust and believe in him alone for salvation. This presentation is a good step by step explanation of the gospel using four of the main themes in Scripture. In this presentation the speaker is explains the main ideas and should include Scripture all while contextualizing the main ideas to children. This evangelistic style can also be used over an extended period of time separating each part into sections to teach. This broad outline must, however, end with asking the child to make a decision to either accept or reject Christ, in order for the presentation to be a full complete.

**Use of concrete illustrations.** Another helpful way to share the gospel with children is by using concrete illustrations, such as stories children can relate. This type of gospel presence is similar to what international missionaries call storying the Bible. In this presentation, the evangelist either tells the story of the Bible in narrative form or presents the biblical principles in narrative form. For example, Massimo Lorenzini tells a

---

<sup>62</sup>Will Metzger, *Tell the Truth* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2002), 233-40.

<sup>63</sup>Greg Gilbert, *What is the Gospel?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010).

story about a pig in his book entitled *Child Evangelism* that is thematic and can be used to teach the spiritual concepts necessary to understand salvation. This short story reads as follows:

There once was a princess who had a little pig for a pet. She bathed it and clothed it and even sprayed it with perfume. One day the princess took her little pig on a walk. They came upon a mud puddle and the little pig jumped right in and got all dirty. The princess wished she could do something to change the pig's heart so he wouldn't want to go in the mud. She prayed that God would give her little pig the heart of a deer. God granted her wish and the pig's heart was changed to the heart of a deer. No longer did the pig like to get muddy. Now the pig wanted to stay as clean as possible.<sup>64</sup>

In this example, Lorenzini is explaining the basic concepts of Jesus, sin, and God. What he instructs people to do to evangelize children is to use this type of story to teach the cross, death, burial, resurrection, atonement for sin, who God is, and many other spiritual truths. The goal is to use these concrete analogies and stories in order to relate to children and then to teach about God.<sup>65</sup> What Lorenzini is proposing is similar to how Jesus taught the story of the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son. The evangelist must remember to not let the story be a stand-alone good story. Rather, the story must be used to teach about foundational concepts of salvation.

Simply using one of the “good techniques” as described above does not ensure a child will come to saving faith in Christ. The purpose of this section of the paper was to show there are gospel presentations that can be contextualized toward children so that they can be better prepared to respond with saving faith.

---

<sup>64</sup>Lorenzini, *Child Evangelism*, 10.

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*, 9.

## **Cultural Change Requires Ministry Change and Contextualization**

As America closes in on its 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of becoming a nation, the American culture has become even more of a melting pot for cultures than ever before. American culture is becoming more diverse, forcing churches to become more diverse and thus forcing children's ministries to become more diverse as well. In all societies the gospel presentation must be contextualized and presented in a way that makes sense to the hearer, therefore American churches must be willing to contextualize and change ministry models to meet the changing culture. For example, R. Albert Mohler said in a speech in 2009, "In the year 2050, twenty-five percent of Americans will have a Hispanic Grandparent. Folks, our American Culture has changed and is only going to change more."<sup>66</sup> He goes on to say that this change is not a change pushing the society toward God, rather it is pushing the society away from God when he states, "The clash of worldviews is now happening very early in life and the question for parents is whether we have trained our young ones to be ready for that clash."<sup>67</sup> The American culture is not moving towards God but rather it is moving more towards secularism, atheism, and a celebration of sin. American children are growing up today in an overtly godless society, resulting in more of them needing to hear the gospel and to be disciplined in the ways of the Lord. This secularized cultural effect is evident even inside Southern Baptist Churches with "two-thirds of Southern Baptists leaving the church between adolescence and adulthood."<sup>68</sup> This simple statistic shows that there is a breakdown between churches, children's ministries, culture, and young people at some level. To be effective

---

<sup>66</sup>Mohler. "The President's Forum on the Future of the Southern Baptist Convention."

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid.

in the lives of children and youth, churches must contextualize methodology to the changing culture with the goal of being relevant to the younger people.<sup>69</sup> In other words, as the American culture changes, church ministries and especially children's ministries must adjust in order to present the gospel and a ministry that is applicable to children's lives.

In order to contextualize a children's ministry and a gospel presentation that is meaningful to children there are seven areas upon which ministries must focus. As ministries focus on these areas, it will lead to deeper levels of contextualization. The seven areas are as follows: Prayer, Parents, Preparation, Purpose, Participation, Plasticity, and Personalization. Some of these areas may need a renewed focus in a children's ministry while others may need complete overhauls.

## **Prayer**

The first area a children's ministry must focus upon is upon prayer.<sup>70</sup> A focus on prayer allows contextualization because the children's ministry that is not focused upon praying is a ministry that is powerless.<sup>71</sup> The more a ministry prays for children and salvations, the more their hearts will be turned to be willing to do whatever it takes to see children come to Christ. Children's ministries must prayerfully ask God for: a renewed heart to reach more children, excitement for children's ministry, for children to give their lives to Christ, for vision and strategy to reach out to the community, for

---

<sup>69</sup>Mark Driscoll, *Vintage Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 227-230. The difference in relative and relevant is stark according to Driscoll. If a ministry is relative the ministry is making truth relative, meaning the ministry will be teaching relative truth. Relevant, however, is referring to making ministries and the gospel relevant to people's lives showing how the never changing truth of God's message can make a difference in their lives today.

<sup>70</sup>George Barna, *Revolutionary Parenting* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2007), 113. Barna's definition of parents who were revolutionary parents, prayed openly in front of their children, by themselves, and prayed expecting God to act on their behalf.

<sup>71</sup>Josh McDowell, *Youth Ministry Handbook* (Nashville: Nelson, 2000), 12-13.

boldness in proclamation of the gospel, for opportunities to reach out to the children's parents, for parents to be the spiritual leaders in the home, and a host of others.<sup>72</sup> Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson reiterate the importance of prayer in the church as they list the amount of prayer as the number one determiner of a church's overall success or failure.<sup>73</sup> If prayer is a large success determiner for churches in general, it must also hold true for individual ministries within the church as well. As George Barna wrote, "A Children's ministry that is not a praying ministry is no ministry at all; it is a daycare and is useless to the church."<sup>74</sup> For churches to impact children's lives, children's ministries must focus upon having a vibrant prayer life by all volunteers and ministers.

## Parents

A second area children's ministries must center upon in order to contextualize to children is parental involvement. For children's ministries to flourish, they can only do so when parental involvement is high.<sup>75</sup> Dennis Rainey wrote in *Building Strong Families*, "No church, community, or nation will rise higher than the spiritual condition of its families."<sup>76</sup> In reality, the children's ministry in the local church must work in conjunction with parents in the spiritual development of their children. As shown earlier, the church is not the scriptural place for children's spiritual development; the home is the center of children's spiritual development. Francis E. Clark wrote in 1903, "Family religion is the foundation stone of all our religious life in church and state, and family

---

<sup>72</sup>Barna, *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions*, 102-3.

<sup>73</sup>Mike Dodson and Ed Stetzer, *Comeback Churches* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2007), 192-93.

<sup>74</sup>Barna, *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions*, 104.

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid.*, 110-11.

<sup>76</sup>Dennis Rainey, "Local Church Family Ministry in the New Millennium," in *Building Strong Families*, ed. Dennis Rainey (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002), 15.

worship lies near the foundation of all family religion. Yet many families are irreligious.”<sup>77</sup> Scripture is clear that parents are the first line of evangelists for their children in their homes,<sup>78</sup> therefore, parents must be teaching the gospel to their children at home. Parents therefore should also be involved in some level with the children’s ministry in order to be important and active in their child’s life. Ministries who have parental involvement are much more effective in reaching children with the gospel and in ministry contextualization because the ministry is capable of at least two contextualization factors. First, the children’s ministry can follow up and work in conjunction with what parents are teaching at home. Secondly, the ministry is more able to know what is changing in children’s lives, enabling ministry and gospel contextualization to occur quickly and the ministry to have a major impact on children’s lives.

### **Preparation**

Another area children’s ministries must be built around in order to have great input on children’s lives utilizing contextualization is through proper preparation. In order for children’s ministries to contextualize the ministry and the gospel to children they must make preparation a priority. This type of priority includes both long-term and short-term preparation in the ministry as a whole and as individual leaders.<sup>79</sup> In the short term, a ministry that only “pulls an event off” in the last few minutes before the event is not doing their best for the Lord or for the children. This type of attitude, to pull it together last minute, is asking God to bless something that was not thought through well,

---

<sup>77</sup>Francis E Clark, *The Christian Endeavor Manual* (Norwood, MA:Plimpton, 1903), 196-98.

<sup>78</sup>Tom Wilkes, “Introducing Teenagers to God,” in *Transforming Student Ministry*, ed. Richard Ross (Nashville: Lifeway, 2005), 47.

<sup>79</sup>Barna, *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions*, 99-100.



was not prepared, prayed for, and more than likely not purposed to impact the children. When ministries are not prepared they cannot be contextualized to the individual children they are working with. Furthermore, children see a lack of training, readiness, and disorganization as a form of disrespect to them. Even though many children are unable to voice this perceived disrespect, the children act out, resulting in distractions in class. If the children's ministry is not important enough for the teacher to diligently prepare, why is it important enough for the children to sit and listen attentively?

In view of longer term planning, the children's ministry that is focused upon reaching children with the message of Christ will plan to be effective in the community by forming a vision and strategy on how to reach the community's children.<sup>80</sup> Having a clear vision and strategy to reach the neighborhood is important because it allows ministry evaluation and goal setting for the future and purpose of the ministry in general. The long-term planning ministries ask themselves what they can do to reach out to their communities better, what is it that they are not doing currently, and who are they not reaching?<sup>81</sup> Ministries, however, must not stop simply with asking these questions; they must push forward to find an answer and craft an action plan to fulfill God's design for their ministry. As ministries consider preparation they will consider new ways to reach out to children, resulting in ministerial contextualization.

Another aspect of long-term preparation is leadership training for volunteers in the children's ministry. Too often ministry leaders are "thrown to the wolves" so to speak, without proper training in teaching children the Bible or biblical concepts. This lack of training for teachers is bad enough in and of itself, but when lack of training is combined with the fact that parents see teachers as experts and thus openly relegate their

---

<sup>80</sup>Miller and Stall, *Making Your Children's Ministry the Best Hour of Every Kid's Week*, 45.

<sup>81</sup>*Ibid.*, 66-67.

evangelistic responsibility to the church volunteers, there is a huge problem.<sup>82</sup> This huge problem, that untrained teachers are seen as the experts in child discipleship and evangelism, results in ineffective ministries with little effective spiritual change in children's lives. Children's workers must be trained in class management, teaching techniques, and child cognitive development. Teachers must understand that children like to be challenged and taught in depth; therefore teachers should be selected on spiritual understanding and knowledge, not simply if they are a warm body and willing to do the job.<sup>83</sup> The reality is that children want information, presented in new ways, so that they can learn more and apply more to their lives.<sup>84</sup> Rather than repeat the same stories each year, children want to be taught insights, personal applications, and lessons to build upon previously learned material so they can grow.

### **Purpose**

Children's ministries that contextualize their ministry in order to share the gospel will be ministries that have clear purpose. Purpose in this sense is not meaning to have a purpose statement but rather the ministry volunteers and leaders will be purposefully missional, scriptural, and evangelical.<sup>85</sup> In other words, the ministry will make a concerted effort for everything they do and teach to be centered on the Scripture, the gospel story, and be willing to use both traditional and non-traditional methods in order to engage children with that message. When children's ministries lose their gospel and scriptural focus, they can become a "church endorsed daycare,"<sup>86</sup> viewed as a

---

<sup>82</sup>Bryan Nelson and Timothy Paul Jones, "Introduction," in *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective*, ed. Timothy Paul Jones and Randy Stinson (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 17.

<sup>83</sup>Barna. *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions*, 108-09.

<sup>84</sup>*Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>85</sup>*Ibid.*, 97-98.

<sup>86</sup>Miller and Stall, *Making Your Children's Ministry the Best Hour of Every Kid's Week*, 51.

ministry only to give “cookies and add Jesus sprinkled on top,”<sup>87</sup> or seen as just playtime for the children. The children’s ministry must purpose the overall ministry to be fun, engaging, and focused upon evangelism and discipleship.<sup>88</sup> To be a purposeful children’s ministry, the goal must be both discipleship and evangelism, not one or the other because in almost every gathering, there are both children who are not saved and those who are already.<sup>89</sup> Neither evangelism without discipleship nor discipleship without evangelism are fulfilling the scriptural purposes of the church and individual ministries of the church.

Further, the children’s ministry must be purposed to be connected to the larger church context. Alvin Reid writes, “While the current trend is that the number of youth and children’s ministries are increasing, sadly the number of baptisms have been decreasing. There could be numerous reasons for such statistics, however the impact of youth and children being relegated to ‘their’ ministries instead of being part of the bigger church cannot be overlooked.”<sup>90</sup> If the church at large does not see the children’s ministry as part of the purpose of the church, the ministry will not reach its full potential.

## **Participation**

Participation is another key for children’s ministries who are ministering in a changing cultural context. In this usage, participation means that ministry workers must be people who are called to work with children. When people are called and are excited to be working with children, their countenance is more jovial, joyous, and excited to be at the children’s ministry event.<sup>91</sup> If the workers are not excited to be at the event, the

---

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., 50.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., 51.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., 50.

<sup>90</sup>Reid, *Introduction to Evangelism*, 261.

<sup>91</sup>Miller and Stall, *Making Your Children’s Ministry the Best Hour of Every Kid’s Week*, 74.

children will follow suit and will not be excited to be there either. In turn, if there is no excitement from the adults, the children see the ministry is lacking fun. If the ministry is not fun, the children have no desire to invite their friends to come to the next ministry event.<sup>92</sup> This cyclical excitement must be present in a children's ministry that is trying to reach out to the community as a lack of excitement and therefore limits the ministry's outreach opportunities. Sue Miller and David Stall, in their children's ministry book, ask, "Do your children want to invite their friends to the children's ministry events? If not then you have a problem that needs to be fixed."<sup>93</sup> In a world that is changing quickly, ministries are competing with everything else in child's world. If children do not enjoy the ministry, they will simply stop coming; therefore, ministries must contextualize to meet the changing culture. Children's ministries, like all ministries, must not be focused on the numerical goals but participation numbers and outreach numbers will tell ministries whether children enjoy the ministry or not.

### **Plasticity**

The next area of focus for a children's ministry must be plasticity, the ability to adjust quickly to cultural changes. As the American culture changes, church ministries must not be locked into only doing ministry in one way. This ability to adapt includes being able to adjust topics of study and the method of study. Particularly for children's ministries, they must be willing to adjust whatever is necessary to present a clear, contextually appropriate biblical gospel to the children they are entrusted by God.<sup>94</sup> For churches to have a plastic ministry style it means that they must have the ability to adjust ministry methods quickly to match cultural cues in order to tell the never changing gospel

---

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., 66-67.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., 66-67.

<sup>94</sup>Wilkes, "Introducing Teenagers to God," 45.

message.<sup>95</sup> Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson explain this concept in *Comeback Churches* when they write,

Once churches started to see their churches turned around, one area of change that was high on everyone's list was the children's ministry. When asked a significant number of comeback leaders indicated that the area of children's ministry changed in many ways. Some of these ways were to: create a yearly emphasis on children in the morning worship service, on VBS, special children's and family events, and changing Wednesday night activities to those that fit their churches best.<sup>96</sup>

Clearly, a children's ministry that cannot adjust to a changing culture will quickly be out of date, limited in the ministry they can perform, and will not be as fruitful as possible. Children's ministries must be ready, willing, and able to adjust and try new methods of doing ministry in hopes of contextualizing to a changing children's culture.

### **Personalization**

The final area of a children's ministry on which to focus in order to contextualize is being personal. The children's ministry that is focused using culture to communicate the gospel message will personalize the gospel message to the children to whom it is ministering. In this type of children's ministry, teachers will take into consideration the group dynamics including age, cultures represented, and diversity as they prepare and shape their studies, methodologies, and gospel presentations.<sup>97</sup> Sometimes the teacher will not know exactly who will show up, but they must take into consideration those who are normally present in order to personalize the message. George Barna writes in *Revolutionary Parenting*, "While there are a few golden rules with youngsters. Each youngster is unique."<sup>98</sup> Because each youngster is unique,

---

<sup>95</sup>Bjorklund, *Children's Thinking*, 19. Plasticity refers to the ability to reprogram rapidly due to stimuli in a context.

<sup>96</sup>Dodson and Stetzer, *Comeback Churches*, 193-95.

<sup>97</sup>Miller and Stall, *Making Your Children's Ministry the Best Hour of Every Kid's Week*, 67.

<sup>98</sup>Barna, *Revolutionary Parenting*, 41.

children's ministries that want to contextualize and thus personalize the gospel will utilize large and small group setting and teach using auditory and hands on techniques to explain the gospel.<sup>99</sup> The ministry that focuses on the gospel while utilizing these ideas will be able to form a personal connection between the leaders, children, and parents, and therefore may be more fruitful. This personal connection will help as the leader continually shares the message of Christ with the children and eventually with the parents, all in hopes of seeing people come to Christ.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has shown that in order to build an evangelistic children's ministry, there are many important factors. One of those factors is that ministries must take into consideration that children are developing cognitively; therefore, children's ministries must understand how and why children think. This thinking forces ministry leaders and teachers to explain the gospel, Scripture, and salvation to children in a way that they can understand and can comprehend. Explaining the gospel in a way children can comprehend is a form of contextualization that has been accomplished in the past and must continue in the future. As the church works with parents and children, all adults must understand that there are different ways to present the gospel, with some being better than others. The evangelist must think through how children will comprehend the presentation of the gospel and must try to avoid the unhelpful presentations that push children to make a decision based on fear, peer pressure, or other manipulations. Because society and the world is changing so drastically, the gospel must be contextualized and the children's ministry itself must be contextualized by staying current and relevant to children's lives.

---

<sup>99</sup>Miller and Stall, *Making Your Children's Ministry the Best Hour of Every Kid's Week*, 75.

CHAPTER 4  
BUILDING AN EVANGELISTIC  
CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

In May 2013, I enlisted ten members of Knoxville Baptist Church, Williamstown, Kentucky to participate in this Doctor of Ministry project. The stated goal of the project was to build an evangelistic children's ministry. At the completion of the project, eight of the members had completed the seminars and the practicum in their entirety. Other church members filled the vacancy of the two who did not complete the project in order to have enough volunteers to complete the practicum. These late additions were not included in the pre- and post-project data analysis. My main objectives in building an evangelistic children's ministry through this project were to equip the participants to effectively evangelize children and to begin a fresh a fire for child evangelism in the church.

In the first phase of the project, participants were recruited from the congregation of Knoxville Baptist Church. During this phase, information about the project such as title, purpose, and goals were made available through church bulletins, newsletters, and Sunday morning worship service announcements. Additionally, I personally sought individual members who had already demonstrated an interest in child evangelism and ministry to ask them to participate in the project. As members agreed to participate, I asked each person to complete a pre-training survey.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>See Appendix 9 for this survey.

Once the participants were recruited, phase 2 began. In this phase, I developed the training curriculum, sermons, and organized the practicum.<sup>2</sup> After I created the training curriculum, I sent a copy of the full curriculum to each member of a five person peer review board. This peer review board critiqued the training curriculum and sermons via survey.<sup>3</sup> Upon receiving the surveys back from the board, I adjusted the curriculum and sermons as suggested by the review board.<sup>4</sup> At the same time during this phase, I contacted the owner of the mobile home park where the practicum was planned in order to gain final approval from him for our presence and ministry in the mobile home park community.

Following the completion of phase 2, phase 3 began that included a two-week sermon series. During this phase, the congregation was taught that Scripture mandates that parents are to be the most influential people in their children's spiritual lives (Deuteronomy 6:4-9). During those same sermons, the church was challenged to remember the scriptural importance of children, the need for child-like faith, and that the church is to love children in the same way as Jesus loves children (Mark 10:13-16).<sup>5</sup>

Phase 4 began following the sermon series that entailed a four-week small group training on Sunday evenings. Each training session was designed to last one hour in length and included lecture, discussion, and question and answer time. Further, I provided a learner guide for each participant to be able to take notes.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup>See Appendix 2 for the Training Session Curriculum and appendices 5 and 6 for sermon outlines.

<sup>3</sup>See Appendix 8 for the Peer Review Board Survey.

<sup>4</sup>See Appendix 13 for an explanation of changes to the curriculum following the review board's recommendations.

<sup>5</sup>See Appendix 5 for Sermon Outline.

<sup>6</sup>See Appendix 6 for Sermon Outline.



Phase 5 was a preparation for the practicum in phase 6. During this phase we distributed flyers for the Backyard Bible Club and Vacation Bible School in the local mobile home park. We distributed flyers on the Sunday night before the Backyard Bible Club was to start on the following Wednesday evening.

Phase 6 was designed to provide an opportunity for the class members to apply what they had learned in the training sessions to evangelize children and see how to have an evangelistic children's ministry. The project practicum, a Backyard Bible Club, showed the need for child evangelism, the need in the local community for the gospel, the way children's ministry could be structured evangelistically, and most importantly to provide opportunities for sharing the gospel message. During this phase the class members ministered for four weeks to children in the mobile home park. One week of the practicum included Knoxville Baptist Church's Vacation Bible School. The class participants, therefore were able to engage 125 children in the VBS with the gospel instead of the Backyard Bible Club that week. Including the church's VBS in the practicum was not originally part of the practicum plans, however, due to church calendar, it was necessary to include.

Phase 7 of the project included a meeting to complete post-training surveys, allow class members to suggest improvements to the curriculum or practicum, and to ascertain an overall feeling of the project. The surveys were the same as given in phase one. Each participant was encouraged to speak whether in the group meeting or one-on-one interview with me. Some participants chose to talk in the meeting while others shared in an interview.

### **Phase 1: Participant Enlistment and Survey**

Participation in the project required completion of a pre- and post-project survey, attending the morning worship service for the two-week sermon series, attending

all four training sessions, distribute flyers, and being involved in the outreach practicum. There were no limitations on the number of participants in the project; age, however, was limited to those above sixth grade. The initial goal, which was completed, was to enlist ten church members in the project. Each of the ten participants completed the pre-training survey at the time of their agreement to participate.

## **Phase 2: Curriculum Development and Adjustment**

The purpose of this phase was to develop the training curriculum and to enlist a peer review group to critique and enhance the curriculum. The training curriculum included two sermons and four training sessions. Upon completing the curriculum I sent all five review board members a copy of the teaching curriculum, sermon outline notes, learner guide, and a survey about the curriculum. Each person was asked to look in-depth at the curriculum overall and make suggestions through the survey. Due to the stated goals of the project, before I could move forward into phase three of the project, the overall average rating of the curriculum by the review board had to be at least 4.5. Upon receiving the surveys back from the review board, the overall average rating was 4.6, therefore I made adjustments as the board suggested and moved forward onto phase three. Lastly, during this phase, I decided to use *Desiring God's Hidden Things*<sup>7</sup> curriculum for the Backyard Bible Club practicum.

---

<sup>7</sup>This curriculum can be obtained from <http://www.childrendesiringgod.org/curriculum/curricula.php?id=1&curriculaId=7>.

### **Phase 3: Sermon Series**

Phase three was accomplished during two sermons given at Knoxville Baptist Church during the Sunday morning worship service.<sup>8</sup> The purpose of the sermons was to educate, encourage, and challenge the church to fulfill biblical mandates in child evangelism and children's ministry. In order to accomplish this wide ranging and wide reaching purpose, the congregation had to be taught and shown that child evangelism was commanded by Jesus himself and that children matter to the kingdom. Further, the church needed to be reminded that parents are key participants to the spiritual development of their children. If the church or parents neglect this scriptural mandate to reach children with the message of the gospel, then they are not fulfilling the Great Commission, nor are they following God's Word obediently. Lastly, the sermons served as a foundation for the training group in building an evangelistic children's ministry.

#### **Week 1: The Mandate for Parental Involvement in Spiritual Growth**

The primary text for this first sermon was Deuteronomy 6:4-9. In this text, the Scripture indicates three concepts for children's ministry very clearly. The first concept is that parents must be purposeful in child rearing. Scripture here teaches that parents must be purposeful concerning the spiritual growth and rearing of their children. Parents must teach and discipline their children in accordance to God's desire and that he is worthy to be loved with their entire heart, soul, and might. Parents must show and teach their children who the Lord is and how to love him fully. Secondly, this text teaches that parents must thoughtfully design their parenting in order to touch their child's heart with the gospel of Jesus. This Scripture text teaches that a child's actions come from the heart; therefore parents must aim at heart change towards God. Simply put, the goal for

---

<sup>8</sup>See Appendix 5 and 6 for detailed Sermon outlines.

Christian parenting must be to affect children's hearts with the gospel of Christ. Thirdly, this Scripture teaches parents to always teach their children the statutes of the Lord regardless of circumstances of life. The text teaches parents that, as they are living life, no matter what they are doing, they should always be teaching their children about the Lord and his ways.

### **Week 2: The Mandate to Evangelize Children**

The primary text for this second sermon was Mark 10:13-16. In this text, people bring children to Jesus, and ask him to bless the children. The disciples rebuke the people in an effort to let Jesus be by himself or to simply rest. Jesus fervently rebukes the disciples and asks for the children to come to him. In this text, therefore, Jesus teaches three very important aspects about children and the kingdom of God. First, Jesus teaches that children are important in the kingdom of God. As the disciples try to turn away the children from Jesus, he is indignant with the disciples, telling them to let the little children come to him. Jesus is teaching the disciples that the children are too important to purposefully keep them away. In a broader sense, Jesus teaches the church that there are no unimportant people in the kingdom of God. In other words, Jesus teaches that regardless of age, socioeconomic status, demographic, or any other social construct, his followers are called to bring everyone they can to meet him. Secondly, the story teaches about the importance of child-like faith. Jesus states that everyone who comes to him must exhibit a child-like faith, whether young or old. This faith is a faith that is joyful, anticipatory, thankful, eager, dependent, and is trusting in Jesus alone for salvation. Lastly, Jesus teaches that his followers must love children like he does. In this text, Jesus lays his hands upon the children, not to impart salvation, but to show how much he loves all people, including children. The church, therefore must care for, love, and share the gospel with all children whom he places within the church's care.

## **Phase 4: Group Training**

Due to the limitations of a fifteen-week project, the training component<sup>9</sup> was limited to four weeks. In order to ensure the class members could better retain the training information, I provided a learner guide enabling them to take notes, answer questions, and record answers.<sup>10</sup> The goals of this training were threefold: to teach how to build an evangelistic children's ministry, how to share the gospel with children, and how to conduct a Backyard Bible Club.

### **Week 1: God, the Church, Parents and Children**

To begin the training curriculum, I began by reviewing the two sermons given the previous two Sunday mornings. Following that introduction, we looked at how God scripturally views children: as a gift to parents (Deut 7:13, Ps. 127:3); as desirable (Gen 9:7, Deut 6:3, Luke 1:24-25); as enjoyable (Matt 18:3, 19:14, Phil 2:15); and as important to protect (1 Sam 20:24). Also, we considered passages that showed adults' job in the raising of children such as: how to think and act toward God (Exod 12:26, Deut 4:9-10, Ps 78:4-6, Prov 22:6); how to be obedient to God (Prov 8:32, Jer. 2:30, Eph 6:1, Col 3:20); and how to discipline and teach (Prov 3:11-12, 13:24, 19:18, 23:13, Eph 6:4). Next we considered at length the importance of laying a proper spiritual foundation, considering their cognitive ability, for children before the age of eight. At this point we were forced to stop the class for the night due to the fact that the church had business meeting before the class session, only leaving about 25 minutes for class. The next week we continued from this point in the learner guide and then moved forward to material for Week 2.

---

<sup>9</sup>See Appendix 2 for the Teaching Curriculum.

<sup>10</sup>See Appendix 7 for the Learner Guide.

## **Week 2: Types and Purposes of Children's Ministries**

In training Week 2, we continued the last part of the teaching outline and also taught the material for Week 2. To finish week one's material, I taught the group about the scriptural mandate for parents to be the largest spiritual influence on a child's life. Further, we considered the historical location, evangelists, and discipled for children's spiritual development from biblical times until today. What we spent much time discovering was that children were heavily influenced, spiritually, by their parents until the onset of the industrial revolution. At that time, many fathers (the spiritual leader of the house) began working further away from the home and worked more hours. Due to the lack of fatherly involvement with children and the inherent loss of the spiritual leader, biblical morals and true spirituality decreased in children. That societal and spiritual change led to the founding of both Sunday school and the public school system, in hopes to replace the lost parental involvement in both spiritual and educational arenas of life.

I then moved directly into the second week's teaching, "Types and Purposes of Children's Ministries." We explored four ideologies of children's ministries prevalent in churches today. Those four ideologies were: a church endorsed baby-sitting service; a place for children to learn basic Bible knowledge; a place to learn how to be a good member of the church; and a place to build spiritual giants. We discussed the idea that few churches view their overall children's ministry to be a place to build spiritual giants. This lack of vision leads to many other problems in children's ministry, such as a lack of funding, a lack of volunteer training, and a lack of appropriate space. What we decided as a group was that, when a church is not focused on building spiritual giants, the children's ministry becomes focused on baby-sitting, knowledge disseminating, and teaching children how to be a good member of the church, all without a focus on the spiritual condition of the children in their care.

During this session we also explored the reason many churches lose focus for their children's ministry. We came to understand that most churches focus on adults to

the point that children only receive focus of whatever is left over, resulting in a loss of children's ministry priority. One participant expressed the belief that the reason children get what is left over is because "they don't really have a voice in business meetings and don't carry any weight in the church because they do not tithe." This observation is insightful and may very well be true, but it is nearly impossible to prove.

Another topic of study for this evening was considering the fact that, for children's ministries to be more evangelistic, we must redefine success inside children's ministry. A successful children's ministry, therefore, must be a ministry that has children coming to know Christ and others being open to spiritual things as a result of ministry done. Most children's ministries are focused on numbers, keeping people happy, or simply providing a place to remove children from the adult area in order to allow the adults to participate in the activities of the evening. This mentality cannot continue for a ministry that is building spiritual giants.

To finish week 2's teaching time, we engaged in five of the seven areas of focus as described in chapter three that lead to contextualization in order to reach children with the gospel. The other two areas have been interwoven throughout the training, therefore, I did not specifically cover them in this section. The areas I did specifically cover were prayer, parents, preparation, purpose, and participation. These are described at length in chapter three and in the appendix.

### **Week 3: Communicating the Gospel to Different Children**

Week 3 of training focused on teaching how to communicate effectively with children. Children's ministry workers must understand how to communicate with children well in order to communicate the gospel effectively. The first idea I explained was that children think differently and thus must be communicated with differently than children a few years ago. The illustration I used was the impact of electronic devices on children. We talked about the electronic devices available to young children now as

compared with ten, twenty, and thirty years ago. Then we talked about how those devices have changed children's thinking, comprehension, and concentration. As a second example we talked about how the world and society are constantly changing and, because of that fact, churches and workers must be able to relate the gospel to children's lives to be effective in their sharing of the gospel. The one statistic that was especially eye opening for the group was that 25 percent of people in America will have grandparents of Hispanic descent no later than the year of 2050.<sup>11</sup> This statistic shows the need for churches and ministries to begin reaching out to others who may not be just like themselves. The cultural melting pot of America today forces churches to be diverse in its ministry as well. This conversation led directly into another discussion about how the church must adjust ministry methodology to engage an ever changing society with the never-changing message of Jesus Christ.

As we continued in this training session, we considered the fact that as society changes, church workers will need to understand that every child must be reached with the gospel differently, even more than in the past. Specifically, each child has developed a different personality due to influences such as their age and gender, education received at school, family situations, social surroundings, experiences, learning styles, and physical limitations. All of these issues affect children's receptiveness to different gospel presentations. The wise children's ministry will continually be training their volunteers in multiple evangelistic techniques so that the children's hearts are always the purpose of the ministry.

The one concept we explained in-depth this week was that children's ministry workers must explain the gospel in certain ways for children to clearly understand the

---

<sup>11</sup>R. Albert Mohler Jr., Lecture at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; "The President's Forum on the Future of the Southern Baptist Convention," August 19, 2009, accessed April 5, 2013, <http://www.sbts.edu/resources/lectures/presidents-forum/video-the-presidents-forum-on-the-future-of-the-southern-baptist-convention/>.



gospel. I explained to the group that children are concrete thinkers thus workers need to use concrete illustrations with children. When explaining the gospel and biblical principles, workers must explain and talk using terms children understand. Other gospel communication skills that children's ministry workers must consider and would hopefully master are, speaking clearly so that everyone can understand, not talking in "Christianeze," using stories and pictures, and using question and answer techniques.

For the last few minutes of the session, we walked through step-by-step how a Backyard Bible Club works in order to be prepared for the practicum part of this project. I explained that the Backyard Bible Club has five parts: Games, Songs, Story, Craft, and Snack. Each aspect is focused towards either evangelism itself or enabling evangelism; the games are designed to get the children interested in being at the club; songs are chosen to explain and set-up the Bible story; the Bible stories are evangelistic (we will be using is from *Desiring God: Children's Club Things Hidden*);<sup>12</sup> the craft reinforces the Bible story teaching, and the snack gives adults time to spend with the children in order to talk with them about the teaching and to share the gospel. After explaining the basic ideas of a Backyard Bible Club I asked for volunteers to head up the five areas. I also handed out the *Desiring God* notebooks so the leaders could become familiar with the material.

#### **Week 4: The Gospel and Preparations for Backyard Bible Clubs**

The last week of training was largely centered on how to share the Gospel with children with a few minutes spent on final preparations for the practicum. As a class we talked through the essential and necessary parts of a good gospel presentation. The parts I taught as essential to a good gospel presentation were: God Created; humanity has

---

<sup>12</sup>This curriculum can be obtained from <http://www.childrendesiringgod.org/curriculum/curricula.php?id=1&curriculaId=7>.

sinned against God; Jesus came, lived, died, and resurrected; that humans must have faith in Him for salvation; and that the evangelist must call the hearer to a decision for Christ. After explaining the Gospel presentation essentials I began sharing some helpful and unhelpful ways to share the Gospel.<sup>13</sup> We then explored how to share the gospel with children. One commonly overlooked aspect of sharing the gospel that the group said openly that they had not considered in the past was that the person who is sharing the gospel must have a solid understanding of the gospel in order to share it effectively with others. Another aspect of a good gospel presentation is that the evangelist must not use “Christianeze,” or language that only those who are already believers understand. If they use “Christianeze” then the child who has not been exposed to church or the gospel previously will not understand. The evangelist must use children’s verbiage or language so that children can understand the gospel fully and be able to respond.

At this point we talked through different gospel presentations. These are outlined in chapter 3 and are included in the teaching outline. The main ideas explained were to utilize the walk through the Bible presentation and the personal testimony technique. I stressed that to just explain the gospel to people without asking them to repent is not true evangelism. I showed the class that after sharing the gospel with children, adults must ask the children if they would like to trust Jesus carefully, sensitively, without pressure, promised reward, or fear tactics.<sup>14</sup> I explained to the class there is an utmost importance in listening to the children’s words in their response to whether they would like to trust in Jesus. Regardless of their answer, the evangelist should ask more questions about Jesus, salvation, and what it means to believe in him for salvation. If children respond with faith type words, then the adult can proceed to help

---

<sup>13</sup>Chap. 3 in this paper explains these helpful and unhelpful Gospel presentations in detail.

<sup>14</sup>See chap 3 for a detailed explanation of these unhelpful Gospel presentations.

the child in a prayer of admittance, belief, and commitment (A, B, C's of salvation).<sup>15</sup> If the children respond with works based understanding or with a simple no, then the adult must respect the child's answer and not push ahead further. It was also suggested that a good closing to their time might be for the adult to pray with and for the child.

Next, we spent a great deal of time talking about the salvation prayer of the A, B, C's of salvation. What was explained was that the A, B, C's are not really the best gospel presentation but is a great outline to follow in prayer to accept Jesus as Lord and Savior. In other words, the A, B, C's of salvation as utilized in much children's literature is a better prayer guide to ask for salvation than a full gospel explanation. I made sure to explain that the younger the child is in age the more help the child will need in praying to receive Christ and the more careful the adult needs to be as they discern the evangelistic response of the child. Lastly, we considered the Backyard Bible Club material again in order to answer questions, plan for the following week, and finalize who was leading each part of the club.

### **Phase 5: Flyer Distribution**

In this phase of the project, the class participants and I handed out lollipops and flyers to the residents at Sherman Mobile Home Park. We handed out nearly 300 lollipops and 100 flyers in one hour.<sup>16</sup> The flyers invited children to participate in the Backyard Bible Club and Vacation Bible School at Knoxville Baptist.

---

<sup>15</sup>See Appendix 12 for a detailed explanation of the A, B, C's.

<sup>16</sup>See Appendix 3 for the actual flyer distributed.

## **Phase 6: Evangelistic Children's Ministry Practicum**

Sherman Mobile Home Park is located just off of US 25 in Grant County. The trailer park is about seven miles from Knoxville Baptist Church and the van ministry picks up approximately ten children from that community for all church events. There are approximately 40 mobile homes in this park with one playground, which is close to the trailer parks' sewer and water treatment plant. In phase 2 I consulted with both the parks' owner and manager, wherein it was determined that the playground area and the area next to it would be the best place to conduct the Backyard Bible Club.

The original design of the project was to hold the Backyard Bible Club each Wednesday evening through the month of July from 6:30 to 7:45 pm. What actually happened, however, was that the Backyard Bible Club met the first, third, fourth and fifth Wednesday evenings during July. The schedule was forced to change due to a change in dates for the church's Vacation Bible School that was scheduled for mid-June but had to be rescheduled for the second week of July. The project participants were asked to participate in VBS and to use their training while at VBS during that week.

During each week of the Backyard Bible Club there were no fewer than ten children and ten workers, with most weeks having seventeen children and twelve workers. Every week's outline was a bit different as we followed the outline in the *Desiring God* curriculum. During most weeks we were able to work with the children, but we were also able to talk with the adults and teenagers who walked the younger children to the club. Later in the month the teenagers who were observing the Backyard Bible Club began to build relationships with the adult workers as we invited them to eat a snack and any other way we could get them to participate. During the last week of the clubs some of the older children and teenagers began asking more questions about Jesus, salvation, and baptism, but no decisions were made at this time. There were multiple

project participants who reported evangelistic conversations with children, teenagers, and parents who were in attendance.

Lastly, VBS was a late addition to the project, but there was a noticeably different ideology in VBS due to the renewed focus on child evangelism. The teachers reported that they were more excited to tell and share the gospel with their classes than last year because they felt they had a better grasp on how to share.

### **Phase 7: Group Evaluation, Survey, and Data Analysis**

During the last phase of the project, the class met to complete the post-project survey, share opinions, experiences, and what they learned through the project. I began the session by asking everyone to complete the survey. Once everyone completed the surveys, I asked the participants open-ended questions about the project such as: what could have been better, what went well, and what were the most meaningful things they learned through the training. The overwhelming majority of participants said they enjoyed the training and stated they now felt more comfortable with sharing the gospel with children. Furthermore, those who work in the children's ministry at Knoxville Baptist Church said they have been implementing the lessons and ideas from the training into their ministries with "great results." One teacher said that focusing on the heart of the children has been transformational in her ministry. In fact, the participants were so excited about the results and spiritual conversations resulting from the Backyard Bible Club they expressed a desire to continue ministering to the mobile home park. The continuation of this project is detailed more in chapter 5. Lastly, during this phase I analyzed the data from the surveys, comparing each person's pre- and post-project surveys, where possible, and analyzed the data of the entire group as a whole.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup>See Appendix 10 for the raw data and chap 5 for the analysis of this data.

## **Conclusion**

After fifteen weeks of planning, preparing, praying, preaching, teaching, evangelizing, and compiling data, it is obvious that this project was more than simply a project or academic exercise. The structure of this project allowed the participating members of Knoxville Baptist Church, Williamstown, Kentucky, to take the initial steps in transitioning from having a non-evangelistic children's ministry to a church whose children's ministry is centered upon and focused upon children's salvation instead of anything else. Furthermore, the participants were trained in evangelistic techniques that, when contextualized correctly, could be utilized in adult evangelism as well as with children.

## CHAPTER 5

### EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

The evaluation of this project includes an examination of the purpose, goals, strengths, and weaknesses of this project. Further, this evaluation includes proposed modifications that are enhancements to the project's strengths or adjustments to strengthen the weaknesses of the project. Lastly this analysis includes a consideration of the overall project in light of theological and personal reflections.

#### **Evaluation of the Project's Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to establish an evangelistic children's ministry at Knoxville Baptist Church. Based upon the practicum, surveys, analysis, open forum, interviews, the time limitation of the project, and perceived results since completion, the project achieved its purpose. While the goal was achieved, the long term effects will only be determined in the future months and years. The goal for this project was to establish an evangelistic children's ministry, which is an extremely broad and encompassing goal. A better goal may have been stated as to develop an evangelistic children's ministry. What I came to understand during this project is that the establishment of an evangelistic children's ministry will not happen before an evangelistic children's ministry is grown. In other words, change takes time. For a church and a children's ministry to change to become more evangelistic the evangelistic heart of the people in the church and ministry must be grown first, which takes time. I would best describe the movement made at Knoxville through this project as growth but I do believe the foundation for an evangelistic children's ministry has been established.

The practicum proved an excellent opportunity for the church to see and participate in an evangelistic children's ministry event. At the same time, it provided opportunities to share the gospel with children, teenagers, and adults in a way Knoxville Baptist Church had not recently been able. During the final group session one participant stated she wanted to continue holding the Backyard Bible Clubs at the mobile home park. Once she expressed this desire, other participants agreed and stated that they wanted to continue ministering to the trailer park. The group discussed how the church could reschedule some planned ministries in order to continue ministry there. The plan included moving ministries from Wednesday evening to Sunday evening, which had not been done, presented, or approved to the church body for many years. The plan was presented and agreed to by both the deacon body and the congregation in business meeting without voiced opposition. Two weeks after the Backyard Bible Club re-started, which was not part of this project, five children expressed a desire to follow Christ. I met with the children and teenagers and explained the gospel to the children and each of them prayed for forgiveness and confessed Jesus as the Lord and Savior. The church's willingness to rearrange the ministry schedule in order to accommodate more ministry to these children shows the church's evangelistic heart is being renewed through this project.

### **Evaluation of the Project's Goals**

In order to evaluate the project's goals, participants completed pre- and post-project surveys. The pre- and post-project surveys were the same and used the Likert scale. By definition, the Likert scale is used to measure group attitudes so that when data is taken before and after, the data allows the analysis to show group attitudinal change. The data also allows analysis to show statistical differences between pre and post-project answers as well as the trending overall divergence in answers. In other words, the data



analysis will show attitudinal change and it will also show whether or not the individual questions were answered more uniformly by the participants following the project's completion.

An explanation of the analysis is in need at this time. Without being overly technical, as seen in the participant spreadsheet<sup>1</sup> I assigned a point value, one through six, to each answer the participants provided. The closer the answer to correct, in conjunction with the Likert scale, the higher I assigned the point value. For example, if a question said, "Salvation is found in no one other than Jesus Christ," and a person answered (by the Likert Scale) that they strongly agree, then that answer was assigned the point value of 6. If the person answered they agreed the assigned point value was 5; agree somewhat was 4; disagree somewhat was 3; disagree was 2; and disagree strongly was 1. To belabor this point in an effort for statistical clarity, if a question was stated as, "The point of church is to be entertained," and the participant answered strongly disagree then the assigned point value would have been 6 (because they are correct), all the way to strongly agree with a point value of 1 (because they would be totally incorrect). The use of this type of numbering system and the Likert Scale allows the analysis to see how strongly the participants believe their answers through the use of the statements agree/disagree somewhat, agree/disagree, and agree/disagree strongly.

Lastly, as an introduction to the goal analysis through statistics and statements, it is profitable to recognize that the eight people who completed the project are currently involved with the children's ministry in some way. What this fact means is that this is not a representative sample of the entire church, rather only the children's ministry workers. The analysis is forced therefore to consider that these answers would most likely be the most evangelistic towards children, most knowledgeable of children's

---

<sup>1</sup>See Appendix 9 for exact answers from all participants.

ministry, and be the most comfortable with talking to children about the gospel of Jesus Christ in the church. Furthermore, due to this particular population sample, the rest of the church body would most likely score lower than the participants on the surveys, which is important considering one of the stated purposes and goals was to change the entire church's attitude toward child evangelism. I will evaluate each of the five goals individually and provide comments about each.

### **Goal 1: To Evaluate the Church's Attitude of Child Evangelism**

Trying to ascertain the entire church's attitude toward child evangelism is difficult when only interviewing and surveying the people, particularly when all ten participants are currently working with the children's ministry already. With that knowledge in mind, I was able to evaluate the attitude of the participants and make generalizations about the church's attitude and knowledge about child evangelism. I will examine this goal's data analysis, looking only at the pre-project answers from three perspectives: the questions that the group was statistically most close to correct, the questions that the group was statistically furthest from correct, and the questions that provide insight to the church's attitude of child evangelism.

There were two questions that the group answered that showed a generally correct understanding. The first question was, "A Biblical Children's Ministry is designed to take the place of parental and familial spiritual responsibilities." This question is asking whether a children's ministry should be designed and focused to remove the parental scriptural directive to be the primary spiritual guidance for children. The participants scored an average of 5.63, showing they hold to the idea that parents must be the first line of spiritual formation and the church is to reinforce and help parents in the spiritual formation of their children. The second question that the participants generally answered correctly was, "The most important battlefield in the world for Christians is for children's hearts." This statement could have been worded in a more

effective way because, as worded currently, there may be some debate on whether or not the battlefield is for children's hearts or the hearts of humanity. The participants agreed that the battlefield for children's hearts is extremely important as they answered to an average of 5.63. These two average answers show that the participants hold to two important facts in the church. First, the church must not supersede parents nor should parents delegate their scriptural duty of teaching their children to the church. Second, the participants showed the knowledge and understanding that children are important, and they need the message of Jesus Christ to change their hearts. Again, these convictions are held by the participants who are currently working with the children's ministry, therefore the assumption would be that the church's attitude overall would be somewhere below these averages.

The questions that the participants scored, on average, the furthest away from a scriptural viewpoint were mostly associated with how to share the gospel with children in child language. In fact, three of the four lowest average scores on the entire survey came from the "Kid Friendly Language" section of the survey. This fact is significant considering there were only five questions concerning kid friendly terminology on the survey. In other words, on three of five questions the participants did not, on average, provide answers that were accurate usages of kid friendly language. What these answers show in the pre-test is a lack of understanding on how to share the gospel with children. Specifically, the participants showed a lack of understanding for how to explain the concepts of punishment, crucifixion, and Savior to children as they scored on average, 3.38, 3.25 and 3.63, respectively. These statistical findings show that the participants in the children's ministry currently do not know how to share the gospel with children in a child appropriate way. In fact, the statistics show that, because the answers were on average below 4, the participants disagreed with a correct usage of child friendly language. Again, as with the answers that were most correct, this analysis is of answers from people currently in children's ministry. An acceptable assumption, therefore, would

lead the analysis to infer that the overall church attitude would score lower than the participants in this project.

To finish the analysis of this goal, I will explore some interesting findings concerning the participants' attitudes in order to show that this project's goals have been accomplished. One of the interesting findings was that there is not a deeply held conviction concerning the purpose of children's ministry. On the question about the focus of children's ministry being about fun, the average answer score was 4.75. This answer score (by utilizing the Likert Scale) is representative of an answer somewhere between disagree and somewhat disagree. In other words, the participants only somewhat disagreed or disagreed with the children's ministry focus to be upon fun. If the average score had been above 5 then the statistics would have shown a much more deeply held conviction about the focus of children's ministry not being about fun. This statistic shows that there is a lack of understood purpose for the children's ministry inside the children's ministry workers and must be even more misunderstood in the general congregation.

Another interesting finding was about children's cognitive abilities, specifically about children's abstract or concrete thinking abilities. On this question which stated, "Children are abstract thinkers from about two years old to ten years old" the average score was 3.63. As with the last interesting score, this shows there is a lack of understanding of how children think. This is problematic for children's ministry workers, but it may also show a simple lack of understanding of what the term concrete and abstract thinkers mean.

A third and final interesting score was the score of 3.75 to question number eighteen. The question reads, "Most children have a one-time exposure experience to the gospel and trust Christ based on that one-time experience." The correct answer would be that most children do not have a one-time experience with the Gospel and trust Christ, but the participants' average score places the group somewhere between somewhat agree and

somewhat disagree with the statement. What this fact shows is that there is a lack of understanding of how most people, especially children, come to Christ after continued exposure to the gospel. The attitude, therefore, of the church must be somewhat unclear as well, leading to a misunderstanding of the gospel's work in people's lives.

**Goal 2: To Develop Curriculum to Teach  
How to Establish an Evangelistic  
Children's Ministry**

This goal, as written, was simply to develop curriculum that would teach the participants how to establish an evangelistic children's ministry. This goal was to be deemed accomplished when the curriculum was created and a peer review board rated the curriculum an overall average of 4 out of 5 through their survey. The survey and response spreadsheet are available in the appendix. In this analysis, I will examine first the development of the curriculum through the peer review board surveys, and second, I will examine the ability shown by the curriculum to teach the establishment of an evangelistic children's ministry as represented on the participant surveys.

To accomplish this goal, I created the curriculum and sent each review board member a copy of the sermons, teaching notes, and learner guides. Upon receiving the surveys back from the board, I analyzed the data and survey statements. The board's average overall rating was 4.6, but I wanted to improve the curriculum based on the board's comments and ratings.<sup>2</sup> One area the board showed me that I needed to improve was in the history of children's ministry. There was a section about the history of children's evangelism but it was not nearly extensive enough. Due to that feedback, I expanded the history of children's evangelism section in the teacher guide and learner guide. A second area I adjusted was in the sermons and, in particular, the sermon illustrations. I found new illustrations that more clearly explained the points that I

---

<sup>2</sup>Appendix 13 shows all changes made due to the review board's surveys and comments.

needed to make. One area the board felt the curriculum was excellent was in the area of showing where children's ministries must adjust to become more evangelistic.

The ability of the curriculum to teach how to have an evangelistic children's ministry should not be evaluated through the peer review board, rather it should be evaluated through the results of analysis and comparison of the pre- and post-project surveys. In comparison of the pre- to post-project survey answers, the most helpful statistics in evaluating the curriculum is the increase in average of correct answers from pre- to post-project answers. A few questions in particular, a few larger observations, and a testimonial statement are worth noting in this analysis.

The largest average increase for correct survey answer from pre to post-project pertaining to establishing an evangelistic children's ministry was about the number of times a child must be exposed to the gospel before becoming a believer. The average score increased 1.5 points from the pre-project survey to the post-project survey. The average score increase also produced a statistically significant change in the participant's answers. A statistically significant change through the use of a t-test shows that the curriculum made a significant difference in the participants' understanding.<sup>3</sup> Another large jump in average answer correctness was about abstract thinking in children, which increased 1.38 points. These two large improvements will help the children's ministry to organize the ministry to be more appropriate to children's cognitive abilities and to be more focused on presenting the gospel continually, both of which are foundational aspects to establishing an evangelistic children's ministry.

Two broad observations will help to explain the effectiveness of the curriculum to help establish an evangelistic children's ministry. The first broad observation that helps to understand the effectiveness of this curriculum is that three of five questions

---

<sup>3</sup>See Appendix 14 for the exact t-test results.

increased in average correct answers pertaining to using child language in the gospel presentation. For a children's ministry to be evangelistic, the workers must understand how to share the gospel with children in language children understand. The curriculum, as evidenced by this data, accomplished the goal of teaching how to explain salvation type terms to the participants.

A second broad observation is that every question's average correctness score increased or stayed the same, except four. In fact, when all the questions' scores are averaged together, the pre-project score is 4.75 and the post-project score is 5.23. This change is statistically significant at a .5 point change in average correctness and shows the participants at least gained knowledge they did not have prior to the project about evangelism and children's ministries.

As helpful as data and statistics are to explain changes in attitude, a personal testimony may help to demonstrate the curriculum's effectiveness. One person, during the open forum night, shared her experience and eye-opening moment. She recounted how she has been working in children's ministry for more than twenty years and had been doing her ministry the same way all twenty. She stated that she had never thought through the societal changes in our culture and how she needed to adjust her ministry. Further, she stated that she became convicted that she had been only focused on teaching the material and not teaching to the children's hearts. In her words,

Since that realization, I have changed my whole outlook on the classes I teach, the way I teach, the way I prepare, the way I respond, the way I pray, it's all different now. I've been doing it differently for three weeks now and I'm already seeing a difference in the children' openness to the gospel, my openness to explaining the gospel and I am seeing their hearts beginning to yearn for more.

I believe this testimonial is not simply evidence of the curriculum's effectiveness; it is evidence of a change in openness to the Holy Spirit, purpose, mentality, attitude, and desire.

### **Goal 3: To Equip Participants with Gospel Techniques to Share with Children**

Most of the participants of this project were already heavily involved in children's ministry thus they had been exposed to many of the main outlines for child evangelism. This goal, therefore, must be analyzed and considered in terms of the participants gaining more knowledge in order to evangelize and in their number of evangelistic conversations with children. I will analyze this goal in two ways. First, I will analyze this goal through comparison of the pre- and post-project survey answers pertaining directly to evangelism. Second, I will bolster those results with statements from the participants concerning the equipping nature of the project.

In terms of statistical analysis, the goal of equipping participants with gospel techniques in order to share with children can be proved to be accomplished through analysis of questions 8-21 and 26-31. The most important question on the survey that shows participants' being equipped to share the gospel is the question that asks about a four part gospel presentation, giving an extremely short outline. The pre to post-project average score increased .63 points, from 5 to 5.63. Further, the group overall answered in a more succinct way with the standard deviation difference between the pre- to post-project answers shrinking by over 1.7. What this conclusion means is that the participants' answers showed a unity and a correctness that was not present prior to the project. The set of questions related to child terminology, as described in goal 2, showed the participants were equipped through the project to share the gospel with children. As stated previously, four of the five questions pertaining to sharing the gospel in children's language increased in correctness from pre- to post-project. This section of the survey contained three of the top four average score increase in the entire survey when comparing the pre- to post-project answers.

In non-statistical terms, I believe this project goal was accomplished because most of the participants were trying to use the A, B, C's to share the gospel with children



without effect. Once the participants understood a proper use of the A, B, C's of salvation, they were better equipped to share the gospel and to help a child pray to receive Christ. In other words, once the A, B, C's were understood more as an outline to pray to receive Christ rather than as a full gospel presentation, it was as though a light-bulb turned on in their heads. This newfound understanding was shown on the post-project surveys with a near full point increase in correctness from the pre-project survey concerning the use of the A, B, C's. Upon understanding that the A, B, C's were not a full gospel presentation, the participants moved deeper into understanding what a good gospel presentation entails and began using the new method.

The participants who completed the project reported during the open forum time that they felt better equipped to evangelize children. They mentioned that they now understood the main ideas they need to tell children and how to relate those theological words into terminology that children can understand. Many of the participants reported some level of continued anxiety in sharing the gospel, but they all said their anxiety had lessened.

#### **Goal 4: To Utilize a Backyard Bible Club as the Practicum**

This project goal, the goal to utilize a Backyard Bible Club as the project practicum, must be considered accomplished due to the fact that the Backyard Bible Club was completed. The club was, however, adjusted from five weeks to four weeks to accommodate the church's VBS schedule and the week of VBS was included as part of the practicum. The Backyard Bible Club possibly provided more opportunity for the participants to share the gospel with children because, in VBS, the church had classes with thirty children, totaling 120 children overall. These simple numbers should translate into more possible conversations about the gospel. Further, the inclusion of the week of VBS also allowed the participants to see how an organized and focused goal of an

evangelistic children's ministry could occur in a different setting other than the Backyard Bible Club.

As an example that the Backyard Bible Club opened the participants' eyes and the church's eyes to reach out to children with the gospel of Christ, the participants stated their desire to continue the Backyard Bible Club ministry after the five-week practicum was completed. This desire to continue the Backyard Bible Club shows that an unstated goal, which is that the church would grow in evangelistic fervor, was accomplished as well.

**Goal 5: To Increase the level of Confidence in sharing the Gospel with Children in Ministry Settings**

The goal of increasing the level of confidence in sharing the gospel with children can be shown through the data analysis because of the use of the Likert scale. As stated previously, the Likert scale, when used properly, can show attitudinal changes from one point in time to another point in time. In the analysis of this project goal, I will analyze the data for a few questions and responses and also will recount some personal testimonies concerning personal growth in evangelism confidence in order to show that this goal has been achieved.

The most obvious data analysis that shows an increase in confidence in sharing the gospel is question number 31. This question simply asks for a numerical number of times the participant had shared the gospel with a child within the last two months. When compared, the pre- to post-project average number of gospel presentations went from 3 per person to 5 per person. This increase is, I believe, indicative of an increase in the level of confidence in sharing. If someone is not confident in their gospel message, they will not share the message. If someone is confident, however, they are much more likely to share.

Another average that must be considered when deciding if this goal has been accomplished is the attitudinal change for the number of times someone needs to hear the gospel message to believe. The question's answers from pre- to post-project averages increased by 1.5 points, which shows a significant change. This significant change indicates that the participants now understand the fact that they must continue telling the message of the gospel to people whether they have heard it before or not. This understanding is a part of the foundation for the reason the average number of gospel presentations per person has increased.

When the data analysis is evaluated from a broad view, seven of the eight participants' overall average answers moved closer to correct when comparing the pre- and post-project surveys. As the participants really began to understand the material, the more confident they became. Furthermore, when a standard deviation analysis is done on each individual question, another indicator of confidence is found. For twenty-one of thirty questions, the standard deviation of the survey answers moved smaller when the pre- and post-project answers are compared. The standard deviation number shows how broad the answers were given by the participants and indicated the group's unity level with each question. As the standard deviation number decreases, the more unity of attitude and understanding; the larger the standard deviation number the less unity of attitude and understanding. As the ministries' standard deviation grows smaller, like in this analysis, and particularly when the number grows smaller for twenty-one of thirty questions, there is a growing unity in the group, which gives an agreed upon purpose, goal, and confidence in the ministry itself and in the ministry volunteers.

As for personal testimonies, the participants openly stated in the open forum that they felt much more confident in sharing the gospel with children. One person, as previously stated, said her ministry has totally changed due to the desire to share the gospel with the children with whom she works. Another person said that his total view of parenting had changed due to this curriculum and project stating,

I now realize that I have been aiming at behavior modification in my children and in other's children. I recognize that is not the goal; the goal is to share the gospel in every situation with graciousness and firmness in order to continually share Jesus with children. My confidence level has increased in sharing the gospel because now I see that is the goal of parenting, children's ministry, and life in general. Knowing the gospel is my goal, I must be more confident in sharing that message.

These types of personal testimonies and statements show clearly that this goal has been accomplished.

### **Strengths of the Project**

As with any project, there were certain strengths that allowed the project itself to fulfill its purpose and goals. I will provide three strengths of this project that I believe had a major positive impact on the project overall. The first strength of the project was the learner guide. This guide was given to the participants enabling note-taking, following along during discussion and teaching time, and enabling the participants to study the material that was covered outside of the training session time. I believe this proved helpful in fulfilling the project's purpose and goals because it allowed the participants to write down the information rather than just hearing the information. As explained in chapter three, everyone learns in a little different way. Due to these different learning styles, the more varied teaching elements a teacher can utilize in a class, the more likely the material is to make an impact on the hearer.

A second strength of the project was that the practicum utilized a ministry model with which none of the participants had experience in the past. The Backyard Bible Club in particular provided a ministry event that few participants had experienced in the past. The participants could see a definite difference in ministry focus than the church's normal children's ministry focus. Furthermore, because no participant had any experience with a Backyard Bible Club before, the participants generally felt a need to listen, learn, and do what they were instructed. Again, this inexperience allowed the participants to see a different type of ministry than normally held by the children's

ministry at Knoxville. Many of the participants have only served in children's ministries that were focused upon behavior modification. For these people, the project served to be an example for what a truly evangelistic children's ministry event and ministry overall could look like. This concept was a huge strength because the differences were so stark between the normal ministry and this project practicum. The participants were forced to see the different focus. As they understood the different focus, they were forced to evaluate the ministry of which they were currently a part.

Another strength of the project was that it created many opportunities for the participants to share Jesus with others. In particular, the project created opportunities for the participants to share Jesus with children, teenagers, and adults who many have never heard of Jesus before. I believe some church members at Knoxville believe that the only people in the world who have not heard of Jesus live in some remote village in an obscure corner of the world. One person who has taught children for twenty years told me, after the first practicum week, "I have no idea where to start with these children to tell them about Jesus. They are so ignorant of who He is and so I really have to think about how I say things and to think about what I need to say." This ignorance of Jesus Christ really opened eyes towards the hurting world inside our own community. I believe this was a strength because it enlightened people in the church to see the need to be evangelical and to minister to those who do not know him.

### **Weaknesses of the Project**

The weaknesses of the project can be determined by the surveys, interviews and my experience as I walked through the teaching material. The first weakness was that the training material was taught over four weeks, with one week being shortened tremendously by the church business meeting. There is enough material in the training to

be taught over six weeks or possibly even longer. Due to the fifteen week limitation of the project, I could not extend the training and still complete the project on time.

Another weakness was the Backyard Bible Club curriculum we used during the practicum. The material was not difficult to teach, did not teach heresy, nor was it controversial. The material was simply more advanced than it needed to be for the workers and the children with whom we were working. In other words, many of the children with whom we were working had never heard of Jesus. Thus, to begin with Jesus' parables was a big step and seemed to leave much foundational work behind. Once the church decided to continue the Backyard Bible Club after the group interview, we developed our own curriculum that was focused on the gospel explicitly. This new curriculum also seemed to have been better suited for our workers and the children we are working with. The change in curriculum proved to be effective for the workers and the children as five children and youth accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior in the second week of use with the new curriculum.

The last weakness of the project was the survey answer data analysis. The six point Likert scale was prescribed for the project, therefore I utilized that scale. If, however, the scale had been similar but included one more answer like "no opinion" or "neither agree nor disagree" in the middle of the scale, turning it into a seven point scale, the analysis would have been somewhat more helpful. The first problem in using the six point scale was that it did not provide an option for the participant to basically say I do not know. They were forced to answer either agree or disagree in some fashion. If they read the question and saw it had cues that seemed to be good, then they would agree with it in some way. The participants needed another option for their answer if they had not ever thought about the question or type of question before. In other words, there was no middle ground to act as a buffer between disagreement and agreement for the participant.

## **Proposed Modifications**

If this project were to be duplicated in the future, several adjustments should be made to ensure an improvement of the weaknesses and to expand the strengths of this project. First, the amount of training sessions would be increased from four weeks to six as the training material is extensive enough to teach in depth for that amount of time. If I were to replicate this project in the local church, I would not be under the same time limitations, therefore, I would adjust the number of training sessions accordingly. If I were to replicate this again for a Doctor of Ministry Project I would adjust the overall schedule by increasing the training to six weeks, decrease the sermon section to one week, and decrease the practicum to four weeks.

Second, I would schedule the project in the midst of the church calendar and schedule all other church activities around the project. In regards to this project and Vacation Bible School, the church VBS directors were forced to change dates directly following the participant recruitment. This scheduling change resulted in was a limited the number of participants for the project and a children's ministry volunteer group that was overworked and stressed. Particularly, I was forced to schedule the teaching session on a Sunday evening, the next on a Wednesday evening, and the last on consecutive Sunday evenings. Further, because of the Vacation Bible School, the practicum weeks at the mobile home park were not consecutive. We had one week at the park, the next week at the VBS, and the last three weeks at the park. Without continuity, there is no way to build momentum. If I were doing this project again, I would make sure church calendars are set and stress the importance of not interrupting the training or practicum for other ministries.

Thirdly, I would use Backyard Bible Club curriculum that is more contextualized for our workers and the children with whom we were working. The material we used was not horrible curriculum, nor would I review it negatively. The

material just simply did not work as well as I hoped for the purposes of this project. Some participants found the Bible stories difficult to relate to the children in the mobile home park, while other participants did not find the stories easy to transition to evangelism. Following the project, when the church and participants extended the number of weeks for the Backyard Bible Club in the mobile home park, we developed our own curriculum, which resulted in an almost immediate change in the comfort level with the Bible stories and evangelistic opportunities.

As a fourth modification, I would adjust the teaching sessions to include more examples of gospel presentations. Furthermore, I would include time to practice and perform the new presentations. The current teaching sessions include ideas, concepts, and a few gospel presentations, but many of the participants did not have a preferred presentation. The most common presentation the participants had used was the A, B, C presentation, which they did not really like using. I taught the class to use the A, B, C's as a way to pray for salvation rather than a gospel presentation. As a modification I would include a section to cover different gospel presentation outlines to children.

### **Theological Reflections**

This project was established upon the biblical basis that all Christians must actively and aggressively participate in the evangelizing of non-Christians, including children. Each of the aspects of this project was designed to work together to create an increased desire to use children's ministry as an evangelistic outreach at Knoxville Baptist Church. The prayerful and hopeful outcome of this project was a church whose obedience in fulfilling the Great Commission would increase as the desire to evangelize children and the lost emerged. I believe this project accomplished those goals; it brought glory to God as his people were renewed in their pursuit of evangelism and fulfilling the Great Commission. I can note at least three theological reflections from this project.



The first theological reflection is that children's ministries and church ministries in general must teach and preach the gospel of Christ. Simply put, children's ministries must stop focusing on moralistic deism that is accompanied by behavior modification. Moralistic deism must not be the focus of children's ministry any longer. Only the heart change brought by a relationship with Jesus Christ is worth the church's focus, time, energy, and efforts. Particularly, through this project, some teachers who have taught for many years began to see the need to teach at the heart of the children and not at their actions. For years, as one children's ministry teacher stated during the training stated, "The church's children's ministry has been focused upon making children into moral people who know how to act right in church, who can talk about some of the Bible's stories, with the ultimate goal of getting the children to repeat a prayer; now I see that those goals are not what I should have been aiming at as a teacher." Theologically, this statement indicates a huge shift in thinking and this shift must not be dismissed. She came to realize that only when God changes hearts do actions change. The Scriptures clearly teach that people are born in sin and need a relationship with Jesus Christ that results in a new heart. Too many children's ministries are not aiming at the heart but are aiming at the head (seeking to give knowledge) or at the feet (the actions of the person) without recognizing that from the heart comes all words and actions. If the church of today is going to impact the world of tomorrow, it will be through affecting the hearts of people and children with the gospel message of Christ.

A second theological reflection is that God has provided each local church with Holy Spirit gifted and talented people who, when they work together, can act and fulfill his plans for the church body's ministry. For example, when I began this project, I was concerned that we would not have enough participants or volunteers to complete the project and practicum in particular. I was also concerned that people who were involved in children's ministry would be the bulk of the participants and thus be absolutely unwilling to consider a new way to perform ministry. I was concerned that this

unwillingness to adjust would render the training sessions meaningless in seeing an evangelistic children's ministry built at Knoxville. Much to my delight, God provided the exact right people for the teaching and practicum in order to minister at the mobile home park and to begin to see an adjustment in the church children's ministry. Furthermore, God provided people of all ages who may not have gone through all of the training but joined the team later because they heard about what God was doing and wanted to make sure the Backyard Bible Club was staffed fully. For instance, a freshman in high school was able to attend roughly half of the training sessions due to prior commitments, but he attended all the weeks of the practicum. He grabbed hold of the goals of an evangelistic children's ministry and was ready to serve in whatever capacity the group needed him to serve. As a result, he led the games in the second set of the Backyard Bible Club. Another story of God's provision was of a grandmother who was simply too old to participate in the practicum of the project. She wanted to be involved with the ministry because, as she said, "I see the evangelistic purpose of the ministry." With her newfound understanding of evangelism, she volunteered to make a snack every week of the practicum (beginning about week two) and for the extended weeks of the Backyard Bible Club ministry. She would make the snacks from scratch on Wednesday afternoon, drop them off at my house, and I would take them with me to the event. God showed himself capable to provide exactly what the church needed in order to fulfill ministry and to fulfill His purposes.

A last theological reflection is that sections of the church can be evangelistically revitalized, possibly with child evangelism as the beginning of revitalization. Many people in this church have not caught the evangelistic zeal, but others have a renewed focus on child evangelism. What I have seen is the "rubbing off" of evangelism from person to person. Truly evangelism is less taught and is more caught. Again, this renewed zeal is evidence of a work of God in this church and in the people of God.

## **Personal Reflections**

After spending many weeks in preparation and prayer for this project, along with the actual fifteen weeks of the project, I have learned, been renewed, and been challenged in many areas. First, my passion for evangelism in following the Great Commission has been renewed and reinvigorated. As a pastor, I have found at times my excitement and commitment to evangelism can increase or decrease dependent upon how passionate the church is for those ministries. If the church is apathetic about evangelism, sometimes my evangelistic zeal wanes as well. Due to this project, my evangelistic zeal has been renewed, and I have been challenged to not allow my calling as a Christian to be dependent upon anything other than obedience to the call of the one who saved me. Furthermore, this project has allowed me to see that others' evangelistic zeal can be renewed and revived as well. As written in chapter one's ministry context, the church began the project as apathetic towards evangelism. Following the project's completion, the church is trying to find new ways to make ministry possible and create evangelistic opportunities with unbelievers. This realization taught me that the church sometimes only needs a spark to catch fire for God. My firm conviction, as a result of this project, is that pastors in the local church must preach boldly, train effectively, and model openly the church's ministry. These things will lead the church to slowly begin to follow and do the same.

Second, I believe that the tools, ideas, and concepts taught through this project will affect Knoxville Baptist Church's children's ministry for years to come. Obviously, the future is unpredictable. I can observe, however, teachers adjusting their teaching and ministry styles, goals, and foci already. The teachers have seen and have implemented new strategies that aim at the children's hearts with their teaching, not simply to impart knowledge or correct behavior. Since the project began, we have seen around eight children who have either prayed to receive Christ or who are open and want to talk more

about following Christ. The church's enthusiasm for children's ministry in total has increased, with the church holding local Royal Ambassador meetings, being an Operation Christmas Child drop-off location, and holding youth rallies. I believe this renewed focus on children's ministry will have an effect on Knoxville for many years.

Lastly, I have been shown that I have much more to learn about God, evangelism, children's ministry, the church, leadership, and much more. I desire to be a life-long learner and to impart that learning to others, for the praise and glory of God. This project is not the end of my training or learning. Instead, it is both reminder of everything I do not know and a tool I must use to push myself further in training and learning.

### **Conclusion**

This project served as the culminating act of earning my Doctor of Ministry degree. From the first seminar until the completion of the degree, I have been challenged by the professors, reading, and my cohort peers to serve Christ more fully and love Him more deeply. Each seminar built upon the previous seminars, explaining more fully and more completely the concepts needed to grow the local church and to evangelize the world. This project served as the net that brought all the concepts, ideas, and teaching together in application for the local church. Without this project, the degree program would have been a life-changing degree for me personally. The project, however, has altered the future of Knoxville Baptist Church and how I will continue to perform and lead in ministry in the future.

APPENDIX 1

KNOXVILLE BAPTIST CHURCH STATISTICS

Table A1. Knoxville Baptist Church Statistics

Year	Baptisms	Resident Membership	Total Membership	Sunday School Attendance Avg.
1990	17	210	301	172
1995	0	335	421	135
2000	4	339	429	151
2005	6	315	394	83
2010	9	339	427	93
2012	2	265	348	65

## APPENDIX 2

### FOUR-WEEK TRAINING SESSIONS FOR EVANGELISTIC CHILDREN'S MINISTRY - TEACHING OUTLINE

#### Week 1: "God, the Church, Parents & Children"

- 1) Children in Scripture
  - a. God's view of Children
    - i. As a Gift to Parents – Deut. 7:13; Ps. 127:3
    - ii. As Desirable – Gen. 9:7; Deut 6:3; Luke 1:24-25
    - iii. As Desirable of Relationship – Ps, 8:2, 34:11, 103:13; Mal 2:15; Matt. 21:15; Mark 10:13-16
    - iv. As Enjoyable – Matt 18:3, 19:14; Phil. 2:15
    - v. As Important enough to Protect – 1 Sam 20:42; Ezra 8:21
  - b. Adult's Responsibility to Teach
    - i. How to Think and Act toward God – Ex. 12:26, 37; Deut. 4:9-10, 6:1-7, 32:12-13; Ps. 78:4-6; Prov. 22:6
    - ii. Obedience to God – Prov. 8:32, 19:26; Jer. 2:30, 3:22; Eph. 6:1; Col. 3:20
    - iii. Discipline to Teach – Prov. 3:11-12, 13:24, 19:18, 23:13, 29:15-17; Eph. 6:4
  - c. Adults are to Mature themselves through Children – Num. 5:28; Deut. 28:4,11; Lam 4:2
  - d. IF children are this important to God they must be this important to us!
    - i. ALWAYS seek to show God's love to children – No matter what or who it is
- 2) This is a Spiritual Battle – Eph. 6:12 / 1 Peter 5:8
  - a. Battle is for the hearts and minds of children who will one day become adults
    - i. This is more important than homosexuality and abortion
      1. Get their hearts now and not have to worry about that later
    - ii. Satan is trying to get children as early as possible to do more damage and get further away from God
    - iii. We must seek out children earlier and earlier to share Jesus with them
  - b. Cannot solely focus upon getting them to memorize Scripture or stories
    - i. Must make it mean something to them – capture heart and mind
    - ii. Change their worldview
- 3) Importance for the Church
  - a. Spiritual formation and foundations laid before 8 yrs old

- i. Developmentally most responsive between Birth and Kindergarten
    - 1. Figure out what love is, words, acceptable behavior, etc...
  - ii. Generally stay with spiritual foundation for rest of life
    - 1. That time sets them up to be open, closed, or neutral
  - iii. 2003 – 93% of Americans some form of Christian
    - 1. 4% evangelical – w/o statistical drift from children to adults
  - iv. 2012 – 78% claim Christianity
    - 1. 2% evangelical – w/o statistical drift from children to adults
  - v. 2003 – 66% say they know the Bible stories
    - 1. 3% have biblical worldview upon examination
      - a. NO scriptural authority; no exclusivity of Christ; no Great Commission; No salvation by grace alone through faith
  - vi. MUST focus on heart change
- 4) Parents and the gospel – Deut. 6:4-9 / Eph. 6:4 / 1 Thess. 2:11,12
  - a. Scripture is clear in the first part of study
    - i. Parents are the 1<sup>st</sup> line of teaching and Church is second
      - 1. The two are to work in conjunction Not all one or the other
  - b. History of children’s ministry and evangelism
    - i. Biblical Times
      - 1. Baptism followed faith
    - ii. Post Biblical Times
      - 1. Paedobaptism – Tertullian, Origen, etc...
    - iii. Following Reformation
      - 1. Began baptizing people again after faith if baptized before
      - 2. Jonathan Edwards – first to take children off on own
        - a. To teach them on their level for the purpose of evangelism and answering questions they had
    - iv. Reformation to 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Industrial Revolution 1800’s
      - 1. Parental ministry and evangelism to children
    - v. After industrial revolution
      - 1. Sunday School / societies / formed to teach children
      - 2. This birthed our form of children’s ministry today
  - c. Church role today – Mark 10:13-16
    - i. If Christian parents – parents must be the 1<sup>st</sup> line of evangelism and discipleship
      - 1. MUST work in conjunction both ways; parent and church
    - ii. If no parents then the church must try to do whatever they can, recognizing they are fighting an uphill and sometimes losing battle
      - 1. 85% of Christian Parents say they are responsible for their children spiritual growth and health
        - a. 66% openly admit they abdicate the job to the church

- i. Because the church teachers must be experts
        - ii. Feel unable to provide spiritual leadership
        - iii. Selfish and want time alone without children
          - 1. Need it sometimes but not all time
      - 2. 10% of families pray, read Bible, serve together
    - d. THEREFORE sadly, the church picks up the slack
  - 5) Intro to a Backyard Bible Club
    - a. How it will work
      - i. Go there, setup
        - 1. Registration, Needed lists
        - 2. Stations
        - 3. Rotations
        - 4. Volunteer responsibilities



## Week 2: “Types and Purpose of Children’s Ministry”

- 1) Types of Children’s Ministries
  - a) Church endorsed Baby-sitting
    - i) Says bring your children and drop them off and you go upstairs
      - (1) Happens is games, snacks, movie, no spiritual formation
      - (2) Just like a daycare just at the church and for a shorter time period
        - (a) Throw Jesus on top of the cookies like He’s a sprinkle
  - b) A Place to know more Material – 1 Cor. 8:1
    - i) I must get through the entire lesson
      - (1) Will not get sidetracked with what they want to talk about
      - (2) Will not allow their comments to shape my teaching
        - (a) They have to learn this material so they can come back to it later
          - (i) Rote memorization has never changed a heart
        - (3) The material is the most important and the children hearts are not
  - c) A place to carry a Bible to, put money in the plate, and be a good member – Matt. 18:1-6
    - i) Training ground to know what they are supposed to do in church
      - (1) Teach them: no running, bring Bible, bring change to put in the plate
      - (2) Teach them: no talking, sit and listen, stand up while singing, the songs
        - (a) These are the main focus of the time they are there
          - (i) Creating robots for doing what is “right” in our eyes
          - (ii) Go to another church they are lost b/c different than our church
            1. NO HEART CHANGE only behavior modification
            2. Behavior modification is bad
              - a. Fed up with it act out and do whatever
              - b. Missing the mark with ministry
              - c. Salvation is about heart change not behavior modification
                - i. OT versus NT covenants; Law versus grace;
    - d) Place to build spiritual Giants – 1 Thess. 2:11,12
      - i) I want children to learn about and KNOW God himself
      - ii) I will teach the main points of the lesson and allow their comments and internalization to mold my lesson
        - (1) It is more important to me for them to understand the spiritual point to the passage than to get the details of the story
          - (a) David vs. Goliath → David slew Goliath OR God can slay anything; God empowers to defeat Satan
          - (b) Joshua and Jericho → walls came tumbling down OR God can make walls come down if we obey Him and trust Him and do exactly what He says
        - iii) QUESTION for churches is do we care enough about children to do and focus upon what we must for them to grow to Spiritual Giants
- 2) Most Children’s’ Ministries
  - a) Throw-in Ministries
    - i) Description
      - (1) Throw in teachers w/o training

- (a) w/o training teachers will fail, feel incompetent, children will recognize it and capitalize to seize control of the class
  - (2) Throw in Jesus w/ games and cookies
    - (a) Talked about this: daycare ministry
  - (3) Throw in leftover chairs, tables, rooms
    - (a) IMPORTANT or children to have proper chairs, tables and rooms
      - (i) Cannot write without proper chair height and table
        1. Preschool – 35 sq feet per child
        2. Children 25 sq feet per child
        3. Youth 12 sq ft per person
        4. Adult 10 sq ft per person
          - a. FOR them to feel comfortable and not get irritated
  - (4) Throw in toys from yard sale that no one bought
    - (a) Lead paint; 60's toys
  - (5) Throw in curriculum that may or may not be age appropriate
    - (a) Teaching youth curriculum to 8yr olds
    - (b) Reading KJV to 3 year olds
  - (6) Throw in all children together regardless of cognitive development and age
    - (a) Can't do it; will talk more about this soon
- 3) WHY a Throw-in Ministry
- a) Church focuses on adults
    - i) Think children are just little guys who will put up with anything as long as parents say so
    - ii) Adults have the voice, tithe, opinions, opinionated about how to do things
      - (1) In SBC Sunday Schools 41% of attendance is 18 and younger yet 15% budget spent on that group
        - (a) At Knoxville 52% SS attendance 18 and younger (4 weeks in March); 6% budget
    - iii) Most adults got throw-in children's ministry so, if it was ok for me and my generation then it is ok for this generation as well
      - (1) Look at how I turned out
        - (a) Really?
          - (i) Highest divorce rate in history for population
            1. No better for Christians
          - (ii) Low evangelism; 1 in 7 adults shared faith with someone in last 12 months
          - (iii) Decreasing membership, baptisms, offerings
          - (iv) Record number of churches closing doors
            1. Rainer said possibly 10,000 doors closed in 2013
  - b) Remember
    - i) Children are not people on way to significance, NO!
      - (1) God sees them as significant NOW
      - (2) Spiritual formation begins the moment they are born
      - (3) Learn from adults, primarily parents but can learn from other adults as well

- (4) Spiritual life is healthy then better outlook on life
- 4) Keys to a Successful Children's Ministry
- a) Definition of Success
    - i) Salvations
    - ii) Spiritual questions and interest
  - b) Prayer -- 1 Thess. 5:17 / Matt. 6:5-15
    - i) Cannot underestimate importance of prayer
      - (1) Need God's hand NOT our ability
      - (2) If not prayed up then asking God to bless our plans and work NOT his
  - c) Parents – Deut. 6:4-9 / Deut 9 / etc...
    - i) Get parents of children involved even if only on observatory level
      - (1) Get them involved somehow, getting snacks together
        - (a) Make a schedule to get them to be there once a month or once every other month
          - (i) This involves them, gets them to see NOT professionals or experts
          - (ii) Gives experience into how things should be done
          - (iii) And begins their training on how to do ministry to children AT HOME
  - d) Preparation – 1 Cor. 14:40
    - i) Cannot underestimate importance of preparation
      - (1) Children can tell quicker than adults that you are winging it
        - (a) They will take advantage where adults won't
        - (b) They will test you to see what you will do
    - ii) When we are NOT prepared
      - (1) Asking God to bless something we haven't prepped for, are winging, and haven't studied
        - (a) REALLY? - as adults we'd say anyone who does that is wasting our time
          - (i) Late and out of sorts – children recognize that
            - 1. If it's not important to you why would it be important to them?
          - (ii) Some churches require meetings of SS Teachers before it starts
            - 1. Prayer
            - 2. On time
            - 3. IF do not show up regularly then warned and eventually replaced
    - iii) Must have the drive to do well as a children's ministry worker
      - (1) If you don't care enough to pray, prep, be placed, then you shouldn't be teaching
    - iv) Training
      - (1) Churches MUST train volunteers
    - v) Vision and Strategy
      - (1) Good children's ministry will have defined vision and purpose
        - (a) Why are we doing it and how will we do it
          - (i) If not then everyone is pulling in own direction
          - (ii) If not then nothing is cohesive
            - 1. Individual ministries instead of an overall children's ministry

- (b) Joint purpose and vision allows teachers to keep that in view
    - (2) Allows dreaming of what we believe God wants the ministry to become
      - (a) The next question is How?
        - (i) Vision and strategy
- e) Purpose – Jn. 3:16
  - i) Missional
    - (1) Whatever it takes to connect with the children that allows us to remain scripturally sound
    - (2) Understanding differences in children learning, and spiritual condition
      - (a) Must BOTH disciple AND evangelize
        - (i) Should not have children saying I don't think I'm saved anymore b/c I don't come to church
        - (ii) Should not have children saying I have to work for salvation
        - (iii) MUST do both evangelize and disciple
  - ii) Scriptural
    - (1) Teaching the Scriptures NOT in a way to memorize without meaning BUT to understand and know it in their hearts
      - (a) Understand the spiritual meaning and to work through it in a way that shows they understand the spiritual meaning
      - (b) Connect with it to apply it
  - iii) Evangelical
    - (1) Not just teach the Bible BUT must also present and call children to respond to the gospel
      - (a) Not just teach the spiritual truths (which is good) but call to repentance and faith
      - (b) Goal is not to make moral children – goal is to convert and disciple
- f) Participation – Peter vs. Paul and their calling
  - i) Some teachers are called to teach certain ages;
    - (1) If clearly called to teach a certain age then work together with current teacher OR move around or wait
      - (a) NOT called to teach a certain group b/c your child is in there
      - (b) NOT called to teach a certain group to get a bad teacher moved out
      - (c) Called = show inherent way to communicate, connect, and lead certain age groups
        - (i) IF NOT called then should not serve
  - ii) Excitement
    - (1) If you don't want to be there then why in the world would the children want to be there
      - (a) If not excited children act out... if too excited children act out
      - (b) DO the children in your ministry or class want to invite their friends to the ministry or class?
        - (i) If yes, then great
        - (ii) If no, then adjust
- g) Plasticity – Acts 17
  - i) Ability to change and adjust when necessary

- (1) Not married to any particular way or ministry model in order to meet children where they are and to contextualize ministry and gospel
  - (a) WHAT was your favorite toy when a kid?
    - (i) Why don't children use that anymore
    - (ii) Why don't we use that as illustrations or centerpiece of ministry
      - 1. Because it doesn't meet children where they are
- h) Personalization
  - i) Every child is different and we will talk at length about this next week
- 5) Backyard Bible Club Intro:
  - a) Games
    - i) All tag games – blob, freeze, circle tag,
    - ii) Steal the bacon
    - iii) 4 – square
    - iv) NO red rover
    - v) Races
    - vi) Duck Duck Goose
    - vii) Red-light, Green light
    - viii) Simon Says
  - b) Songs
    - i) Peace like a river
    - ii) Makn' melodies
    - iii) This little light of mine
    - iv) Oh I need you Lord to Help me
  - c) Snacks
    - i) Whatever we have
      - (1) Food
      - (2) Drink
- 6) Games to play to generate interest
  - a) Tag; Freeze Tag; Steal the Bacon; 4-Square; Duck-Duck-Goose; Hopscotch; Red light, Green light; Simon Says

### Week 3: “Communicating the Gospel to Different Children”

- 1) Understanding Difference in America today versus yesterday
  - a) Mohler: “in the year 2050 or before, 25% of people in America will have grandparents with Hispanic backgrounds
    - i) Possibly accelerated by more immigration and amnesty or whatever else
  - b) Sin is celebrated instead of condemned
    - i) Jason Collins called “Courageous” by President Obama
    - ii) Rise in Pornography
  - c) Situation churches find themselves in
    - i) 2/3 of SBC affiliated children leaving the church between adolescence and adulthood
    - ii) Rainer: “I wouldn’t be surprised to see 10,000 traditional mainline churches close their doors forever in the year 2013-2014.”
      - (1) Why?
        - (a) No contextualization
        - (b) Not willing to keep message of Christ while changing the message
  - d) Match our context and people we are trying to reach
    - i) Who are we reaching out to in children’s ministry?
      - (1) Howdy Dooty? OR SpongeBob
      - (2) Parents drinking sweet tea or Beer
      - (3) Kick the can or Wii
      - (4) Tape players or iPods (digital system of some sort)
  - e) Technology is king in our world
    - i) Can we use it to our advantage to share the gospel with children?
- 2) Understanding Differences in Children
  - a) All In His Image – Gen. 1
  - b) All Given different aspects and personalities - Rom 12:4-6
  - c) Age
    - i) As children get older they develop different physical, emotional, and psychological skills
      - (1) 5-10 yrs old are totally different
      - (2) 3-6 yrs old are totally different
      - (3) Concrete thinkers until age 13
        - (a) No abstract concepts
          - (i) Cannot even understand pointing at things to say go over there until 4 yrs old
  - d) Sex
    - i) Girls mature mentally and physically quicker than boys
      - (1) Girls are usually bigger than boys until late elementary school
    - ii) Boys are hard wired to destroy and protect
      - (1) Hard wired to tear apart and try to put back together; most time results in broken toy
  - e) Education
    - i) Better school = better learner
    - ii) Better parental education = better learner

- (1) Diminishing returns sometimes though; more education less time with children
- f) Family situation
  - i) w/o parent = major problems for children
  - ii) Discipline at home?
  - iii) Who runs house; they will try to run the children's ministry as well
- g) Social Surroundings
  - i) Who else are they around, children learn from watching others who are more skilled
- h) Experiences
  - i) Learn from what they have done or had happen to them
  - ii) Learn from internalization (really affects them at the heart level)
- i) Learning styles
  - i) Visual - seeing
  - ii) Auditory – hearing
  - iii) Kinesthetic – hands on
- j) Physical limitations = Educational limitations
  - i) Dyslexia, physical strength, even the food they have eaten can either increase or decrease their learning potential
- 3) Different Children and Affect on Children's Ministry
  - a) Age Graded Classes
  - b) Teacher Placement
  - c) Latch and Stay children
  - d) Teach using all the learning skills
- 4) Important Communication Skills
  - a) Concrete not abstract thinkers
    - i) UPWARD 2005 – told to take the ball out
  - b) Clarity
    - i) Not detail oriented; only distract them from the Big Picture
      - (1) Army
    - ii) Slow and Clear
      - (1) Suddenly amen = in son's name, amen
  - c) No Christianeze
    - i) Video Lost in Translation
      - (1) Must purpose in ourselves to view every single one as never having heard the gospel before
  - d) Use Question and Answer
    - i) Forces children to think, take ownership, and apply to themselves if asked correctly
    - ii) KNOW you will get some crazy answers
      - (1) Steer them back to the BIG picture
  - e) Stories and Pictures
    - i) Acts 17 – receptivity increased when used
    - ii) Puts it on their level – Luke 10 – Good Samaritan
    - iii) Connects with their lives
      - (1) Bikes, siblings, school

- f) Actively teach and reinforce the gospel
    - i) Your actions both reinforce and teach the gospel or your actions prove you do not believe what you are teaching; children pick up on this!
      - (1) Love everyone, then talk about someone bad in hallway
      - (2) Matt 19:13-15
  - g) Easily Distracted
    - i) Disturbances of other children, yourself
    - ii) Position them to not be looking out an open door or towards where children are playing
  - h) Attention Span
    - i) Adults = 30 minutes
      - (1) Arguably much less in the past 10 years
        - (a) Some suggest as short as 10 minutes now
    - ii) Children = 5 minutes
      - (1) UNLESS you are
        - (a) Connecting; illustrating; painting word pictures
          - (i)
- 5) Backyard Bible Club Information:
- a) Stories and Crafts taken from *Desiring God's Children's Club: Things Hidden*



Week 4: “Gospel and Preparations for Backyard Bible Club”

- 1) What a good gospel presentation contains
  - a) General ideas to cover in a good gospel presentation
    - i) God’s Creation
    - ii) Man’s sinfulness and rebellion or disobedience against the Creator
    - iii) Man’s need for a savior b/c we aren’t good enough and cannot work our way to heaven
    - iv) Jesus perfect life and death on the cross to pay for our sin and rebellion
      - (1) As the sacrifice
    - v) We must trust and believe
    - vi) Call to make a response – trust Him
      - (1) Is this something you would like to do today, right now, to trust Him
- 2) How to share the gospel with Children
  - a) You must know him yourself
    - i) Key to share gospel with anyone
      - (1) Why trust someone who doesn’t know anyway
      - (2) How can you tell them if you don’t know yourself
  - b) Must know the story
    - i) God Created
    - ii) Man Sinned
    - iii) Jesus Came
    - iv) We must believe
  - c) Explain so they can understand
    - i) NO Christianese
      - (1) If I used words like supralapsarian, consubstantial, ecclesiology, eisegesis; you have NO idea what I was talking about
      - (2) Children use words like saved, atonement, salvation IF WE DO NOT explain and teach what these words mean they have no idea either
      - (3) ASSUME there is no previous experience or exposure to the gospel
        - (a) 1 Cor. 2:1
    - ii) Children verbiage
      - (1) SAME GOSPEL different language – kid friendly
        - (a) We are sinners and deserve punishment – Rom. 3:23
        - (b) Jesus took our punishment – Gal. 3:13
        - (c) We can trust Him for forgiveness and with our lives – Rom 4:25
      - (2) USE the right words - Kid Lingo – Acts 2
        - (a) Remember concrete thinkers, no abstract, not big vocabularies
          - (i) Sin = things we do wrong; bad things we do; no-no’s; naughty stuff; when we disobey; make a bad choice; that make God sad;
          - (ii) Punishment = get grounded / timeout / spanking / go to room; consequences; penalty; get in trouble; be disciplined;
          - (iii) Crucified = died on a cross because that person was in so much trouble; killed; hurt bad then died;

- (iv) Savior = forever friend; rescuer; helper; took bad stuff for us; agrees to be in trouble instead of you; took our place; was hurt and killed even though he did nothing wrong;
- (v) Resurrection = alive again; came back from the dead; didn't stay dead; came back to life
- (vi) Ask Jesus into your heart = follow Jesus; become a Christian; become best friends with Jesus; start a relationship with Jesus; tell Jesus your sorry and ask him to always be your friend
- (vii) Lord = let Jesus show me the right/best way to live; let Jesus help you make right choices; Jesus helps me do the right things; a guide; have Jesus as the one I follow and obey; someone who will always listen/care/help
- (viii) Ask forgiveness = say you're sorry; apologize
- (ix) Forgiveness = not in trouble any more
- (x) Confess = admit you did wrong, tell what you did
- (xi) Eternal life = live forever in heaven with Jesus
- (b) Share in listener focused language
  - (i) Acts 14:1 and 1 Cor. 9:20-23
- d) Ask them if they would like to trust Jesus
  - i) Wait for them to ask you what they need to do for salvation
    - (1) We cannot do it for them
  - ii) No reward based evangelism
    - (1) AWANA in 2004 – spiritual birthday cake –
      - (a) Children you can have a spiritual birthday cake too if you get saved
      - (b) What kid doesn't want cake so everyone became a believer
  - iii) No fear tactics to get them to pray a prayer
    - (1) Doesn't matter if they pray a prayer if they do not understand it and mean it
- e) Avoid age as the only reason to say no
  - i) Listen for faith words
  - ii) Never told in Scripture to understand everything before coming to Christ
- f) Take advantage of every opportunity
  - i) Number of times to share with them is limited
    - (1) One less every time you get with them
  - ii) Give them nuggets of God's truth anytime and everywhere
- g) What you need to have clear before praying with them for salvation
  - i) They must have and express a genuine desire to be saved
    - (1) Personally
    - (2) Not under pressure to fit in
    - (3) Not under pressure to please the leader

- (4) Understand that salvation is not by magical prayer
  - (a) It is through personal belief and faith in Jesus
- h) Ask them why they want to do this
  - i) If no solid faith answer then present the gospel again
    - (1) No solid faith answer = I don't know
      - (a) My friends were doing it
      - (b) I want to talk more about it
      - (c) I think it would be cool to be dunked by the preacher
      - (d) I want to tell my parents what I'm learning
    - ii) If faith answer then go to A-B-C prayer
      - (1) Faith answer – because Jesus died for me
      - (2) I need forgiveness
      - (3) I'm a sinner and done wrong
- 3) How to lead in prayer - Rom. 10:9 / Matt 10:32 / Acts 2:37 / Acts 16:30
  - a) Remember the younger they are the more help they will need
  - b) The older they are the more they can lead themselves after you explain the gospel to them
  - c) How to lead someone to pray
    - i) A – Admit they are sinner and ask forgiveness
    - ii) B – they believe Jesus as the one who accepted our trouble on the cross and died to take our trouble away
    - iii) C – I choose to follow you not self or trouble, now please help me do that and be my Lord
  - d) If a child wants to pray again it is ok
    - i) We must never grow old or tired of the cross and repentance
      - (1) May not understand that they are to repent of sin
        - (a) Instead of become a Christian again
    - ii) For most people salvation is a process of gaining deeper understanding
      - (1) Until they grasp a saving faith it
      - (2) Or until they feel assured by Holy Spirit
        - (a) Some have one time experience but it is getting more rare
- 4) Outline the order for each day
  - a) Games, song, study, craft, snack
- 5) Review the study and craft for each day
- 6) Figure who is doing the study each day and what they need
- 7) Assign people to individual groups to begin prep for their part
  - a) Everyone participates in each section but is to lead their assigned part
  - b) Leave the session if your section is next.
  - c) Craft people begin making plans and cutting out parts for the crafts
- 8) Put together flyers with lollipops.

APPENDIX 3

FLYER FOR DISTRIBUTION AT SHERMAN  
MOBILE HOME PARK



Pre-K through 6<sup>th</sup> Grade

Games

Snacks

Stories

Songs

Crafts

Come be a part of Kids Club!

Every Wednesday Night in July, 6:30 PM

Meet at the Playground Area

## APPENDIX 4

### MEETING OUTLINE BEFORE FLYER DISTRIBUTION

- I. Prayer
- II. Review very quickly
- III. Where to go to pass out flyers
  - a. Remember going on mission trip
  - b. Look for opportunities to share gospel even in questions
    - i. Why are you doing this
    - ii. What are you doing
- IV. Go pass out flyers for the Backyard Bible Club

## APPENDIX 5

### FIRST SERMON OUTLINE PROJECT PHASE 3

Sermon 1 - Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Title: A Day to Begin Anew as Parents

Opening Illustration:

Job description of a Parent—

Long term team players needed for challenging permanent work in an often-chaotic environment. Candidates must possess excellent communication and organizational skills and be willing to work variable hours, which will include some evenings and weekends and frequently twenty-four-hour shifts on call. Some overnight travel required, including trips to endless sports tournament in distant cities. Travel expenses not reimbursed.

Responsibilities include: for the rest of your life, you must be willing to be disliked at least temporarily until someone needs \$5 to go skating. Must be willing to bite tongue repeatedly. Also, must possess the physical stamina of a pack mule. Must be willing to face stimulating technical challenges, such as small gadget repair, mysteriously sluggish toilets and stuck zippers. Must screen phone calls, maintain calendars and coordinate production of multiple homework projects. Must be willing to be indispensable one minute and an embarrassment the next. Must handle assembly and product safety testing of a half million cheap, plastic toys and battery-operated devices. Responsibilities also include floor maintenance and janitorial work throughout the facility.

No possibility of advancement or promotion. Wages and compensation are paid by you. You provide raises and bonuses, a balloon payment occurs at age 16 and age 18; when you die they get everything you leave and the oddest thing about this is that you actually enjoy giving all your money away and you wish you could only do more.

OUR job description as parents is given in lots of places in Scripture... I want to give you

one place this morning...

- I. Parents of Purpose (4-5)
  - a. Exegesis and Application
    - i. (4) God is absolutely God w/o any one or thing greater
      1. He is uncaused God Almighty
      2. This sets up everything else
    - ii. We are to be parents of purpose (7 – tells us to teach to our children so talking to adults and parents) because of WHO God is and his call on our lives
    - iii. (5) THE PURPOSE – Love Lord with all heart, soul, and might
      1. Matt 22:37
      2. All understanding – how does this square with God’s teaching; what does he think about this
      3. All will – what is God’s desires for me right now and in the future
      4. All energy and actions – how will I use God’s blessing He gives?
    - iv. THE Purpose is to Love God b/c He is the almighty
      1. Because of the gospel
        - a. God created; Man sinned; Jesus came; We must believe and repent
        - b. Cross / love / grace / mercy / salvation – Tell the gospel
        - c. While yet sinners died on cross becoming sin, even though he had no sin
      - v. Purpose in Life is not in word only but unreservedly and entirely above everything else
        1. Life lived for Him
  - b. Illustration – began thinking about how our world seems to get purpose in life
    - i. Be happy, make money, etc...
    - ii. Psychologist lesson on how to find your purpose in life
      1. Take out pen and paper
      2. Write at top, what’s my true purpose in life
      3. Start writing down answers until you have a complete surge of emotion and begin crying because that is You
        - a. Should take 15-20 minutes and about 50-60 tries
        - b. Take breaks every 30 ideas or as often as you feel like you need to do something else.
        - c. If emotionally repressed it may take up to an hour and 300 ideas
    - iii. The psychologist answer: “my purpose in life is to live consciously (as opposed to unconsciously) and courageously to resonate (to move??) with love and compassion (only psychopaths and axe murderers want to not love and have some form of compassion on people), to awaken the great spirits within others (like they are

asleep again?) and to leave the world in peace (BIG purpose, talk North Korea, Al-Qaeda)

- iv. Calls the process convergence
  - 1. When we try to find purpose anywhere else other than in Jesus we find, bologna
  - 2. When we try to find purpose in \$, providing, protecting, correcting without teaching, enabling – then our lives are left unfulfilled...
    - a. You were created for a purpose and that purpose is to worship and bring Glory to the Living God who made you and loves you
      - i. You are to do this in your individual life, as a parent modeling it to your children, to your spouse and at church; with everything you do; worshipping God.

## II. Place of Purpose (6)

### a. Exegesis and Application

- i. (6) place of purpose is heart
  - 1. Not head, not guilty conscience, not backside
  - 2. Not head knowledge
  - 3. IS HEART knowledge
    - a. Internalize, comprehend, applied, own it, make sense of it
      - i. SO THAT daily acts and conversations are God's words
- ii. (7) diligently teach to your children = adults and specifically parents
  - 1. Because the purpose is the heart – we teach, explain, evangelize NOT from obligation But from LOVE
    - a. What is more loving than telling someone, including a child, How to believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior?
    - b. More loving as a parent to tell son/daughter how to love God?!
  - 2. You = Parents as primary spiritual leader
    - a. Diligently = pointed intensity; like going for an NCAA championship
    - b. NOT school; NOT teachers; NOT even church
      - i. You as parents here are called to be the primary spiritual leader and teacher in your family
    - c. Ronnie Floyd: “The example you set is your child's first gospel. Your actions, your reactions, your emotions, your values, and everything in you should tell a consistent story of walking with Christ. If your children believe what they see, they will read



the true Bible. They will begin to follow its Author. Love God with all your heart, soul, and strength. It is the most important parenting skill of them all.”<sup>1</sup>

3. This is how it was from Reformation to Industrial revolution
  - a. Dad began working NOT on farm, but in factory or other place like that
    - i. 6 days per week, 10 hrs per day
      1. My dad didn't; yes, you are correct, but understand what happened
  - b. Because the cities where most people lived were not teaching and training their children Sunday School and the Public School System started
    - i. Because parents weren't able or were choosing not to because of work hours or tired from work
    - ii. Sunday School – to teach morals and the Bible to children
    - iii. Public Schools – to educate in reading, writing, and arithmetic
      1. Death of one room school houses
  - c. Gone on since then to the point of today where
    - i. 89% of parents recognize their calling to be the spiritual leader of their family BUT
    - ii. 66% openly admit the only way they do that is to take their children to church
      1. NOT what Scripture says here... parents are to be the number one spiritual leader and guider of the children
      2. MUST work in conjunction with the Church but church is not to be 100% of spiritual guidance
    - iii. Fear parents are doing a better job at teaching morals than teaching the faith; because they are leaving that to the church
  - d. What happens – church picks up the slack and we must
    - i. We must pick up the slack particularly for families who have no Christian influence in the home
      1. w/o a doubt

---

<sup>1</sup> Ronnie Floyd, *Our Last Great Hope*. (Nashville: Nelson Publishing, 2011), 81.

2. praise the Lord for Knoxville's importance to those who come on the VAN
3. Praise the Lord we have parents moving into roles in children's ministry!
  - ii. But for those who are believers in the home, scripturally we are to work in conjunction NOT just at church
4. If we want a growing, vibrant, Children's ministry, that is seeing children come to Christ, it does not begin at the church, it begins in your home and my home;
  - a. Maybe for your family it is committing to read the Bible every night as you tuck everyone into bed
  - b. Maybe it is to commit to having family Bible Study Time each night or every other night
  - c. Maybe it is to have family prayer time where everyone in the family is asked to pray after a short devotional

### III. Presence of Purpose (7-9)

- i. (7) where to teach
  1. Talk while sitting – hanging out everything out of mouth worship God
    - a. Grades/academics/college – doesn't matter if heart is not changed; just becoming an educated person without heart for God
  2. Walk by the way – as you go through life
    - a. Athletics – God given abilities and hard work to have other watch them and tell them they are good; no heart for God
    - b. \$/Job – riches do not bring happiness; the one who dies with the most toys still dies; not taking a U-Haul to heaven with us
  3. Lie down – before you go to bed
  4. Rise – as you get up
    - a. ALL TOGETHER = all time / life
      - i. Strength, soul, life
  5. WHAT to talk about and live by and teach?
    - a. Words (6)
      - i. What Words
        1. (5) Love the Lord
        2. Love of the Lord always on your lips!
          - a. Must point our children intensely toward God above all else

- b. Point through our actions, words, deeds, that the CROSS of Christ matters to us
- c. That forgiveness, mercy, redemption matter to us

b. Illustration

- i. Last time you talked with your children about Christ?
  - 1. Other than what did you teach about tonight
- ii. Last time you said I learned something today that I'd like to teach you
  - 1. Our job is to tell about Christ
    - a. At the dinner table – talk about Christ
    - b. In the Car – talk about Christ
      - i. Our Goal should be – when I die and one of my children says what they remember about me should be
        - 1. I remember they always told me about Jesus, the cross, Jesus' love for me, teaching the Bible, and my dad's love for me.

IV. Conclusion

- a. Our job as parents is not to make moral children, good church members, know when to stand up and sit down and not run in church and to not embarrass us when out
  - i. We must want to see children who love God and obey Him out of a new heart
- b. Are you a parent of purpose; with your heart as the place of purpose; living in front of your children the presence of purpose?
- c. Do you know this Jesus – Share the gospel; call people to the gospel

V. Invitation

- a. Here's what is going to happen; we are going to sing a song in just a minute and I am going to be down front. If I can explain to you more about what it means for your heart to be changed by Jesus I would love to do that; if I can pray with you over anything I'd love to do that as well; If you are here and you are thinking how do I join his body of believers I'd love to talk with you about that; whatever it is I pray you will let the Holy Spirit search you out and that you will be obedient to His call

## APPENDIX 6

### SECOND SERMON OUTLINE PROJECT PHASE 3

Sermon 2 - Mark 10:13-16

Title: Faith Like a Child

#### Opening Illustration:

Lots of children's ministry opportunities coming up; VBS, Backyard Bible Club, Youth trips, Children's Choir, need help in Children's Church; need people to be assistant teachers to give our wonderful teachers a break from teaching each and every week. Why do we do these things? Why have budget of \$2000 for VBS? Why send Ron to pickup children each week? Why welcome with open arms any children that come and treat them like family?

- I. Children must be brought not screened (9-14)
  - a. Exegesis and application
    - i. Child = one under 12 years old
      1. Jairus' daughter Luke 8:41 ff – same word used = she was 12
    - ii. Bring them to me and not kept away
      1. Started bringing
        - a. Constructed = started and kept bringing them
          - i. Like the disciples couldn't stop them from coming
        - b. They were rebuking the people, but the people didn't stop
      2. Rebuking or stopping them from coming is following Luke 9:52-56
        - a. Call down fire and brimstone b/c they didn't convert
          - i. Disciples are dense sometimes, takes a few times
        - b. Trying to stop b/c afraid of getting too tired
          - i. Poss. b/c not invited
          - ii. Poss. b/c sinners
          - iii. Too little
          - iv. NOT ours!!!!!!

- v. Won't and can't understand this stuff
        - 1. REALLY it was the disciples who didn't understand yet.
  - 3. Indignant = greatly afflicted and upset both physically and mentally
    - a. SO important he stops everything he was doing to stop with the children
    - b. NOT move on and forget about the disciples' mess up
  - 4. Divine and overflowing love for children
    - a. Too important to be hindered from coming to Him
      - i. B/C we know under 12
        - 1. Basis for worldview
        - 2. Image of God
        - 3. Longer w/o Christ the harder for conversion
          - a. Like Satan sinks his teeth deeper and deeper
5. No one is too little to not be cared for by Jesus or the church
  - a. Provide facilities, classes, care, voice, the gospel
    - i. To all ages... if we don't we aren't being like Jesus
    - ii. Last time I checked that is what we are called to be
  - b. No one is unimportant in the kingdom
- II. Faith is the Key to the Kingdom (15)
- a. Exegesis and Application
    - i. Faith like a child for both adults and children – what does that mean
      - 1. Know the kingdom and salvation is a gift from God – Eph 2:8-9
      - 2. How do children receive a gift
        - a. Joyfully
        - b. Anticipation
        - c. Thanksgiving
        - d. Receptivity
        - e. eagerness
        - f. dependence
          - i. THIS IS how the gift of salvation is to be received
            - 1. NOT begrudgingly b/c mom told you to get baptized
            - 2. NOT to please peers or parents or leader
    - 3. Faith in those bigger than selves – particularly parents

- a. Faith
    - i. Complete trust or confidence in someone or something.
    - ii. Strong belief in God or in the doctrines of a religion, based on spiritual apprehension rather than proof.
  - b. NOT knowledge
    - i. Judas
    - ii. Children have limited knowledge but can understand the gospel
  - c. NOT works
    - i. Eph. 2:8-9
    - ii. How much is enough – never enough!
  - d. NOT wealth
  - e. NOT status
  - f. NOT age
4. Faith, come to him
- a. Including children in those who can come to him  
b/c must be like them
    - i. KEY is what are they believing in;
      - 1. Not a prayer
      - 2. Not a dunking
      - 3. Not something mom or dad said
      - 4. They are believing Jesus to forgive them of their sins and want HIM to be their Lord and Savior
        - a. NOT about understanding everything
          - i. None of us would be saved if that were the idea
    - ii. Trust in Him completely – a childlike total faith
      - 1. ILLUSTRATION: Luke and transplant – I’m ready for you to fix my heart, how much longer do I have to wait; God is in control, I’m ready, and I want to go to Florida as soon as they fix my heart.

### III. Love Them Like Jesus

- a. Exegesis and Application
  - i. Lay on hands = bless fervently
    - 1. Not salvation; prayer
  - ii. Giving Jesus great honor and power of a prophet
    - 1. When tell children about Jesus
    - 2. When we take care of children at church by providing ministries for them
      - a. WE Are loving them like Jesus
- iii. God’s view of children

1. Gift from God
2. Desirable
3. Wanting relationship with them
4. Enjoyable
5. Important enough for us to protect with our lives
  - a. WHY VBS; Backyard Bible Club; VAN?????  
Children's Church' Children's Choir?
    - i. b/c God loves children and it is our job to get the gospel to as many as possible
  - b. Why are we alive?
    - i. To bring as many people to Jesus as we can

#### IV. Conclusion

- a. Every single person is in the same boat
  1. Lost and in sin
    - a. In need of a Savior
      - i. GOSPEL

#### V. Invitation

- a. You might be here today and say I need this faith like a child, I'd love to share that with you
- b. You might be here today and say I need to love children more, especially those that aren't mine
- c. You might say I need to be more involved with our children's ministry
  - i. However God is working in your life I would love to share with you, to pray with you or to minister to you in any way;
    1. Here's what is going to happen, I am going to pray and then the music will start and the singers will sing, you be obedient to whatever God is calling you to do; don't put it off and don't delay

APPENDIX 7

FOUR-WEEK TRAINING SESSIONS,  
LEARNER GUIDE

*Building an Evangelistic Children's Ministry*



*At Knoxville Baptist Church, At Any Church, In Your  
Ministry*

Learner Guide



Week 1: “God, the Church, Parents & Children”

- 1) Children in Scripture
  - a. God’s view of Children
    - i. As a Gift to Parents –
    - ii. As Desirable –
    - iii. As Desirable of Relationship –
    - iv. As Enjoyable –
    - v. As Important enough to Protect –
  - b. Adult’s Responsibility to Teach
    - i. How to Think and Act toward God –
    - ii. Obedience to God –
    - iii. Discipline to Teach –
  - c. Adults are to Mature themselves through Children –
  - d. IF children are this important to God they must be this important to us!
    - i. ALWAYS seek to show God’s love to children – No matter what or who it is
- 2) This is a Spiritual Battle
- 3) Importance for the Church
- 4) Parents and the gospel
- 5) Introduction to a Backyard Bible Club

Week 2: “Types and Purpose of Children’s Ministry”

- 1) Types of Children’s Ministries
  - a) Church endorsed Baby-sitting
  - b) A Place to know more Material
  - c) A place to carry a Bible to, put money in the plate, and be a good member
  - d) Place to build spiritual Giants
- 2) Most Children’s’ Ministries
  - a) Throw-in Ministries
- 3) Why is it known sometimes as a Throw-in Ministry
  - a) Church focuses on adults
  - b) Remember
- 4) Keys to a Successful Children’s Ministry
  - a) Definition of Success
  - b) Prayer -- 1 Thess. 5:17 / Matt. 6:5-15
  - c) Parents – Deut. 6:4-9 / Deut 9
  - d) Preparation – 1 Cor. 14:40
  - e) Purpose – Jn. 3:16
    - i) Missional

- ii) Scriptural
  - iii) Evangelical
  - f) Participation – Peter vs. Paul and their calling
  - g) Plasticity – Acts 17
  - h) Personalization
- 5) Backyard Bible Club Introduction:
- a) Games
  - b) Songs
  - c) Snacks
- 6) Games to play to generate interest

### Week 3: “Communicating the Gospel to Different Children”

- 1) Understanding Difference in America today versus yesterday
- 2) Understanding Differences in Children
  - a) All In His Image – Gen. 1
  - b) All Given different aspects and personalities - Rom 12:4-6
  - c) Age
  - d) Sex
  - e) Education
  - f) Family situation
  - g) Social Surroundings
  - h) Experiences
  - i) Learning styles
  - j) Physical limitations = Educational limitations
- 3) Different Children and Affect on Children’s Ministry
- 4) Important Communication Skills
  - a) Concrete not abstract thinkers
  - b) Clarity
  - c) No Christianeze

- d) Use Question and Answer
  - e) Stories and Pictures
  - f) Actively teach and reinforce the gospel
  - g) Easily Distracted
  - h) Attention Span
- 5) Backyard Bible Club Information:
- a) Stories and Crafts taken from *Desiring God's Children's Club: Things Hidden*

Week 4: “Gospel and Preparations for Backyard Bible Club”

- 1) What a good gospel presentation contains
- 2) How to share the gospel with Children
  - a) You must know him yourself
  - b) Must know the story
  - c) Explain so they can understand
    - i) NO Christianese
    - ii) Children verbiage
      - (1) SAME GOSPEL different language – kid friendly
      - (2) use the right words - Kid Verbiage – Acts 2
        - (a) Remember concrete thinkers, no abstract, not big vocabularies
          - (i) Sin = things we do wrong; bad things we do; no-no’s; naughty stuff; when we disobey; make a bad choice; that make God sad;
          - (ii) Punishment = get grounded / timeout / spanking / go to room; consequences; penalty; get in trouble; be disciplined;
          - (iii) Crucified = died on a cross because that person was in so much trouble; killed; hurt bad then died;
          - (iv) Savior = forever friend; rescuer; helper; took bad stuff for us; agrees to be in trouble instead of you; took our place; was hurt and killed even though he did nothing wrong;
          - (v) Resurrection = alive again; came back from the dead; didn’t stay dead; came back to life
          - (vi) Ask Jesus into your heart = follow Jesus; become a Christian; become best friends with Jesus; start a relationship with Jesus; tell Jesus your sorry and ask him to always be your friend
          - (vii) Lord = let Jesus show me the right/best way to live; let Jesus help you make right choices; Jesus helps me do the right things; a

guide; have Jesus as the one I follow and obey; someone who will always listen/care/help

(viii) Ask forgiveness = say you're sorry; apologize

(ix) Forgiveness = not in trouble any more

(x) Confess = admit you did wrong, tell what you did

(xi) Eternal life = live forever in heaven with Jesus

(b) Share in listener focused language

(i) Acts 14:1 and 1 Cor. 9:20-23

d) Ask them if they would like to trust Jesus

e) Avoid age as the only reason to say no

f) Take advantage of every opportunity

g) What you need to have clear before praying with them for salvation

h) Ask them why they want to do this

i) If no solid faith answer then present the gospel again

ii) If faith answer then go to A-B-C prayer

3) How to lead in prayer - Rom. 10:9 / Matt 10:32 / Acts 2:37 / Acts 16:30

a) Remember the younger they are the more help they will need

b) The older they are the more they can lead themselves after you explain the gospel to them

c) How to lead someone to pray

d) If a child wants to pray again it is not a problem

4) Outline the order for each day

- 5) Review the study and craft for each day
- 6) Figure who is doing the study each day and what they need
- 7) Assign people to individual groups to begin prep for their part
- 8) Put together flyers with lollipops.



## APPENDIX 8

### PEER REVIEW BOARD CURRICULUM SURVEY

Dear Peer Review Board,

Let me explain this survey. I am working on the Doctor of Ministry degree at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. For my project I have chosen to develop a curriculum to equip the participants to be more comfortable when evangelizing children and prayerfully as a result, more effective. Following the teaching element, we will implement what was learned by holding an evangelistic Backyard Bible Club at a mobile home park near our church. My church, Knoxville Baptist, has never done a Backyard Bible Club, however they have done many Vacation Bible Schools. Also, the church overall is not very evangelistic, in terms of active, spoken evangelism. They know the gospel, but to speak it to someone else is something totally out of the ordinary, especially children. The goals of this project are pretty simple, to teach them about evangelism in order to establish an evangelistic children's ministry.

What I am asking you to do is this: Please look over the attached curriculum and give your honest opinion. I have created two sermons and five weeks of training. On the back of this sheet there are ten questions, two suggestion sections and then a place for your name.

Thank you so very much for your help and your input will shape and change the curriculum. Once I make these changes, I will send it back to you for a second look. Thank you again!

#### **Agreement to Participate**

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to determine the usefulness and completeness of this curriculum. This research is being conducted by Josh Landrum for purposes of project research. In this research, you will provide his or her agreement or disagreement to twenty statements. 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 totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

By your completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Please record your agreement or disagreement to the following statements using the line provided. Please answer as honestly as possible using the following answers:

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>DS</b>	<b>AS</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>

1. \_\_\_ The sermons help focus the church upon Evangelism, Mission, and the need to be more evangelistic in children's ministries.
2. \_\_\_ Once someone goes through the training, they will most likely be able to share the gospel with a child.
3. \_\_\_ The training curriculum explains child development practically enabling volunteers to contextualize the gospel.
4. \_\_\_ The training curriculum explains the direction children's ministry must move towards in be impactful in children's lives.
5. \_\_\_ The training curriculum adequately provides evangelism training.
6. \_\_\_ The training curriculum adequately provides insight to evangelism with children.
7. \_\_\_ The training curriculum adequately explains the history of children's ministry.
8. \_\_\_ The sermons need reworking to fit into the theme of the project.
9. \_\_\_ The Backyard Bible Club seems to be a good opportunity for practicum.
10. \_\_\_ The sermon illustrations add to the need for children's evangelism.

Suggestions for the sermons: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

Suggestions for the Backyard Bible Club training sessions and the Backyard Bible Club nightly curriculum:

---

---

---

Overall, my assessment of this curriculum's ability to achieve the desired outcome (on a scale of 1-5 with 1 being not useful and 5 being extremely useful) is: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX 9

PRE- AND POST-TRAINING  
PARTICIPANT SURVEY

Dear Participant,

I want to thank you for answering the call to take the gospel to Sherman Mobile Home Park. Taking the gospel there is the main point of doing the Backyard Bible Clubs. With that said, I have gotten approval from Southern Seminary to use the Backyard Bible Club as my ministry research project for the Doctor of Ministry degree, however, I must have some level of data to gauge the effectiveness of the project overall and the curriculum I used for the project. I ask you to fill out the twenty question survey on the back of this paper and turn it in upon completion. Also, please note that for those of us, who are under 18 years of age, I must have a parental release for you to complete the survey and no one under 6<sup>th</sup> grade is to complete a survey. Each student under 18 must have a separate form completed by their parents. For those of us over 18, your reading the below statement and completing the survey is your release to study. Lastly, I ask for your name at the bottom of the other side of the page so that I can compare your answers before and after the project. If you are not comfortable putting down your name, either leave it blank or put the last four digits of your social security number.

**Agreement to Participate – Less than 18 years old**

You are being requested to give permission for a minor or member of a vulnerable population under your legal supervision to participate in a study designed to examine beliefs about evangelism, the gospel and Backyard Bible Clubs. This research is being conducted by Josh Landrum for purposes of project research. In this research, a person will provide his or her agreement or disagreement to twenty statements. Any information provided will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will a person's name be reported, or a person's name be identified with his or her responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary, and the person you are giving approval to participate in this study is free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

By signing your name below, you are giving informed consent for the designated minor or member of a vulnerable population to participate in this research if he or she desires.

Participant name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Agreement to Participate – Over 18 years old**

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to examine belief about

evangelism, the gospel, and Backyard Bible Clubs. This research is being conducted by Josh Landrum for purposes of project research. In this research, you will provide his or her agreement or disagreement to twenty statements. 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 totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

By your completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Please record how much you agree with the following statements using the line provided. Please answer as honestly as possible using the following answers:

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>DS</b>	<b>AS</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Section 1: Children’s Ministry in the Local Church**

1. \_\_\_ The primary purpose for children’s ministry is to have somewhere for children to attend while parents are in adult’s activities.
2. \_\_\_ Children, 18 yrs old and under, makeup about 40% of church attendees, and receive less than 15% of funds, showing Children’s ministry is not a priority.
3. \_\_\_ Because adults know how church is supposed to be done, only adults’ needs should be heard, considered, and met.
4. \_\_\_ Children are abstract thinkers from about 2 years old until about 10 years old.
5. \_\_\_ Children’s ministry workers must understand the ministry as a process to produce a biblical worldview in children.
6. \_\_\_ A biblical children’s ministry is designed to take the place of parental and familial spiritual responsibilities.
7. \_\_\_ To be effective, children’s workers must be prepared and studied up on the subject they are teaching about for that night.

**Section 2: Sharing the gospel with Children**

8. \_\_\_ The most important battlefield in the world for Christians is for children’s hearts.
9. \_\_\_ Statistically, people must be reached after they are adults to come to Christ fully.
10. \_\_\_ To effectively share the gospel someone must know the gospel and be a believer.
11. \_\_\_ Scripture continually teaches that someone must understand everything about Jesus before they can believe in Him.
12. \_\_\_ A good four part gospel outline that can be adjusted from adults to children easily

is: God Created / Man Sinned / Jesus came / We must believe

13. \_\_\_ One of the most important questions to ask a child who says they want to become a believer is: “Why do you want to do this?”
14. \_\_\_ We should always lead a child in prayer, they MUST pray the right words in order to be saved.
15. \_\_\_ Children often get caught up in the details of the story.
16. \_\_\_ Presenting the gospel to children must be done the same way as to adults.
17. \_\_\_ Adults must be discerning before praying with a child and determine if they desire to pray based upon peer pressure, leadership pressure, or if it is from a genuine desire to follow Christ.
18. \_\_\_ Most children have a one-time exposure experience to the gospel and trust Christ based on that one time experience.
19. \_\_\_ All children are always at the same cognitive level, therefore teachers must explain the gospel to every class in the same manner.
20. \_\_\_ One way to pray with a child to become a believer is the A-B-C method.
21. \_\_\_ Praying with a child for a second time for salvation is strictly forbidden in Scripture.

### **Section 3: Backyard Bible Clubs**

22. \_\_\_ Backyard Bible Club is simply a tool to get children to hear the gospel.
23. \_\_\_ All children’s ministry programs should be focused for children to have fun.
25. \_\_\_ Most Backyard Bible Clubs consist of three parts: Craft / Games / Songs

### **Section 4: Kid Friendly Terminology**

26. \_\_\_ In children’s terminology: sin means the wrong things we do.
27. \_\_\_ In children’s terminology: punishment means that we need to go to jail.
28. \_\_\_ In children’s terminology: crucify means to beat to a pulp and be nailed to a tree.
29. \_\_\_ In children’s terminology: to ask Jesus into your heart means to ask him to forgive you and always be your friend.
30. \_\_\_ In children’s terminology: to be the Savior means someone who agrees to be in trouble for us.

### **Section 5: Evangelism – Numerical Answer**

31. \_\_\_How many times did you share the gospel with children during the previous two months?

APPENDIX 10

RAW PARTICIPANT SURVEY DATA

Table A2 Raw Participant Survey Data

QUESTION	1 PRE- TRAINING	1 POST- TRAINING	2 PRE- TRAINING	2 POST- TRAINING	3 PRE- TRAINING	3 POST- TRAINING	4 PRE- TRAINING	4 POST- TRAINING	5 PRE- TRAINING	5 POST- TRAINING
1	5	6	5	6	6	6	6	6	5	5
2	1	6	5	1	6	6	6	6	5	5
3	6	6	5	5	5	6	6	5	5	5
4	5	6	5	5	1	5	5	2	1	5
5	1	6	6	5	5	6	5	5	5	5
6	5	5	5	5	6	5	6	5	6	5
7	5	6	5	5	6	6	6	5	5	5
8	6	6	5	6	5	6	6	5	5	6
9	5	5	5	6	5	6	6	5	5	5
10	5	6	5	6	6	6	1	5	6	5
11	5	6	5	5	5	6	6	5	6	5
12	5	6	5	6	6	5	5	5	5	5
13	6	6	5	5	5	6	6	5	6	2
14	5	6	5	6	6	6	6	5	1	5
15	5	6	5	5	6	1	2	5	2	5
16	5	6	5	5	6	6	6	5	5	5
17	1	6	5	5	6	6	6	5	5	5
18	6	6	5	5	1	6	1	5	1	5
19	5	5	5	6	6	6	6	5	5	5
20	5	6	5	5	6	6	5	5	5	5
21	6	6	5	5	6	6	6	5	5	5
22	5	6	1	6	6	6	1	5	2	2
23	6	6	6	6	6	6	2	2	2	5
25	1	5	6	5	1	1	5	5	1	2
26	5	6	6	5	5	6	6	5	5	5
27	1	6	1	6	5	6	6	6	2	6
28	6	5	1	6	5	6	1	5	5	2

Table A2 continued

29	5	6	5	5	5	6	6	5	5	5
30	2	6	5	1	5	6	5	5	2	5
31	10	12	0	0	0	0	3	4	0	0
AVG	4.4	6.0	4.7	5.1	5.2	5.4	4.8	4.9	4.0	4.6
INC.		1.5		.38		.38		.07		.59

QUESTION	6 PRE- TRAINING	6 POST- TRAINING	7 PRE- TRAINING	7 POST- TRAINING	8 PRE- TRAINING	8 POST- TRAINING	OVERALL QUESTION AVG	PRE- T POST- COMPARE	STD. DEV. OF CHANGE
1	1	5	5	5	5	6	5.2	1	.71
2	5	5	6	5	6	6	5.0	.13	0
3	6	6	6	5	5	5	5.5	0	0
4	2	6	5	5	5	5	4.3	.5	.97
5	5	5	6	5	5	5	5.0	-.38	.35
6	6	5	6	6	5	6	5.4	0	.27
7	6	5	6	6	5	6	5.5	.13	0
8	6	5	6	5	6	6	5.6	.25	.09
9	5	5	6	5	5	6	5.3	.63	.28
10	6	6	6	6	5	5	5.3	-.13	.44
11	6	5	6	5	5	6	5.4	.25	.09
12	5	5	6	6	5	6	5.3	-.5	.28
13	6	5	6	5	5	6	5.3	.5	.35
14	5	5	6	5	5	5	5.1	.5	.35
15	5	5	5	6	5	6	4.5	.38	.27
16	5	5	6	5	5	6	5.3	0	0
17	5	5	6	6	5	6	5.1	.63	.44
18	5	5	6	5	5	5	4.5	1.5	1
19	5	5	6	6	5	6	5.4	.13	.09
20	5	5	5	5	5	5	5.1	.13	.09
21	5	5	6	5	2	6	5.2	.25	.28
22	6	5	5	5	5	5	4.4	1.1	.8
23	2	6	5	5	6	6	4.8	.88	.62
25	1	2	6	5	1	5	3.2	1	.71
26	5	5	5	6	6	5	5.1	-.38	.27
27	5	5	5	6	2	5	4.3	2	1.4
28	2	2	2	5	5	6	3.9	1.3	.97
29	6	6	5	5	5	6	5.3	.25	.48
30	6	6	2	5	2	5	4.2	1.2	.88
31	1	2	0	10	10	12			1.4
AVG.	4.7	5	5.3	5.3	4.5	5.8			
INC.		.24		0		1.2	.54		



APPENDIX 11

PEER REVIEW BOARD SURVEY,  
RAW DATA

Table A3. Peer review board survey, raw data

Question	Peer Reviewer 1	Peer Reviewer 2	Peer Reviewer 3	Peer Reviewer 4	Peer Reviewer 5
1	5	5	6	6	5
2	5	5	5	6	6
3	6	5	6	6	5
4	6	6	6	6	6
5	6	5	6	6	5
6	6	5	6	6	5
7	4	5	6	6	6
8	5	6	6	6	6
9	6	5	5	6	5
10	5	5	6	6	5
Overall rating	4	5	5	5	4

## APPENDIX 12

### THE A B C'S OF SALVATION

#### **Admit:**

##### **Confess to God that you are a sinner. Repent or turn away from your sin.**

Romans 3: 23 - "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"

Romans 6: 23 - "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord"

I John 1:9- "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

Acts 3: 19- "Repent, and then turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord."

#### **Believe:**

##### **Trust that Jesus is God's Son and that God sent Jesus to save people from their sins.**

Romans 5: 8- "but God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Acts 4: 12- Salvation is found in no else for there is other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved"

John 3: 16- "For God so loved the world, that He gave His one and only Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

I Peter 3: 18- For Christ died for sins once in for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit."

John 14: 6- "Jesus answered, I am the way the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

#### **Commit:**

##### **Give your life to Jesus. Ask Him to be your Lord and Savior.**

Roman's 10: 9, 10- That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord', and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved."

Romans 10: 13- "For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Mathew 16: 24- "then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

Luke 9: 23- "Then He said to them all: if anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."

## APPENDIX 13

### CHANGES TO CURRICULUM DUE TO PEER REVIEW BOARD

#### Sermons

##### **Sermon #1 – Deuteronomy 6:4-9**

1. Changed opening illustration.
2. Adjusted point 1 to be more about parental focus is found in Scripture -- also adjusted focus from obligation to share the gospel to share out of LOVE.
3. Adjusted point 2 greatly: focus is much more on parents as primary spiritual leaders in verse 7.
3. Included a section about the history of child ministry and child evangelism being parental focused.
4. Stated that if we desire to have a children's ministry that is growing, vibrant, seeing children come to Christ and being discipled, it begins with the parents.
5. Adjusted point 3 greatly. I removed pt 3.a.i and moved some of the application/illustration to point 3.a.ii; also reworded last illustration and conclusion at the end of the sermon.

##### **Sermon #2 – Mark 10:13-16**

1. Moved intro to the conclusion.
2. I changed the three points to: 1) Importance of Children; 2) Importance of Childlike Faith; 3) Importance of Loving Children like Jesus.
3. I moved pt. 3.a.iii.1-5 to the introduction with Scripture references.
4. In the invitation I made it clear to share gospel call again.

#### To Both Sermons:

1. I added positive reinforcement for things that the church and individuals are doing currently.

#### TEACHING OUTLINE

##### On Day 1:

Added a section about the history of children's ministry, when and how it began

##### On Day 2:

Extended the keys to a successful children's ministry to match my paper

##### On day 3:

Added a section about culture change forces ministry to change

##### On Day 4:

Added a section on what a good gospel presentation will contain

On all days I added Scripture references to ground the arguments and what is needed to be done

Adjusted the learner packet accordingly

APPENDIX 14

T-TEST RESULTS FROM  
THE PARTICIPANT SURVEYS

Table A4. T-test results from the participant surveys

	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	4.75	5.241
Variance	.680	.157
Observations	29	29
Pearson Correlation	.685	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Df	28	
tStat	-4.240	
P(T<=t) one-tail	.0001	
tCritical one-tail	1.701	
P(T<=t) two-tail	.0002	
tCritical two-tail	2.048	

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Arnold, Clinton E., and Grant R Osborne. *Matthew*. Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010. e-Sword.
- Barna, George. *Revolutionary Parenting*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2007.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions: Why Children Should be Your Church's #1 Priority*. Ventura, CA: Gospel Light, 2003.
- Barna Group, The. *Barna Study of Religious Change Since 1991 Shows Significant Changes by Faith Group*. Accessed April 28, 2013. <http://www.barna.org/faith-spirituality/514-barna-study-of-religious-change-since-1991-shows-significant-changes-by-faith-group>.
- Barna Group, The. *49 Million Born Again Adults Shared Their Faith in Jesus in the Past Year*. Accessed April 28, 2013. <http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/5-barna-update/125-49-million-born-again-adults-shared-their-faith-in-jesus-in-the-past-year>.
- Barnes, Albert. *Barnes' Notes on the Old and New Testaments*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983. e-Sword.
- Beckwith, Ivy. *Postmodern Children's Ministry: Ministry to Children in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Church*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004.
- Beougher, Timothy. *Richard Baxter and Conversion*. Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2007.
- Bjorklund, David F. *Children's Thinking: Cognitive Development and Individual Differences*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2005.
- Black, Frank, and Charles Doggett. *Royal Ambassador Campcraft*. Memphis, TN: Brotherhood Commission, SBC, 1972.
- Blomberg, Craig L. *Matthew*. The New American Commentary, vol. 22. Nashville: Broadman Reference, 1992.
- Calvin, John. *John 12-21 and Acts 1-13*. *Calvin's Commentaries*, vol. 18. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Harmony of Matthew, Mark, Luke; John 1-11*. *Calvin's Commentaries*, vol. 17. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005.
- Carson, D. A. *Matthew*. In vol. 8 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*. Edited by Frank E. Gaebelin, 3-602. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984.

- Clark, Francis E. *The Christian Endeavor Manual*. Norwood, MA: Plimpton, 1903.
- Clarke, Adam. *Clarke's Commentary on the Whole Bible*. Nashville: Cokesbury, 1977. e-Sword.
- Cooper, Rodney L. *Mark*. Holman New Testament Commentary, vol. 2. Nashville: Holman Reference, 2000.
- Dever, Mark. *Baptism in the Context of the Local Church*, in *Believer's Baptism*. Edited by Thomas R. Schreiner and Shawn D. Wright. Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2006.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Gospel & Personal Evangelism*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *9 Marks of a Healthy Church*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004.
- Dodson, Mike, and Ed Stetzer. *Comeback Churches*. Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2007.
- Driscoll, Mark. *Vintage Church*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008.
- Edwards, Jonathan. *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*. Las Vegas: Empire Books, 2012.
- Floyd, Ronnie. *Our Last Great Hope*. Nashville: Nelson, 2011.
- Gangel, Kenneth O. *Acts*. Holman New Testament Commentary, vol. 5. Nashville: Holman Reference, 2000.
- Gilbert, Greg. *What is the Gospel?* Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010.
- Gill, John. *John Gill's Exposition on the Entire Bible*. London: Matthews & Leigh, 1810. e-Sword.
- González, Justo. *The Story of Christianity*. Vol. 2. San Francisco: Harper, 1984.
- Graham, Billy. *How to be Born Again*. Waco, TX: Word Books, 1977.
- Green, Joel B., and Scot McKnight, eds. *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992.
- Greer, J. D. *Gospel*. Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2011.
- Henry, Matthew. *Matthew Henry's Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1961. e-Sword.
- Hunt, Gary, and Angela Hunt. *Too Young to Drive, Too Old to Ride*. San Bernadino, CA: Here's Life, 1992.
- Jamieson, Robert, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown. *Matthew – Revelation. A commentary on the Old and New Testaments*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997. e-Sword.

- Knight, Russ. "The Home as a Ministry Base." In *A Heart for the City*. edited by John Fuder, 463-481. Chicago: Moody, 1999.
- Minter, Mike. *A Western Jesus*. Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2007.
- Lawless, Chuck. *Discipled Warriors*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002.
- Lawless, Chuck, and Thom Rainer., eds. *The Challenge of the Great Commission*. Bemidji, MN: Pinnacle, 2005.
- Lerner, R. M. *Developmental Psychology*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 1991.
- Lewis, Robert. *The Church of Irresistible Influence*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001.
- Longenecker, Richard N. *Acts*. In vol. 9 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, edited by Frank E. Gaebelin, 207-592. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984.
- Lorenzini, Massimo. *Child Evangelism: A God-Centered Guide for Genuine Conversion*. Tipton, PA: Frontline Ministries, 2008.
- MacArthur, John. *Acts 1-12. The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*. Chicago: Moody, 1989.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Matthew 16-23. The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*. Chicago: Moody, 1989.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Matthew 24-28. The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*. Chicago: Moody, 1989.
- Marshall, I. Howard. *New Testament Theology*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004.
- McDowell, Josh. *Youth Ministry Handbook*. Nashville: Nelson, 2000.
- Merrill, George, and Marion Lawrence., eds. *Development of the Sunday School*. Toronto: International Sunday School Convention, 1905.
- Metzger, Will. *Tell the Truth*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2002.
- Miller, Sue, and David Stall. *Making Your Children's Ministry the Best Hour of Every Kid's Week*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004.
- Mohler, R. Albert, Jr. "The President's Forum on the Future of the Southern Baptist Convention." Lecture given August 19, 2009. Accessed on April 5, 2013. <http://www.sbts.edu/resources/lectures/presidents-forum/video-the-presidents-forum-on-the-future-of-the-southern-baptist-convention/>.
- Nelson, Bryan, and Timothy Paul Jones. "Introduction." In *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective*, edited by Timothy Paul Jones and Randy Stinson, 13-32. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011.
- Palau, Patricia. "Leading a Child to Jesus." In *The Complete Evangelism Guidebook*, edited by Scott Dawson, 156-62. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006.



- Payne, J. D. *Evangelism*. Colorado Springs: Biblica, 2011.
- Phillips, John. *Exploring Acts. The John Phillips Commentary Series*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1986.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Exploring The Gospel of Mark. The John Phillips Commentary Series*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2004.
- Piper, John. *Let the Nations Be Glad! 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.* Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003.
- Platt, David. "Why Accepting Jesus in Your Heart is Superstitious and Unbiblical." Sermon given April 12, 2012. Accessed on March 6, 2013. <http://www.vergenetwork.org/2012/04/12/platt-why-accepting-jesus-in-your-heart-is-superstitious-unbiblical/>.
- Plummer, Robert. "Bring them up in the Discipline and Instruction of the Lord." In *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical and Practical Perspective*, edited by Timothy Paul Jones and Randy Stinson, 45-60. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011.
- Rainer, Thom. *Effective Evangelistic Churches*. Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1996.
- Rainey, Dennis. "Local Church Family Ministry in the New Millennium." In *Building Strong Families*, edited by Dennis Rainey, 15-28. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002.
- Rankin, Jerry. *To the Ends of the Earth*. Richmond, VA: Broadman and Holman, 2005.
- Reid, Alvin. *Introduction to Evangelism*. Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1998.
- Robertson, A.T. *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. Nashville: Holman Reference, 1958. e-Sword.
- Robinson, C. Jeffrey, Sr. "The Home is an Earthly Kingdom." In *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective*. edited by Timothy Paul Jones and Randy Stinson, 115-30. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011.
- Selph, Robert B. *Southern Baptists and the Doctrine of Election*. Harrisonburgh, VA: Sprinkle Publications; 1996.
- Smith, T. C. *Acts*, In vol. 10 of *The Broadman Bible Commentary*. Edited by Clifton J. Allen, 1-152. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1971.
- Staal, David. *Leading Your Child to Jesus: How Parents Can Talk with Their Children about Faith*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006.
- Stenburg, W. Ryan, and Timothy Paul Jones. "Growing Gaps From Generation to Generation." In *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective*. edited by Timothy Paul Jones and Randy Stinson, 143-62. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011.
- Stetzer, Ed, and David Putnam. *Breaking the Missional Code*. Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2006.

- Stott, John. *Personal Evangelism*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1949.
- Tripp, Tedd. *Shepherding a Child's Heart*. Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 1995.
- Turlington, Henry E. *Mark*. In vol. 8 of *The Broadman Bible Commentary*. Edited by Clifton, J. Allen, 254-402. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1971.
- Vincent, M. R. *Vincent's Word Studies in the New Testament*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1985. e-Sword.
- Weber, Stuart K. *Matthew*. Holman New Testament Commentary, vol 1. Nashville: Holman Reference, 2000.
- Wesley, John. *Explanatory Notes upon the Old and New Testament*. Nicholasville, KY: Schmul Publishing, 1958. e-Sword.
- Wilkes, Tom. "Introducing Teenagers to God." In *Transforming Student Ministry*. Edited by Richard Ross, 41-53. Nashville: Lifeway, 2005.
- Wilkins, M. J. "New Birth," In *Dictionary of Later New Testament & Its Developments*, edited by Ralph P Martin and Peter Davids, 793. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997.
- Wren, C. Michael Jr. "Among Your Company at Home." In *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective*, edited by Timothy Paul Jones and Randy Stinson, 101-14. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011.
- Zuck, Roy E. *Precious in His Sight*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996.

## ABSTRACT

### ESTABLISHING AN EVANGELISTIC CHILDREN'S MINISTRY AT KNOXVILLE BAPTIST CHURCH, WILLIAMSTOWN, KENTUCKY

Joshua Adam Landrum, D.Min.  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014  
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Adam W. Greenway

The purpose of this project was to establish an evangelistic children's ministry at Knoxville Baptist Church, Williamstown, Kentucky. This project also provides a reproducible program to establish an evangelistic children's ministry.

Chapter 1 gives an overview of the entire project. This overview covers the project's goals and ministry context, including information concerning events leading up to the project's initialization. Moreover, this chapter gives the rationale for establishing an evangelistic children's ministry at Knoxville Baptist Church, Williamstown, Kentucky. Finally, this chapter serves as an outline for the rest of the project, including research methodology and statistical analysis of the research data.

Chapter 2 provides a biblical and theological basis for establishing an evangelistic children's ministry. The following passages are examined in detail and serve as the basis for the project: Acts 1:8, Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 10:13-16, and Matthew 18:1-6.

Chapter 3 entails the theoretical and sociological considerations for child evangelism and children's ministry. This chapter shows the importance of contextualizing the gospel because of children's cognitive abilities. Further this chapter looks into historical gospel contextualization and how some gospel presentations are better than others. Finally, this chapter provides seven areas children's ministries must focus upon to be able to contextualize children's ministry, which are: prayer, parents, preparation, purpose, participation, plasticity, and personalization.

Chapter 4 describes in detail the fifteen weeks of this project. This chapter breaks down each phase of this project and includes details about the curriculum building, training, practicum, and analysis.

Chapter 5 is an evaluation of the project. This chapter analyzes the short-term effectiveness of this project on the participants and the teacher. Furthermore, the final chapter includes the strengths and weaknesses of each phase, as well as suggestions on how to improve this project.

## VITA

Joshua Adam Landrum

### EDUCATIONAL

Diploma, Dixie Heights High School, May 1998, Crestview Hills, Kentucky

B.S., Transylvania University, 2002

M. Div., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009

### MINISTERIAL

Pastor of Students and Recreation, The Baptist Church at Andover, Lexington  
Kentucky 2003 – 2010

Pastor, Knoxville Baptist Church, Williamstown, Kentucky, 2010 –