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EQUIPPING ADULTS AT BEACON HILL BAPTIST
CHURCH OF SOMERSET, KENTUCKY FOR
GOSPEL MINISTRY TO CHILDREN

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APPROVAL SHEET

EQUIPPING ADULTS AT BEACON HILL BAPTIST
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To Lisa,
my loving helpmate;
to Ragan and Owen,
God's great gifts;
and my parents, brother, and grandparents,
faithful supporters.

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PREFACE

I offer my heartfelt gratitude that is given here to every church that has allowed me to serve alongside them in the ministry of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Their contributions directly to me spiritually, and implicitly by financial faithfulness through the Cooperative Program afforded me the opportunity to attain what I believe to be the best theological education available to serve the current church.

With thanksgiving I acknowledge the church of my salvation, Mount Pisgah Baptist in Faubush, Kentucky, where I came to faith and early service in carrying a plate or holding a door. I thank the churches of my Deacon and Gospel Ordinations, First Baptist Church of Danville, Kentucky, and Hillcrest Baptist Church of Lexington, Kentucky, where service became an internally expressed and externally affirmed life-calling.

I thank the church of my first pastorate, Bradfordsville Baptist in Bradfordsville, Kentucky, for having faith in God to transition an Associate Pastor to a Senior role. I thank the church that called me back to my home county, Woodstock Baptist in Somerset, Kentucky, that God used to kindle the beginnings and birth of this project.

Finally, I thank Beacon Hill Baptist Church of Somerset, Kentucky for serving so willingly as the subjects of this project, faithfully encouraging me to finish the race with their glad participation. May the churches of my past, and one of my present have

their love and grace multiplied through whatever future God has for the use of this project in aiding others in their gospel ministry.

I thank the faculty of Southern Seminary for their contributions to my theological education. Most notably, Dr. Robert H. Stein who began my seminary journey through a long evening commute to his Biblical Hermeneutics class, before I even knew what hermeneutics even was. Likewise, I thank Dr. Stuart W. Scott who concluded my seminary journey in Biblical Counseling. These have been two wonderful bookends in my journey that span many other numerous contributors, colleagues and cohorts that I am gratefully indebted to. May their investments in me be multiplied for the glory of none but Christ alone.

Donavon Burton

Somerset, Kentucky

December 2015

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to teach a biblical approach that will equip families and adult volunteers of Beacon Hill Baptist Church to responsibly minister the gospel to children.

Goals

The first goal of the project was to enlist a core group of participants and evaluate their current level of knowledge and confidence in gospel ministry with children. This goal was measured by a pre-instruction survey that gauged the respondents' understanding of key concepts and attitudes towards gospel ministry with children.¹ This goal was successfully met when twenty-five participants who are professing believers in Christ enlisted, completed, and returned pre-instruction surveys for statistical analysis.

The second goal of this project was the development of a biblically faithful curriculum of gospel ministry for children taught to these volunteers. The developed curriculum aimed for broad contextual application and immediate increases in knowledge and confidence among those instructed. This goal was measured by submission of the

¹See appendix 1.

developed curriculum to a panel of three peer evaluators comprised of a representative specialist from the areas of children's ministry, evangelism and biblical counseling. This goal was successfully met when each evaluator returned scores that indicated marks of sufficiency for all areas given in a curriculum evaluation questionnaire.²

The third goal of this project was the implementation of curriculum training for the purpose of increased awareness and competence with regard to future gospel ministry opportunities with children. This goal was measured by a post-training survey that looked for changes in understanding and attitudes of participants when compared to the pre-instruction responses.³ This goal was successfully met when a positive, statistically significant change in participants' scores on the post-test was observed, as indicated by a t-test for dependent samples.⁴

Ministry Context

According to statistics taken from a 2011 LifeWay[®] Transformational Church assessment, Beacon Hill Baptist Church sits within a nine-mile radial reach of 11,032 residents below the age of twenty. Although all 11,000 people represented in that survey are not the target of this project, it is valid to assume that a significant number of

²See appendix 2.

³See appendix 3.

⁴David Longstreet, "t-statistic-Test between the Means of Related Groups," *StatisticsFun*, accessed July 28, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j_yDvBLDgow/.

unreached elementary and middle school aged children are located within close geographic proximity.⁵

Coupled to these demographics, were responses reflected from a congregational survey that further indicated the need for the intervention of this project. In response to the prompt, “Our members are comfortable sharing their faith with unbelievers”; only 16 percent of Transformational Church survey respondents indicated a strong agreement, while 19 percent disagreed with this statement. As a result, the church formulated a transformational goal to “provide increased opportunities to share evangelistic experiences” over the next five years.

I, as Senior Pastor, along with the ministry team of Associate Pastor, Youth Pastor, Children’s Director and Minister of Education surveyed the current status of children’s ministry at Beacon Hill and concurred that this previously stated transformational goal had not yet been met. One hundred and ten elementary-aged children visit the church campus on a weekly basis to participate in Sunday School, Team KID[®], Royal Ambassadors[®], Girls in Action[®], Bible drill and children’s choir. While these activities and programs are essential components, they emphasize missions, biblical knowledge and worship arts without the explicit evangelistic component that the transformation plan called for.

⁵Ed Stetzer and Thom S. Rainer, *Transformational Church: Creating a New Scorecard for Congregations* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group and LifeWay Research, 2010). After a study of this text, Beacon Hill engaged in a *Transformational Church* on-site training and assessment with key leadership that resulted in a summative consultation report from which this data is taken.

Additionally, the forty adult volunteers that minister weekly to this group have not received any evangelism training in several years. A church-wide emphasis on the F.A.I.T.H. evangelism system promoted by LifeWay® has now lapsed into non-use.⁶ Some of the volunteers received prior training from *Leading a Child to Christ*, but as the aforementioned statistics demonstrate, this truncated system of teaching adults to remember “A-admit, B-believe, C-confess” did little to increase their confidence in faith-sharing.⁷ Therefore, given that Beacon Hill has such a heavily populated ministry field, has an expressed goal of increasing evangelism opportunities, and noting the fact that few volunteers have received recent or remarkable training, it seemed imperative at this time to lead in equipping the church towards a more biblically responsible method of gospel ministry to children.

Rationale

As indicated in Scripture, the family is to be the center of spiritual instruction for children. Therefore, those who should bear the greatest responsibility in training their children towards faith in Christ should be their parents. Therefore, the local church, including Beacon Hill Baptist, must provide biblical and responsible guidance to parents in fulfilling this God-given task. In the absence of believing parents, or parents

⁶Bobby H. Welch, *Evangelism through the Sunday School: A Journey of FAITH* (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 1997).

⁷LifeWay Church Resources, *Leading a Child to Christ: For Adults* (Nashville: LifeWay Christian Resources, 2008).

altogether, the church must also provide surrogate spiritual instruction that seeks the same aims.⁸

In current practice, where parents or adult volunteers primarily seek the pastor or ministry staff's assistance, there is an unhealthy dependence that has fostered a view of professionalism. This view hinders the spiritual growth of the one making the referral and may not provide enough direct instruction for successful modeling in the future. Instead, what is needed is instruction that will lead to an exponential expansion of evangelism, rather than a merely linear model. A minister of the gospel who serves as the single source of gospel ministry to children, can double this gospel reach by training one additional member of the congregation. Thus, an exponential ministry of the gospel to children within the reach of the church can only be accomplished by a deliberate effort of discipleship that will train and equip adults to become competent and confident in their preparation for children's ministry.

Additionally, it cannot be assumed that these adults will happen upon helpful instruction without the guidance of the local church. There is lack of widespread consensus in evangelical circles as to how children should be evangelized, and when they should be deemed ready to receive the gospel and ordinances. While statistics support

⁸James 1:27 declares, "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world." While certainly this verse refers to the physical needs of biological orphans, should it not also be implied that there is a responsibility upon the church to visit and care for the spiritual needs of this same group? The church may view children who lack parents who are believers in Christ as *spiritual* orphans, which they are responsible for delivering the gospel to as surrogates.

“nearly half of all Americans who accept Jesus Christ as their savior do so before reaching the age of 13 (43 percent), and that two out of three born again Christians (64 percent) made that commitment to Christ before their 18th birthday,”⁹ there is equal caution given in using these numbers as justification for hurried or hap-hazard methods of ministry.¹⁰ This reporting serves as a warning for the church to exercise greater care and clearer discernment instead of granting quick assurances of salvation to children. For these reasons, it should no longer be presumed that the church has a readily responsible method of gospel ministry to children.

Definitions

Nine key terms are defined as they relate to the goals of this project.

Children. “Children” in this project will refer to students in the ministry of Beacon Hill Baptist Church that have reached the age of five but have not yet attained the age of thirteen. This age range was chosen to remain consistent with the Barna Group reporting cited in the project rationale.

Conversion. “Conversion” in this project referred to “the first step of Christian life . . . in the act of turning from one’s sin in repentance and turning to Christ in faith.”¹¹

⁹Barna Group, “Evangelism is Most Effective Among Kids,” accessed July 28, 2015, https://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/5-barna-update/196-evangelism-is-most-effective-among-kids#.VdIe_3gtEfk.

¹⁰Grace to You, “Evangelizing Children,” accessed July 28, 2015, <http://www.gty.org/resources/distinctives/DD05/evangelizing-children>.

¹¹ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 946.

In this sense, a person may only be considered as converted who has experienced repentance and has demonstrated personal faith in Christ. Such delineation will become necessary when dealing in the context of gospel ministry to preclude giving false assurances to those who have completed a process or achieved an intellectual understanding of the gospel apart from genuine repentance and faith. In specific reference to children, the definition will be useful to distinguish those children who have been merely catechized but not truly converted.

Conviction. The term “conviction” in this project will be used to mean the action of the Holy Spirit upon the heart of a person in which they are made aware that “their sin has alienated them from God and exposed them to his condemnation, hostility and wrath, so that their first need is for a relationship with him.”¹² As evidenced by this definition, it will be argued that conviction of sin is a necessary first work of regeneration and conversion.¹³

Directed prayer. “Directed prayer,” as it relates to this project, is a method of praying during evangelism in which the person being evangelized uses their own personal words while the sharer provides guidance through directed steps and phrases.¹⁴ While

¹²J. I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008), 70.

¹³Charles Spurgeon argued the point well in one of his surviving sermons Charles H. Spurgeon, “What Is it to Win a Soul?” The Spurgeon Archive, accessed February 15, 2013, <http://www.spurgeon.org/misc/sw01.htm>.

¹⁴Sam Doherty, *U-Can Lead Children to Christ: A Step-By-Step Guide for Counsellors of Children* (Lisburn, Northern Ireland: Child Evangelism Fellowship, 2011), 44-45.

giving helpful prompts and instructions, “directed prayer” as it is intended in this project stands in contrast to rote methods of recitation in which the person ministered to is led to repeat a formulaic prayer.

Gospel Ministry. As used in this project, “gospel ministry” refers to verbally sharing the “good news that Jesus Christ came from heaven, died on the cross having lived a perfect sinless life, bore then in His body the full penalty of our sins, [and] was raised from the dead.” Furthermore, this good news is shared so that, “those who repent of sin and place their faith in the perfect work of Christ can and will be saved.”¹⁵ This definition serves as a summative description of the ultimate object of the gospel in the person of Jesus Christ and the desired outcome of ministry in His name, which is repentance, by faith unto salvation.

Regeneration. As it will be used in this project, “regeneration” refers to the “personal operation of the Holy Spirit in believers” in which a “sovereign work of God in the person of Christ is effected . . . to all who believe in him” and includes their “personal new birth . . . new creation [and] inclusion in the kingdom of God.”¹⁶ Elsewhere, it is defined as the “mysterious work of the [Holy] Spirit . . . mediated by Jesus, [and] apart from [which] one cannot see the kingdom of God.”¹⁷ Such a definition encompasses the

¹⁵Daniel L. Akin, “Gospel Definitions,” compiled by Trevin Wax, accessed November 18, 2015, <http://blogs.thegospelcoalition.org/trevinwax/files/2009/09/Gospel-Definitions.pdf>.

¹⁶Graeme L. Goldsworthy et al. eds., “Regeneration,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity), 721.

necessity of the new birth as declared by Jesus in John 3:3, in addition to the life-giving presence of the Holy Spirit as given by Titus 3:5.

Repentance. “Repentance” in this project is defined as the “radical turning away from anything, which hinders one’s wholehearted devotion to God, and the corresponding turning to God in love and obedience.”¹⁸ This renunciation of sin and embracing of obedience is made necessary for eternal life in the preaching and teaching of Jesus, most notably in Luke 13:1-5.

Sacramentalism. “Sacramentalism” is intended in this project to be understood in the most narrow and pejorative sense in which “persons or church traditions see the essence of Christianity as participation in the sacraments rather than as inner transformation and personal piety.”¹⁹ As it relates to the project, “sacramentalism” refers to the effects of methods of evangelism that place greater emphasis on the mechanics of presentation and prayer rather than the evidence of transformation of the person being ministered to.

Salvation. While “salvation” in the broad and objective sense is the “provision of God for our human situation of need and sin,”²⁰ this project focused on the more

¹⁷William L. Kynes, “New Birth,” in *Dictionary of Jesus & the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity), 576.

¹⁸Jonathan M. Lunde, “Repentance,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 726.

¹⁹“Sacrament, sacramentalism,” in *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms*, ed. Stanley J. Grenz, David Guretzki, and Cherith Fee Nordling (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991), 104.

narrow understanding and subjective view of the term. As such, “salvation” as it used in this project refers to “being saved” that is, “the ongoing process [begun] when believers offer themselves to God as slaves of righteousness [and] experience release from the power and reign of sin and progress towards Christian maturity.”²¹ In this usage, is reflected the understanding from John 5:24 in which it is said that those who believed have passed from death to life and have escaped eternal judgment.

Limitations and Delimitations

The first limitation for the project was the number and diversity of the participants, which lies outside the control of the project design. Only those congregants who were willing to participate in the pre-survey, training, and post-survey were able to contribute meaningful data to the project goal. A second limitation for the project was the targeted implementation timeframe of fifteen weeks. Given this limitation, the offering of instruction was constrained to a particular date that may not have accommodated all those wishing to participate.

There were two delimitations for this project. First, it sought the inclusion of converted adults who have either parenting or child-related volunteer responsibilities within the church. Second, it sought the formation of a minimum target group of twenty-five participants that meet these criteria from Beacon Hill Baptist Church in Somerset, Kentucky.

²⁰I. Howard Marshall, “Salvation,” in *Dictionary of Jesus & the Gospels*, 720.

²¹Murray J. Harris, “Salvation,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 766.

Research Methodology

Implementation of the project occurred in four phases over the course of fifteen weeks. The first phase was the development and approval of the curriculum and comprised four weeks. The second phase of participant recruitment and curriculum compilation was implemented during the next three weeks. The third phase of curriculum instruction consisted of a seven-week period of hourly training sessions. The final phase was administration of a post-instruction analysis of all gathered participant data and comprised one week.

Curriculum Development and Approval

The first phase of the project was the development of a teaching curriculum using previous protocols that I had developed during required doctoral seminars that were focused on bringing children to Christ and had the benefit of peer review.²² This four week phase expanded and articulated the five steps given in the protocol using research from the best practices for counseling data-gathering, the Four Heart Types of Children, the *Seven C's of History* gospel presentation²³ and directed prayer examples. A draft copy of this compiled curriculum was then shared with a minimum of three specialists from the specific areas of children's ministry, evangelism and biblical counseling with an evaluative scoring rubric.²⁴ The first phase was completed when the developed

²²See appendix 4.

²³Ken Ham and Stacia McKeever, *The Seven C's of History* (Petersburg, VA: Answers in Genesis, 2011).

²⁴See appendix 2.

curriculum received scores of sufficient or greater in all areas of evaluation from the consulted panel.

Participant Recruitment and Curriculum Compilation

The second phase of the project commenced with participant recruitment through church communication channels. Participants were enlisted from current adult volunteers serving in children's ministry areas and also through promotional materials given to families that are served by the church. Enlistments were collected and monitored through the church office to ensure the desired minimum number of twenty-five participants had been achieved.

Concurrent with participant recruitment was the final compilation and preparation of the developed curriculum to be utilized during the instructional phase. Final rubric scoring from independent evaluators were received and reviewed, and any possible improvements were included during this phase. These materials received final editing, compilation and binding for distribution by the completion of this second four-week phase.

Curriculum Instruction

Seven instructional sessions of hourly length commenced during this phase with the pre-requisite twenty-five or more participants. These sessions took place during the traditional mid-week teaching times of the church, which are Wednesday evenings at 6 o'clock.

All willing participants completed a pre-instruction survey in the introductory session, and subsequent sessions maintained an individual emphasis taken from the counseling seminar protocols as follows.

Session 1: *Pre-Instruction Survey and Introduction* – participants completed the pre-instruction survey and discussed attitudes, competencies and challenges in gospel ministry to children.

Session 2: *Gathering Data for Gospel Ministry with Children* – participants explored the biblical instructions of listening and discernment and examined key questions to ask during ministry opportunity times with children.

Session 3: *Gauging the Heart of Children* – participants examined 2 Corinthians 7:10-11 and listed the biblical characteristics of conviction in an analysis of the four heart types of children.

Session 4: *Giving the Gospel to Children* – participants were given a method of gospel presentation that differentiates between reading competencies of children and encompasses the scope of the redemption story as adapted from *The Seven C's of History*.²⁵

Session 5: *Guiding Children in Confession* – participants were given biblical instruction in helping children profess faith in Christ and introduced to the example of directed prayer as the preferred method of verbal confession.

Session 6: *Going Further with Growing Christian Children* – participants discussed the need for further counseling in the ordinances for children and were

²⁵Ham and McKeever, *The Seven C's of History*, 2011.

introduced to follow-up questions that help adults identify the development of spiritual fruit in children.

Post-Instruction Analysis

Post-instruction analysis occurred at the end of the instructional phase and had participants complete a summative objective assessment measuring comprehension and retention of the instructional curriculum.²⁶ Participants also completed a post-instruction survey that was compared to the previous pre-instructional survey for statistical gains.²⁷

²⁶See appendix 4.

²⁷See appendices 1 and 5.

CHAPTER 2

THE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL SUPPORT FOR EQUIPPING ADULTS TO MINISTER THE GOSPEL TO CHILDREN AT BEACON HILL BAPTIST CHURCH

The thesis of this project is that there are clear biblical principles, which provide a responsible method of ministering the gospel to children. An understanding and application of these principles is a necessary guide for instructing the church in both the motives and methods of any gospel ministry. The passages that have been selected for this examination will form the principal theological foundation for the pedagogical decisions that will comprise the methodology used in equipping adults at Beacon Hill Baptist Church for a ready gospel ministry to children.

The Ministry Mandate of Deuteronomy 6:4-7 and Acts 2:38-39

The mandate for this gospel ministry comes from the Great Commandment:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.
You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and
with all your might.
And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.
You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit
in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down,
and when you rise. (Deut 6:4-7)¹

¹All Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version.

It is here where God instructed His people that their children should be taught to love Him, the one Lord, with all their heart, soul, mind and strength. This manner of teaching, translated in the ESV as “diligently” from the Hebrew root *shanan* (שׁנן), connotes the process of whetting or sharpening.² The analogy is the taking of a sword’s edge or an arrow’s tip and sharpening it against a stone. To do so, required bringing the malleable metal to a well-hardened rock over and again. Thus, the diligent teaching of children to love God presupposes that the teacher will have well-developed, oft-repeated and time-tested tools for the task. It is then, a combination of both purpose and preparation that are anticipated in the Great Commandment, and are therefore expected of families.

While it is inarguably the family unit that is being primarily addressed as the diligent teachers of Deuteronomy 6, it is the Great Commission that exponentially expands this command to include not just the family, but also the entire church in gospel ministry to children:

And Jesus came and said to them, “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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matt 28:18-20)

Through the triumphant resurrection of Jesus Christ, now the command for diligent teaching and disciple-making includes all the nations, and by implication, children of the world. Thus, it is fitting that not just parents, but pastors and parishioners are expected to

²F. Brown, S. Driver, and C. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005), 1041. The lexicon derives שׁנן - *shanan* as incisive teaching with connotations of carefully selected and honed words. Such specific definition will be crucial to later arguments of this proposal.

be well equipped with a purposeful preparation for gospel ministry to children.

Both the Great Commandment and Commission to teach children assume a specific content. Deuteronomy 6:6 calls for the teaching of “these words” which God had commanded. Likewise, Jesus directs in Matthew 28:20 that “all that I have commanded (ἐνετειλάμην) you”³ is to be used as instruction for the making of disciples. In accordance then, the diligently-taught commands required to be given to children must encompass both that which is necessary to lead them in complete love for God and obedience to Christ. As Jesus iterates in Luke 6:46,⁴ to call God the Lord requires obedience to what He commands. So inseparable is this love from obedience, that Jesus conjoins them in John 14:21,⁵ declaring that true love of God is shown through the keeping of His commandments. Therefore, if children are to be taught to love God diligently, then they will by necessity be instructed that love encompasses obedience to what Jesus has commanded. If children are to be responsibly ministered to by the gospel they must be taught obedience to its primary call as an expected response from their lives.

In the first post-resurrection sermon of Acts 2, this primary call of obedient love towards God was shown to be one of repentance. Peter, when approached by those

³Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), 218. Thayer notes that a literal reading is “accomplished in you,” denoting all the mighty works that Jesus had done in the presence of the disciples. To be fair, Jesus’ instruction included more than teaching merely by words, but certainly not less, which is the point being pressed here.

⁴Luke 6:46, “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you?”

⁵John 14:21a, “Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me.”

whom the Spirit had “cut to the heart” replies,

Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38)

The post-Pentecost sermon defines the response of obedience to the gospel as the act of repentance. Later, in Athens, Paul also succinctly concludes that in Christ, God has commanded “all people everywhere to repent.”⁶ This command of repentance was the prophetic call of John the Baptist,⁷ was the first content of the preaching of Jesus,⁸ and was also the invitation of both Peter at Pentecost and Paul amongst the pagans. Therefore, it is the same call of obedience that is to be diligently taught to children as well, since there are not two distinct gospels, one for adults and another for children.⁹

⁶ “The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to *repent*” (Acts 17:30, emphasis mine).

⁷ “John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of *repentance* for the forgiveness of sins” (Mark 1:4, emphasis mine).

⁸ “From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “*Repent*, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt 4:17, emphasis mine). And, “he answered them, Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way? No, I tell you; but *unless you repent*, you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but *unless you repent*, you will all likewise perish” (Luke 13:1-5, emphasis mine).

⁹ “There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all” (Eph 4:4-6). And, “For the Scripture says, Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame. For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him” (Rom 10:11-12). Both passages make this principle, albeit in the context of geography, ethnicity, gender and social rank rather than age.

The unity of expectation found in the Great Command and Great Commission leaves no allowance for offering children anything less than a full-presentation of the gospel. Nor, does it warrant calling children to redemption through anything short of genuine repentance. The gospel articulated by Peter through the power of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, inseparably linked the gifting of that same Spirit by which he preached with the act of repentance.¹⁰ The Pentecost Discourse powerfully demonstrates by both exposition and the experiential evidence of the hearers that repentance is affixed to the receiving of the Holy Spirit. Since it is so demonstrated that the Spirit is necessary for new life,¹¹ then it follows that children also must repent if they too would be saved. Since most all children do, at some point, come to a definite knowledge of sin¹², they also

¹⁰Peter's response in Acts 2:38 is "repent . . . and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

¹¹John 3:3-8, "Jesus answered him, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.' Nicodemus said to him, 'How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?' Jesus answered, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, "You must be born again." The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit' " is offered as a proof alongside Rom 8:9, which says, "You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him."

¹²R. Albert Mohler and Daniel L. Akin, "The Salvation of the 'Little Ones': Do Infants who Die Go to Heaven?," accessed January 31, 2015, <http://www.albertmohler.com/2009/07/16/the-salvation-of-the-little-ones-do-infants-who-die-go-to-heaven/>. Rom 2:14-16 teaches that all men are without excuse, as the law is written on their hearts in the form of a conscience that accuses or excuses sin. The fact, that there is a precise point in the development of children where this moral conscience emerges is alluded to in Isa 7:15-16. While no definitive age is ever attributed, Rom 2:1-3 indicates that we are liable for judgment, and give evidence of such a conscience when can identify sin in others.

stand in need of salvation, which must come through repentance. There is for them, as for all, a consistent gospel message of redemption and repentance that they must hear, be encouraged to receive by faith, and ultimately be saved by.

So, if children are to be taught to love God diligently, they must be led to obey Jesus' command of repentance. How can it be known if they are able to do so?

Since God has granted life, even to the pagan Gentiles,¹³ so too may He also grant it to their children. In fact, this is the precise promise given of the Father's heart in the very context of parenthood:

What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him! (Luke 11:11-13)

One may argue that there are other Greek words that would more strongly indicate that Jesus is specifically referring to children in this passage, rather than the broader usage of *huios* (υἱός) for son.¹⁴ However, it is clear from the context of Jesus' illustration that the son could not provide or procure for himself the very necessities of life and simple sustenance. Such a request to a father from a grown son would be highly unusual, and potentially offensive, as the tension of the return of the grown Prodigal Son to beg of his father indicates.

¹³“If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way? When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, ‘Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life.’ ” (Acts 11:17-18).

¹⁴Παιδίον being the most relevant example.

The principle of Luke 11:11-13, is that what the children ask for in the giving of the Holy Spirit, their good Father in Heaven knows and takes pleasure in granting. There is then, no expectation that God would deny this good gift of the Holy Spirit to those who ask for it in repentance, irrespective of their earthly age.¹⁵ If the bitterest divide of ethnicity between Jew and Gentile, promised and pagan peoples, was no obstacle to the saving mercy of God, then neither should it be assumed that age would be. Since God alone is sovereign over the granting of the gifts of His gospel, then He may have mercy on whom He wills and may harden whom He hardens,¹⁶ chronological age being no hindrance to Him.

The Ministry Caution of Matthew 19:14 and 18:10

The greater concern, then, is not whether children may actually receive repentance, faith and conversion. Instead, it should be that they neither be hurried nor hindered in their coming to Christ. The hindering of a child in their approach to Christ is, according to Jesus Himself, a damnable offense. In the incident given in Matthew 19:13-15, there are two rebukes recorded. One rebuke is of the people bringing the children, and is made by the disciples. The second rebuke is of these same disciples by Jesus.

¹⁵ J. J. Van Oosterzee, *The Gospel According to Luke*. trans. Philip Schaff and Charles C. Starbuck, in *A Commentary of the Holy Scriptures* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Works 5, 2014). Oosterzee, notes the unique promise of the addition in Luke's account of Jesus' fatherly comparisons. The sum of v.13 he proclaims "a remarkable *interpretamentum*, which teaches us with the best right to consider the Holy Spirit as the essence of all good gifts which the Father in Heaven can bestow on His praying child."

¹⁶"So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills" (Rom 9:18).

Jesus explains that these children, who in this instance are inarguably young by His specific grammar,¹⁷ are demonstrating a coming to Him that is exemplary for all those that will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. This is not to argue that the children in this specific pericope are experiencing salvation by touching Jesus and by receiving His verbal blessing. The text gives no definitive proof of anything more than an earthly affirmation and approval. However, Jesus does say that their present actions and motives of child-like faith are certainly an example for that which is required for eternal salvation. So, if children are not to be hindered in coming to Jesus for a temporal blessing, it is reasonable to infer that neither should they be prevented from coming to Him for an eternal one.

Such thinking less of these little-ones, as Jesus iterates in Matthew 18:10, is to reject that which the Father rejoices in. It is to contradict His will in seeking them that are gone astray that they may not perish. It is not difficult here to connect Jesus' intentions to that of the salvation of children, as He provides the context of "seeing the face of my Father in heaven," and in what follows speaks of lostness by "going astray"¹⁸

¹⁷R. T. France, *Matthew*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove: IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 277-87. Παιδίον here is specifically used by Jesus, indicating at least in France's opinion, that the overlooked and outcast of that day and age, which would have often included children, were the very ones Jesus came to seek and to save.

¹⁸Jesus asks, "What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray?" (Matt 18:12).

and the desire that not one of the little ones should “perish.”¹⁹ In previous context, Jesus has plainly stated that these little ones may “believe” in Him, and that to cause them to sin would be worse than a swim in a deep sea with a dense stone.²⁰ Jesus is clear in making known His conviction that children will belong to the kingdom of heaven, and are not to be lightly esteemed in their ability to believe in Him nor to be rebuked in their exercise of it.

The Ministry Role of Acts 8 and 1 Samuel 3

Knowing that children must not be hindered in their belief and coming to Jesus, gospel ministry must be wise to recognize the subtle forms that these causes of stumbling may take. The single hindrance that Jesus condemned most adamantly was the false proselytizing of the Pharisees and Sadducees.²¹ He confronted the scribes and Pharisees in making their converts twice a child of Hell, and thereby worsening their spiritual condition.²² The teaching by which they accomplished this feat, Jesus warned as being ubiquitous yeast, which His disciples must be on guard against. One particular

¹⁹“So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish” (Matt 18:14).

²⁰“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 18:6).

²¹“How is it that you fail to understand that I did not speak about bread? Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” Then they understood that he did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matt 16:11-12).

²²“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For . . . when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves” (Matt 23:15).

component of this dangerous and hindering yeast was the false assurance presumed by the scribes and Pharisees in their claim of heaven's reward through the lineage of Abraham.

They answered him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing the works Abraham did, but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did. (John 8:39-40)

Thus, the scribes and Pharisees caused those they taught to stumble through the granting of eternal assurances under false pretenses. Similarly, it is imperative that children not be hindered in their coming to faith in Christ through early and easy offers of eternal assurance that, although well intended, are not biblically warranted.

Because of the biblical injunction against hindering children in their coming to faith in Christ, and by the ease in which they might be manipulated in areas of trust, a clear understanding of the adult role in the ministry of the gospel to children is critical. The best understanding of this adult role is as a sharer of the gospel to children that strives for greater gospel discernment, and becomes less dependent upon a personality of persuasion. This is not to deny the inherent exhortative and urgent nature of the gospel,²³ but it is rather to assume one's proper position in relation to the authority and work of the Holy Spirit. No person can create conviction.²⁴ Instead, they may very well contrive

²³For example, Paul was very emphatic in his evangelistic persuasion, imploring others to be reconciled to God (2 Cor 5:20) with such a passion that wished he himself could be substituted for them (Rom 9:1-3).

²⁴Jesus makes clear that it is a unique work of the Spirit in John 3:7-8. Attempts to contrive and control such power were the cause of rebuke for Simon Magus (Acts 8:18-24).

coercion and confusion through a hurried approach. Jesus instead likens the ministry of the gospel as the sowing of seed, and Paul adds the attendant tasks of watering and reaping,²⁵ noting all the while that it is God who gives the growth.²⁶ Therefore, the role of the gospel-sharer is shown to be one of a consistent and patient sower of the Word of God, just as the Shema commands. It is the sharing of the Word of God that is the central component of the task of the adult who ministers to children, just as the scattering of seed is indispensable to the sower. Without this seed-Word, the would-be sower beats the air without any hope of genuine increase.

This role of such an adult Word-sharer, is perhaps best demonstrated by the actions of Philip in Acts 8:35, where he “opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture . . . told him the good news about Jesus.” Here clearly, is shown the primary role of the gospel-sharer as the evangelist, the seed-sower standing in the light of Deuteronomy 6 and Matthew 28. This is the demonstration of what it means to be the

²⁵“And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant, he said, ‘To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that “seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.” Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away. And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience” (Luke 8:9-15).

²⁶“What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth” (1 Cor 3:5-7).

diligent and direct teacher of Scripture. When this is properly understood, those who minister the gospel to children will gain a freedom from coercive and manipulative methods. They will do so by coming to trust the efficacy of their ministry as being dependent upon the Holy Spirit's work through the Word. No longer will there be the anxiety of being dependent upon powers of human persuasion. A fruitful gospel ministry to children begins with the diligent teaching of the Word, and continues in trusting the work of the Spirit to do the reaping of God.

With the caveat of having been declared a failure to his own children,²⁷ Scripture does provide the priest Eli and the calling of Samuel as a case-study of the discernment role being advocated for above. First Samuel 3:7 recounts that at the current time in his temple life, the boy Samuel did “not yet know the Lord, and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him.” As the Lord began to call upon Samuel's life, albeit with time, Eli did ultimately perceive that the “Lord was calling the boy.”²⁸ While not as passively as Eli, what is advocated for in Scripture would be the role of a diligent Word-sharer and patient discerner of the Lord's calling for those who minister the gospel to children.

²⁷Eli's rebuke of his sons, much too late in their lives, is recorded in 1 Sam 2:22-25 as the Lord had already set His judgment against their sins. Eli is later chastised and held responsible by God for being too lenient with the sin of his sons in 1 Sam 2:29.

²⁸“And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli and said, ‘Here I am, for you called me.’ Then Eli perceived that the LORD was calling the boy” (1 Sam 3:8).

The Ministry Method of Romans 10:14-17 and Galatians 3:2-5

The command and role of the gospel-sharer demonstrated above has already set forth a precedent for the method of ministry to children. The mandate of being a diligent teacher of God's commands, and the role of discernment meld together in the ministry pedagogy of Paul. His syllogism for this approach, is given in Romans 10:13-17:

They are saved when they call,
They will call when they believe,
They will believe when they hear,
They will hear when they are preached to.

Paul's pedagogy, summarized in verse 17, is that "faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ." Here then, is the ministry method throughout and for all the ages – *people must hear the word of God if they are to come to faith in Christ. They must hear, they must believe, they must call – if they would be saved.*

That there can be no substitute or shortcut for this succession of preaching to hearing, hearing to believing, and believing to calling is further supported by Paul's rhetorical question to the church of Galatia. Being seduced to return to a faith of legalistic self-righteousness, Paul has for the Galatians a single question: "Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?"²⁹ The obviously expected answer reveals the method that forms the basis of a responsible and ready gospel ministry; people receive the Holy Spirit by hearing with faith. It is an inarguable conclusion from Paul to Rome, to Galatia, and to the church of today.

²⁹ "Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?" (Gal 3:2).

Having shown from Romans 10:17, that this specific hearing is of the Word of Christ, the ministry method to children is now no longer abstract. It is to be concretely fixed upon the preaching and teaching of the Word of God. While this teaching may contain explanation and illustration, *these should only be supplemental and servant, and not supplanting of the substance of Scripture.* The only method by which God has affixed His seal of affirmation³⁰ for ministry to children, or to anyone else for that matter, is one in which His Word is diligently taught in such a way that they might hear and be called to repentance and belief.

The Ministry Expectation of 2 Corinthians 7:10-11

Peter had already utilized the ministry method that later would be further explained and elucidated by Paul, and the blessed outcome had been evident. Some of the hearers of the crowd that Pentecost day were “cut to the heart.” The Holy Spirit moved upon them, based upon the gospel that they had heard. And He moved in such a way that convicted them of their own sins, and of their guilt in having necessitated and participated in the crucifixion of Jesus. This cutting conviction caused within them a desire for action, one that was expressed in a single burning question, “Brothers, what shall we do?” This cutting, this conviction by the Holy Spirit, this questioning desire, while never in the control of the sharer, should always be the prayerful and joyfully expected outcome of the method of gospel ministry given in the Bible. In the case of

³⁰Only the Word is said by God Himself to have the power to penetrate the very soul, as shown by proof in Heb 4:12. It is only the “sacred writings” that are ever granted the authority and power to make one “wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim 3:15).

these three-thousand, conviction was readily apparent. They came asking for the proper response to what they had heard and had experienced, and they followed by repentance and baptism that very day.³¹ This Pentecost result, may not be so readily and so visibly abundant in the modern gospel ministry to children.

But, there is, after the Great Pentecost, a further help and more detailed description of what precisely being “cut to the heart” by the conviction of the Holy Spirit should be. Undoubtedly, perhaps thousand others heard Peter’s Pentecost preaching, might have been moved in some emotional or sorrowful way, but it was only these three-thousand souls that came to repentance. The conviction they experienced, and that others did not on that day is differentiated by Paul in 2 Corinthians 7:10-11.

For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, but also what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what punishment! At every point you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter (2 Cor 7:10–11).

Here, Paul distinguishes between a “worldly grief” that “produces death” and a “godly grief [that] produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret.” What is made clear, is that apart from the cutting of the heart, apart from the godly grief witnessed at Pentecost and written of by Paul – there can be no repentance and salvation. It is here set forth no plainer, without conviction there can be no conversion.³² Jesus says none come

³¹ The entire account paraphrased above is given in Acts 2.

³² Donald G. Bloesch, *The Holy Spirit: Works & Gifts* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 285. Bloesch, in this comprehensive survey of the works and gifts of the Holy Spirit in their various historical controversies and different interpretations, still concludes that “especially vital for both faith and salvation is the revealing work of the Spirit.”

without this drawing in John 6:44, and that this drawing will be accomplished by the Holy Spirit's convicting power in John 16:8-11.

God is gracious in the word of Paul to Corinth to provide, what might be properly viewed as the Fruits of Conviction. Making clear again, that no one can produce such fruit; it is this outcome of God's mercy that the gospel-sharer to children is alert to discern. Paul notes seven such fruits of godly-grief conviction that lead unashamedly to repentance unto salvation. They are: *earnestness, eagerness, indignation, fear, longing, zeal, and punishment*. These, Paul says, are the outwardly produced signs of the inward work of the Holy Spirit that had given him the confidence that God had saved the true church of Corinth. So, where gospel conviction is being worked, and salvation is being strived, there will be evidence of:

earnestness (σπουδή) – a sincerity and seriousness about the condition of the soul³³
eagerness (ἀπολογία) – to act on what has been heard and to be cleared of guilt before God³⁴
indignation (ἀγανάκτησις) – a hatred of sin, whether one's own or of others³⁵

³³ Murray J. Harris, *2 Corinthians*, in vol. 10 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 364. Harris interprets the usage of σπουδή here as a “splendid example” of “seriousness of purpose” and “beneficial outcome” of the “godly sorrow” caused by Paul's letter.

³⁴ Ralph P. Martin, *2 Corinthians*, *The World Biblical Commentary*, vol. 40 (Dallas: Word Books, 1986), 239. Martin concludes that “we miss the force of Paul's thinking if we fail to note that the Corinthians came to realize their concern to be reconciled to Paul ‘before God.’ ” That is, not to discount that they sought reconciliation with Paul, but that the eagerness for doing so was ultimately reconciliation with God.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 235. Martin agrees that the possible interpretation of this indignation “could be addressed at themselves, for they brought much shame upon the reputation of the church at Corinth” or at the previous perpetrator mentioned in 1 Cor 5:1-2. Either interpretation supports the conclusion above that ἀγανάκτησις is to be understood as a hatred of sin.

fear (φόβος) – of God’s wrath, of condemnation by Him, of Hell itself³⁶
longing (ἐπιπόθησις) – for peace and reconciliation with God and others³⁷
zeal (ζηλεύω) – for the works of God, knowledge of God, house of God³⁸
punishment (ἐκδίκησις) – willingness to suffer for the sake of righteousness³⁹

³⁶ Christian Friedrich Kling, *The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* trans. Conway P. Wing, *A Commentary of the Holy Scriptures* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Works 5, 2014). Kling disagrees with the interpretation given above, arguing, “The φόβος was in this case a fear not of Divine judgment and still less of apostasy, but of the Apostle lest he should come to them with a rod.” But it is illogical to deduce that Paul believed his own wrathful rod could ever produce genuine repentance and salvation. Such a fear, as Kling proposes, is also inconsistent with Jesus’ teaching in Matt 10:38.

³⁷ Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 235. Martin attributes this longing to being reunited with Paul and a “restoration of . . . trust and affection.” But one cannot be reconciled to his brother, without first being reconciled with God, nor truly love His brother apart from being loved as a child of God. This point is precisely argued by the Apostle John in 1 John 3:10 and 1 John 4:20-21. So, with respect to salvation, one cannot long for a brother rightly without first longing for God.

³⁸ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, trans. John Pringle (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Works 5, 2014). Calvin agrees with the definition above in principle, if not in the particulars. He states, “I shall not enter into any dispute as to whether the things that Paul enumerates are effects of repentance, or belong to it, or are preparatory to it, as all this is unnecessary for understanding Paul’s design, for he simply proves the repentance of the Corinthians from its signs, or accompaniments. At the same time he makes *sorrow according to God* to be the source of all these things, inasmuch as they spring from it—which is assuredly the case; for when we have begun to feel self-dissatisfaction, we are afterwards stirred up to seek after the other things. Zeal, whether understood as the preparation or proof of the Corinthians’ repentance, had stirred them to self-dissatisfaction and towards seeking the things of God.

³⁹ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*, (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Works 5, 2014). Harris (*2 Corinthians*, 364) reads ἐκδίκησις as a desire for the punishment of the previous offender in the first letter, and Martin (*2 Corinthians*, 235) concedes that this is the consensus modern view. However, less recent commentators like Henry saw a more personal interpretation in which, “It wrought, lastly, revenge against sin and their own folly, by endeavours to make all due satisfaction for injuries that might be done thereby.” Regardless of which view is taken as the consensus, a willingness to inflict punishment for the purity of the church, or to receive it for the due penalty of one’s own sins could only be rightly fulfilled by a genuine convert who had experienced true conviction.

It is these qualities of conviction that were evident in the life of the believers to which Paul wrote, and in this he was comforted and assured. It is certainly expected that the convicting fruit of the Holy Spirit that originally led them to salvation would be continuing to grow in them through the work of sanctification. Jesus teaches it to be so in His analogy of the vine-abiding branches (John 15:1-17). The discovery here is exciting for the adult seriously engaged in gospel-ministry to children because it gives informed guidance to the age-old question of, “When are children ready?” *It should never be assumed that children are ready to be professed as converted before there is reasonable evidence of the preceding presence of conviction.*

The Ministry Confession of Romans 10:10,13

Peter’s command to those at Pentecost who had heard the word of Christ and had been convicted of the Holy Spirit was at first to repent. The response to the cutting was to be repentance. This was to be the turning of the heart, soul, mind and strength towards love to God through obedience to what Christ had commanded. While Luke reports the form and specifics of how repentance was to be demonstrated in the Pentecost event, there are other instances in which Christ declared people forgiven of their sins instantaneously.⁴⁰ Jesus, “knowing their hearts”⁴¹ certainly had this power and prerogative. But it is one that the gospel-sharer to children should never presume to

⁴⁰For example, in Matt 9:2, Jesus declares it of a paralytic, and in Luke 7:48 to the woman of the alabaster anointing.

⁴¹But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man (John 2:24-25).

possess, because it is a gift unique to Jesus' divinity. With this in mind, discernment must be exercised in the given fruits of conviction as set forth above, both prayerfully and patiently. After which, what follows genuine conviction is the ministry of confession as set forth in Romans 10.

In Romans 10:8-13, for those whom Paul says the word of faith had come near their heart, the command was to verbally confess with their mouths the belief in their heart that Jesus is the Risen Lord. This is the obedient response to conviction given by Scripture. What one has come to hear, has come to be convicted by, and has come to believe in should be verbally confessed. It is with the heart and the mouth that one responds to gospel ministry in the promise of God that everyone who does so "will not be put to shame"⁴² but that "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."⁴³ Verbal confession should follow genuine conviction as first evidence of the belief of the heart.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there have been six principles expounded from Scripture that provide a responsible and ready gospel ministry method for children:

1. Children will be intentionally instructed in daily life towards love for God.
2. This love for God in obedience will have the aim of repentance.
3. The Scriptures will be shared personally and diligently with children.

⁴² Rom 10:11, as Paul applies the prophecy of Joel 2:26-27.

⁴³ Rom 10:13, again as Paul turns to the prophecy of Joel in 2:32.

4. The sharer will be wise to discern the convicting fruits of the Holy Spirit.
5. There should be no hurrying or hindrance to any child coming to faith.
6. Conviction by the Holy Spirit will be met with guidance in repentance and verbal confession unto salvation, as God so mercifully wills.

These principles have produced a clear pattern that will set forth the foundation for the pedagogical methods of gospel ministry that follow in effectively equipping the church to minister to children.

CHAPTER 3

THE THEORETICAL SUPPORT FOR EQUIPPING ADULTS TO MINISTER THE GOSPEL TO CHILDREN AT BEACON HILL BAPTIST CHURCH

The purpose of this chapter will be to justify the need for this ministry-equipping project due to the current state of children's evangelism, which has shifted from a theologically centered emphasis to a methodologically centered one. This shift, and the necessity that it creates, will be shown by a survey comparison of historical and modern methods of children's evangelism that demonstrate the following general trends:

1. A movement away from patient, pastoral care towards a push for performance as measured by procured numbers.
2. A movement away from a full presentation of the gospel towards an abbreviated alliterated, and formulaic presentation.
3. A movement away from the sufficiency of Scripture towards the perceived need of additional aids, illustrations and educational manipulatives.
4. A movement away from an understanding and identification of conviction, towards the necessity of personality persuasion and emotional manipulation.
5. A movement away from repentance being expressed through genuine confession, towards rote methods of repetition of unbiblical Sinner's prayers.
6. A movement away from the patience of fruit bearing as evidence of salvation assurance, towards successful completion of mental assent, verbal repetition and performance traditions.

Trend 1: From Patience to Performance

An initial trend that readily emerges from a survey of past and present evangelism methods is the movement away from patient pastoral care towards performance as measured by procured numbers. The church-growth movement, and the emergence of the mega-churches have perhaps played large roles in this shift. But long before these factors may have come to bear on individual methods of gospel ministry, Southern Baptist churches at the national, state and local level were already measuring, comparing and calculating their overall health by some consideration of the number of yearly baptisms.¹ Doing so, encapsulated church and spiritual growth into a single measurement, while ignoring the fact that there is no easily quantifiable measurement of sanctification through the Fruits of the Spirit. The result was a tangible pressure placed upon pastors to keep up with the church of the Jones' by increasing yearly baptisms.² To

¹BP News, "Pastors' Task Force on SBC Evangelistic Impact & Declining Baptisms," accessed February 19, 2015, <http://www.bpnews.net/pdf/SBCTaskForceReport.pdf>. This Special Task Force report, established in 2013, was charged with examining current baptismal numbers and rates with those reaching back, to at least 1950. While these numbers are tangible and plotted, it might be suggested that they are merely symptoms of the actual disorder of weakening ministry and evangelism methods. The actual report itself, while encouraging more baptismal and evangelism engagement, did very little to connect surface symptoms to core theological problems in ministry approaches.

²Rick Warren, "40 Ways to Increase Baptisms," pastors.com, accessed February 19, 2015, <http://pastors.com/40-ways-to-increase-baptisms/>. The article referenced, mentions Scripture only once in a passing mention found in recommendation no. 15 of printing a brochure, while the terms "party," "beautiful," and "inviting" are especially emphasized and repeated. The article specifically suggests in recommendation no. 39 that the baptizing pastor should take any grade school children up from the water by raising their hands high, as if a winner of a game.

do so, required a quicker, easier method of sharing the gospel and declaring conversion, so more people could be led to the baptismal pool in a year's time.³

It is clear to see, that children, who are more vulnerable in areas of trust and manipulation could easily fall prey to such methods, and the current state of the church supports this as fact. While baptisms among Southern Baptists have been plateaued or declining from the 1970's, the only group that has shown consistent growth during this time has been children under the age of 6, a group which has shown an increased baptismal rate of 96 percent between 1974 and 2010.⁴ While some might argue that perhaps the church has been especially effective in reaching and witnessing conversions in this particular age group during these years, the fact that many of these baptized children later leave the faith and church of their upbringing would suggest otherwise.⁵

It is more likely, that the push for performance in the area of recording baptisms has caused a departure from patient and persistent pastoral care, which is necessary for genuinely effective gospel ministry, to all ages, including children. This

³Nelson Searcy, "Break Through Barriers to Baptism and Get a Free Taste of What it Means to be a 'Renegade Pastor,'" Church Leader Insights, accessed February 19, 2015, <http://www.churchleaderinsights.com/index.php/specials/maximizing-baptism-half-off>. Here, Searcy offers a half-price discount on his "Maximizing Baptism Seminar," which promises that "there are several common reasons why people aren't taking the step of obedience to be baptized in your church. Once you know these reasons and put a system in place to educate and encourage people, you'll immediately begin baptizing more of them." Such a bold promise seems a far cry from the teachings of Jesus in John 3:8 or Matt 19:25-26.

⁴BP News, "Pastors' Task Force on SBC Evangelistic Impact & Declining Baptisms," 2015.

⁵Pew Research Center, *Religion among the Millennials*, accessed February 18, 2015, <http://www.pewforum.org/2010/02/17/religion-among-the-millennials/>.

departure, was long ago decried and reprimanded by men like Richard Baxter in his *Reformed Pastor*, and that cry remains relevant to this day. Ichabod Spencer, while not specifically referencing a child, yet reports of often visiting the lost, leaving himself exhausted, and leaving the one being ministered to week upon week still wrestling with the truth.⁶ These men, as historical examples, did not expect the seed sown to bear immediate fruit, but anticipated patient watering and waiting as a part of gospel ministry. The patience in such ministry comes from the understanding that what God has saved, man cannot undo, and what God has not saved, man cannot manipulate. Jesus says it can no more be hurried than a man can command the wind to pick up its speed.⁷ As the Shema commanded, disciple-making is daily diligence, not an encapsulated moment of time with an always immediate decision. Andrew Murray prescribes such patience in gospel ministry:

Instruction must be persevering and continuous. The entrance of Divine truth into the mind and heart, the formation of habit and training of character, are not formed by sudden and isolated efforts, but by regular and unceasing repetition. This is the law of growth in nature.⁸

While a case could be argued, against such patience, by pointing to examples of what appear to be abrupt, even spontaneous conversions, nowhere has God guaranteed them or

⁶Ichabod Spencer, *A Pastor's Sketches: Conversations with Anxious Souls Concerning the Way* (Vestavia Hills, AL: Solid Ground Christian Books, 2001), 152-154.

⁷“The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit” (John 3:8).

⁸Dennis Gundersen, *Your Child's Profession of Faith* (Sand Springs: OK, Grace & Truth Books, 2010), 55.

prescribed their participation in every case.⁹ Instead, the clear command has been diligence, to teaching, to sowing and the waiting for the bearing of fruit.¹⁰ But the modern push for performance, above patience, has now left us with the dilemma of churches under our convention, and assumed convictional umbrella that press the boundaries of very brief gospel ministry and counsel through encouragement of spontaneous baptisms.¹¹ What is argued for here, is the need again, for neither hindrance nor hurrying – a balance only struck with some measure of patience and biblical practice. This project is needed, because of the current emphasis of performance over patience.

Trend 2: From Full Presentation to Formula

At some, perhaps indiscernible moment in the history of ministry to children, it became the accepted understanding that children either could not, or would not be able to understand and respond to a comprehensive presentation of the gospel. The definition of what is meant here by a comprehensive gospel presentation is one that takes the child through a sharing of the total picture of God’s redemption plan from Creation to Eternity

⁹The Apostle Luke, in Acts 2:41, accounts of the Pentecost 3000 who heard, repented and were baptized in a single day, in addition to the Ethiopian eunuch who did likewise in Acts 8:26-38. However, in these 3001 examples, it is not possible to know with certainty any of their prior experiences with the Word or work of the Spirit, and how normative we should make the unique events of Pentecost to the expectation of today.

¹⁰In Matt 13:1-8 and 18-23 Jesus’ very parable of the seed sowing of the Word of the Kingdom implies patience, as seeds do not produce root nor fruit but with time.

¹¹Steven Furtick, *Spontaneous Baptism Resource Kit*, accessed February 19, 2015, <http://www.sunstandstill.org/baptismkit>.

after Consummation.¹² Catechisms, systematic teaching plans and comprehensive gospel presentations of the past were discarded for more truncated models.¹³

The most popular of these abbreviated models that has become the most widespread standard in gospel ministry is the Roman Road, which is self attributed to Dr. Jack Hyles.¹⁴ Here, the gospel had been truncated to simply eight verses.¹⁵ The current state of gospel evangelism to the children of the LifeWay generation is a modification of

¹²One may consult Ken Ham and Stacia McKeever, *The Seven C's of History* (Petersburg, VA: Answers in Genesis, 2011), *A Catechism for Boys and Girls* (Auburn, MA: Carey Publications, 1995), or David R. Helm, *The Big Story Picture Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004) as the best current examples.

¹³Tom J. Nettles, “An Encouragement to Use Catechisms,” Founders.org, accessed February 19, 2015, <http://founders.org/fj10/an-encouragement-to-use-catechisms/>. The last SBC commissioned catechism was produced in 1892 by the Sunday School Board and was written by John A. Broadus.

¹⁴Jack Hyles, “There Remaineth Very Much Land Yet to Be Possessed,” The Jack Hyles Home Page, accessed February 18, 2015, <http://www.jackhyles.com/muchland.htm>.

¹⁵ Jack Hyles, “Let’s Go Soul Winning,” Faith Bible Baptist Church, accessed February 18, 2015, <http://www.fbbc.com/messages/hylesletsgosoulwinning.htm>. Hyles advises that “you can be a soul winner if you don't know a single verse of Scripture, if you can draw a map in your Bible to tell yourself where to go. All you need do is find Romans 3:10 and you won't have to know a single verse of Scripture. Right beside Romans 3:10, write the next verse to tell you where to go in your Bible. Actually what you do is draw yourself a little road map in your Bible to explain where to go next. First, turn to Romans 3:10. That is all you have to remember. Underline the verse. Beside it write 3:23. After you have read Romans 3:10, it tells you where to go next. Now turn to Romans 3:23. Underline that verse and beside that write 5:12. Turn to 5:12 and underline 5:12 and write beside it 6:23. Underline 6:23 and beside it write 5:8. Underline 5:8 and write beside it 10:9-13.” Hyles is to be commended for the simplicity of his method and the regard to sufficiency with which he holds Scripture. His method will form a part of the gospel presentation of this very project, but the critique is that his selection of Scripture was too narrow to grant the full scheme and scope of the redemption narrative.

Hyles' method that instructs them to "Admit, Believe, and Confess" as a clever acronym akin to learning their alphabet.¹⁶ As a pastor, concerned parent and blogger, Mike Leake correctly observes, "Admit, believe and confess is not the gospel. It is the only fitting *response* to the gospel, but is not the gospel itself."¹⁷ Pastor Leake is correct to note and respond to such a drastic redaction of the gospel.

Of perhaps even greater concern, are manuals of gospel ministry to children that are completely devoid of any mention whatsoever of a gospel presentation beyond a single verse. In *The Faith of a Child*, Art Murphy proclaims that,

John 3:16 may be all that you need. If you use more than two or three Scriptures, you will need to review or summarize what you have read when you finish. It is too much for a young mind to remember.¹⁸

Again, instead of making the argument for patience in planting, the recommended shortcut is to simply condense the content for children, as much as is possible for maximum efficiency and effectiveness. This project is needed because a more comprehensive gospel presentation has been abandoned for a lesser formulaic substitute for children.

¹⁶Ken Parker and Kay Parker, *The ABCs of Becoming a Christian*, LifeWay Articles, accessed February 19, 2015, <http://www.lifeway.com/Article/abcs-of-becoming-a-christian>.

¹⁷Mike Leake. "An Open Letter to LifeWay," Borrowed Light Blog, entry posted June 6, 2013, accessed February 18, 2015, <http://www.mikeleake.net/2013/06/an-open-letter-to-lifeway.html>.

¹⁸Art Murphy, *The Faith of a Child: A Step-by-Step Guide to Salvation for Your Child*, (Chicago: Moody Publishers), 102.

Trend 3: From Sufficiency to Sacred Toys

As previously argued in the theological defense of this project, the Scriptures alone contain the promise of God that they are sufficiently “able to make [one] wise unto salvation” (2 Tim 3:15). As the church trended further adrift from patience and towards formula, it is not wholly surprising that this commitment to sufficiency would also ultimately be abandoned. It was one small step from an abbreviated Scripture presentation, to an absent one altogether. Gospel ministry to children moved very quickly from Hyles’ truncated tracts of the 1970’s to sacramental toys in the 80’s and 90’s. As recent as a decade ago, gospel ministry to children was whole-heartedly advocating the use of educational manipulatives as substitutions for the diligent teaching of the Shema. Brian E. Hill gives this preferred method in his *Come to Me: Nurturing the Spiritual Birth of Your Child*:

It has been my experience that a very effective way to communicate the gospel to children is to use gospel tracts designed and written specifically with children in mind. Although I recommend the use of booklets or tracts to lead children to faith in Christ, I recognize that there are other effective means of sharing the gospel with children. The Evangecube is an unfolding puzzle that presents the gospel in a colorful and creative way. Children love puzzles, and the Evangecube is a *sure way* [emphasis mine] to capture your child’s attention as you share the gospel story with her. Another tool . . . is the salvation bracelet . . . consist[ing] of a leather string with beads . . . a black bead . . . which symbolizes our sins; a red bead which symbolizes the blood of Jesus; a blue bead for baptism; a white bead symbolizing forgiveness; a green bead . . . symbolizing Christian growth; a gold bead for the promise of heaven; and a seventh purple bead that is a reminder that we are to worship God.”¹⁹

Notwithstanding, that not only has Hill given in the last purple symbol, the

¹⁹Brian E. Hill, *Come to Me: Nurturing the Spiritual Birth of Your Child*, (Waynesboro, VA: Authentic Books, 2004), 107.

very first law that drives mankind to the need of a Savior, his methods show how the trending push for performance, and the formulaic gospel content have now been collapsed into puzzles, bracelets and sacred sacramental, trinkets. *One must ask, for which of these methods did God affix His promise?* It is unquestionable, that Jesus did indeed use much symbolism in His own preaching and teaching. Nor, is it argued that an entire knowledge of the biblical canon is necessary for salvation. However, Jesus was careful to explain that this entire canon spoke to His mission of salvation, and the early evangelists, preachers and ministers of the gospel were diligent to open their mouths, beginning with Scripture,²⁰ just as Jesus had previously done on the Emmaus road, carefully reasoning to them from its teachings.²¹ This project is needed, because the increasing trend is to move from an abbreviated Scripture presentation, to one that is completely devoid of Scripture. This is promoted through the use of educational manipulatives that have neither the promise nor the power, that have not the inspiration, nor the efficacy of the Holy Spirit inspired Scriptures.

Trend 4: From Conviction to Confusion

The aforementioned trends, have left gospel ministry to children in a state of chaos and confusion. The result of their movement and adoption within the church, has left most without a consensus answer to the most pressing of all questions, “How do we

²⁰Philip serves as a salient example in Acts 8:35 when he, “opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture [Isa 53:7-8] he told him the good news about Jesus.”

²¹Luke 24:27 says about Jesus “beginning with all Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.”

know when a child is actually ready to take the first steps of faith profession?" Parents, pastors and parishioners wrestle with any theological certainty of when a child may be rightly joined to the church through the ordinances of baptism and communion. Greater still, is the dilemma of when to teach the doctrines of assurance in any personal application to the child's life. When it comes to children's conversion and communication into the congregation, the church is most desperately confused because the current trends have caused it to lose its former understanding of the doctrine of conviction.

In the theological history of the mid-nineteenth century, the question of child readiness was measured by the presence of Holy Spirit conviction. Harvey Newcomb, wrote in the memoir of Phebe Bartlett, that she was the age of 4 when private diligent instruction at home and the public preaching of Johnathan Edwards brought her to Christ. How could it be known with the best of human certainty? He describes her experience of conviction and conversion as follows:

She would go away alone, several times in a day and pray to God. Sometimes she would do this five or six times in a day. I do not know what she said, at that time, when she prayed: but I suppose she told God how bad her heart was, and asked any thing not hinder her from praying. One day she told her mother she could not find God. By this I suppose she meant that she could not feel his Holy Spirit in her heart, filling it with love, and making her love to do good. A little while after, her mother heard her in her closet praying aloud and very earnestly. She cried at the same time very hard; for she saw how wicked and sinful she was, and it grieved her very much. She said a great deal, but all her mother could hear was these words: "Pray blessed LORD give me salvation! I PRAY, BEG, pardon all my sins!" When she had done praying, she came and sat down by her mother, and cried out aloud. Her mother asked her what was the matter. But she cried more and more, and wrung her hands. Her mother then asked her if she was afraid God would not give her salvation. She answered, "Yes, I am afraid I shall go to hell!" Her mother tried to quiet her, but little Phebe saw so much wickedness in her heart, that she could not stop crying till it was changed. But God heard her prayer, when she begged so earnestly for salvation. In a little while she stopped crying all at once, and began to smile, saying to her mother, "Mother, the kingdom of heaven is come to me."

After this, little Phebe went to her closet again, for now she loved to talk with God, and call him her Father, and to thank Jesus for dying to save her. When she came back to her mother she said, 'I can find God now.' And again she said, 'I love God.' Her mother asked her if she loved God better than she loved her father and mother and her little sister Rachel. 'Yes,' said she, 'I love him better than I love any thing else.' Her elder sister asked her where she could find God. She answered, 'in heaven.' 'Why,' said her sister, 'have you been in heaven?' 'No,' said Phebe. Her mother asked her if she was afraid of going to hell, and if that made her cry. 'Yes? I was,' said she, 'but now I shall not be' she answered. Her mother asked her if she thought God had given her salvation. She answered, 'Yes.' 'When?' 'To-day,' said she. All that afternoon she appeared glad and joyful. Some one asked her how she felt. She said, 'I feel better than I did.' 'What makes you feel better?' said the other. She answered, 'God makes me *so*.'²²

Now, it is possible, that Newcomb, the Bartlett family, and even Phebe herself could possibly have been terribly wrong about her salvation coming at 4 years of age.

However, they had in the very least exercised the diligent teaching of the Shema, and had also the added objective measures of the Fruits of Conviction to Repentance given by Paul in 2 Corinthians 7:10-11.²³ Phebe's testimony bore all the evidences of the eagerness, indignation, fear, longing, zeal and willingness for punishment against her sin that the "godly grief that leads to repentance to salvation" anticipates in Scripture. It is little surprise then, that Bartlett's biographer ends her memoir by stating;

I have nothing further to say about little Phebe, except that when she had become a woman she married Mr. Noah Parsons, and was a very good, pious woman. Those who knew her, say that she was a very prayerful, sincere, and devout Christian.²⁴

This project is needed, because the trend away from an objective understanding of

²² Harvey Newcomb, *The Memoir of Phebe Bartlett of Northampton, Mass.* (Philadelphia: American Sunday School Union, 1831), 7-13.

²³ Namely, those Fruits of Conviction are "earnestness, eagerness, indignation, fear, longing, zeal and punishment" as exegetically discussed in chap. 2 of this project.

²⁴ Newcomb, *The Memoir of Phebe Bartlett of Northampton, Mass.*, 34.

conviction and waiting for its coming fruit has caused great confusion in gospel ministry to children.

Trend 5: From Repentance to Repetition

Examining again, Paul's chain of conversion in 2 Corinthians 7:10, the linchpin between the godly grief of conviction and salvation is repentance. With a diluted gospel presentation, and a subjective view of conviction based on emotionally elicited responses, the ministry of gospel to children has shifted from repentance to rote repetition. Repentance has no longer been viewed as the beginning of sanctification, but mere mental assent to an abbreviated set of Scriptures that culminates in an expressed willingness to repeat a 'Sinner's Prayer.' The Apostle James was concerned that such shallow belief of his epistle readers went no further than that of the demons.²⁵

While it is beyond the scope of this project to track the origins of the Sinner's Prayer, much like the Roman Road it has become the much-wearied standard of gospel ministry to children. Essential to such a prayer is a formulaic repetition that includes asking, "Jesus into your heart." Many up and coming leaders within the church are now decrying this method as sheer sacramentalism and woefully misleading to children. J.D. Greear notes in his "Stop Asking Jesus Into Your Heart" that:

a 2011 Barna study shows that nearly half of all adults in America have prayed such a prayer and subsequently believe they are going to heaven, though many of them rarely, if ever, attend a church, read the Bible personally, or have lifestyles that differ in any significant way from those outside the church.

²⁵Jas 2:19 emphatically declares, "You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!"

Ultimately, my concern is not on what words or actions we might use to express our faith in Christ but that we don't substitute those words or actions for repentance and faith.²⁶

Nothing of the sort of any sinner's prayer, as it is popularly taught now to children is found in Scripture. It would be foolish to state here, that people have not been genuinely converted during the repeating of a Sinner's Prayer, but it would be wise to say that they were saved not by it, but in spite of it. Again, while verbal confession is shown to be a necessity by the Scriptures, nowhere is it specified what the content of that confession must contain. Generations of children have been taught that repentance was encapsulated in a single moment of a well-intentioned evangelist saying, "Repeat this with me" rather than Jesus commanding, "Take up your cross and follow me" (Luke 9:23). The current trend of equating repentance to rote repetition of a formulaic and sacramental 'Sinner's Prayer' makes this project urgently necessary.

Trend 6: From Demonstrated Perseverance to Delivered Promises

If the above trends are valid observations, then the last trend will prove most damning to the church. It will be that the church has moved in its gospel ministry to children to dangerously delivering promises of assurance apart from any demonstrated perseverance. If our impatience has led us to seek numerical performance, and our gospel message has been diluted, if sacramentalism has replaced sufficiency and

²⁶J. D. Greear, *Stop Asking Jesus into Your Heart: How to Know for Sure You Are Saved* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2013), 6-9.

conviction and repentance has been collapsed into a single moment of mimicry – then we are cranking out a generation of little Pharisees.

The indisputable mark of a genuine Christian is the indwelling Holy Spirit,²⁷ and the indisputable evidence of that indwelling is the fruit bearing of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness gentleness and self-control; against which there is no law of condemnation that can stand (Gal 5:22-23). However, to grant someone the assurance of acceptance, apart from abiding in the vine, is not conversion, but is only temporary comfort to the bramble prepared for the flames.²⁸

As previously stated in the opening of this chapter, droves of children's ministry graduates come out with the blessing and assurance of salvation, only to experience true salvation later in life with that false assurance being a hindrance, or simply never to return – going out from us, because they were never a part of us. While it is easy to retreat into the maxim that there is not one thing any man can do to hurry nor hinder the true saving work of the Holy Spirit in another, the grace of that truth does not give us license to minister irresponsibly or un-biblically. We are not to knowingly err in our ministry by taking comfort that grace will make the necessary correction later in their lives. It is time for the church to reform her methods of gospel ministry to children in a

²⁷“You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him” (Rom 8:9).

²⁸“If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned” (John 15:6).

manner that makes them more biblically responsible and objectively faithful.²⁹ This has been demonstrated from comparison of current trends to both Scriptures and historical observation, and it is the impetus for this project.

²⁹“What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?” (Rom 6:1). While given in a differing context, this passage teaches the core principle that we are not to be lax in our spiritual duties, expecting and anticipating grace to cover our laziness or neglect.

CHAPTER 4

DETAILS OF THE PROJECT

The purpose of this chapter will be to provide details of the project development and implementation in a replicable manner that could be easily adapted to any church setting. Implementation of the project occurred in four phases over the course of fifteen weeks. The first phase was the development and approval of the curriculum, comprising four weeks. The second phase was the finalization of curriculum compilation and the recruitment of participants taking three weeks. The third phase was curriculum implementation, which consisted of seven one-hour training sessions occurring weekly. The final phase of the project was post-instruction analysis of all gathered participant data, which consisted of one week.

Curriculum Development and Approval (Weeks 1-4)

The first four weeks of the project were devoted to the development of a teaching curriculum that would be used to equip the adults of the church for gospel ministry to children. The development of this curriculum used five steps argued to be essential for gospel ministry with children:

1. Gathering Data for Gospel Ministry with Children
2. Gauging the Heart of Children
3. Giving the Gospel to Children
4. Guiding Children in Confession

5. Going Further with Growing Children

Each of these steps was developed and articulated with the aforementioned theological and theoretical studies intentionally focused upon providing a biblically sound and spiritually responsible curriculum. An instruction manual draft was compiled that included one session dedicated to each of the five steps above, with the inclusion of one introductory session that addressed the current need for the equipping project in the context of Beacon Hill Baptist Church and the church in its broadest context. It introduced the participants to the purpose and plan for the upcoming sessions. Beyond Scripture, the curriculum draft included a description of the *Four Heart Types of Children*¹ described in instructional session 2, an adaptation of the *Seven C's of History*² as a gospel presentation for use in instructional session 3 and an application of researched directed-prayer methods used in instructional session 5.³

After the initial four-week compilation of this teaching manual in draft form, it was submitted to three specialists from the areas of evangelism, children's ministry and biblical counseling for their independent review, critique and comment. An evaluation rubric was included for their completion, and their satisfactory review was required before further implementation.⁴

¹See appendix 4.

² Ken Ham and Stacia McKeever, *The Seven C's of History* (Petersburg, VA: Answers in Genesis, 2011).

³ Sam Doherty, *U-Can Lead Children to Christ: A Step-By-Step Guide for Counsellors of Children* (Lisburn, Northern Ireland: Child Evangelism Fellowship, 2011), 44-45.

⁴See appendix 2.

Participant Recruitment and Curriculum Compilation (Weeks 5-7)

During weeks 5 through 7 of the project, returned rubrics from the three ministry specialists were reviewed, and final editorial corrections, theological clarifications and reviewer suggestions were added to the initial draft. A final draft of the instructional manual was compiled, duplicated and bound for instructional use.⁵

Concurrent with the curriculum compilation, a demographic survey of the congregation was conducted utilizing the church's ACS™ database and by interview with the current children's director. From this survey, a target list of participants that included all current parents and children's ministry volunteers was developed. This target group was contacted through church media to advertise the upcoming instructional period. Alongside this targeted recruitment, the instructional sessions were placed on the church calendar and advertised to the entire congregation through normal communication channels of print and social media. By monitoring enlistments through the church office the minimum number of 25 participants meeting the criteria of being professing believers and members of the church was exceeded.

Curriculum Instruction (Weeks 8-14)

Week 8 - Session 1

Seven one-hour instructional sessions were completed during the midweek teaching time of the church, on Wednesday evenings at 6 o'clock. The first session of instruction included completion of a consent to participate, a twenty-four question Likert

⁵See appendix 1.

scale pre-instruction survey⁶ and a discussion of the Introduction-Rationale section of the instruction manual. This session focused on the attitudes, competencies and challenges present in gospel ministry with children. The Introductory-Rationale instruction engaged participants to imagine the scenario that an adult had brought a child to them for spiritual help, or that as a parent/guardian, teacher or friend at church, they were asked the following:

1. Can you talk to my child about being a Christian or baptism?
2. I think my child is at the age where they need to become a Christian. Can you help me?
3. I think my child is ready to make a commitment and needs to talk with someone. Will you talk with them?

Additionally they were challenged to imagine a child coming alone to them asking,

1. What does it mean to be a Christian?
2. Can I be baptized, be a Christian, join the church, take communion, go forward during the invitation time, etc.?

Participants were asked and agreed that the most likely response to the above questions by church members would be “You’re going to need to talk to the pastor, student pastor, or children’s director.” They were then instructed that the problem with this response is two-fold. First, it does not help them grow in their competence and confidence in their responsibility to fulfill the Great Commission. Secondly, it limits the witness of the entire church body by reducing it to a linear model of growth rather than an exponential one. Participants were challenged to begin to change unhealthy views of gospel-sharing as a professional vocation towards one of a shared congregational

⁶See appendix 1.

commitment and responsibility. The main point of session one was summarized in the following challenge statement given to participants, “If we are going to maximize our opportunities in obedience to the Great Commission, we must move away from a linear-professional model to an exponential-congregational model of evangelism and discipleship.”⁷ Participants were invited to discuss their agreement and understanding of this principle that would govern the remainder of the impetus for the project.

Instruction then focused on the most common barrier to this paradigm shift, which is fear. The most common objections of “not knowing what to say,” “not having the right answer,” or “doing something wrong” were confronted. It was acknowledged that many of the participants had observed gospel-sharing gone awry through hindrance and hurrying or muddled and manipulative methods. However, they were challenged to understand that even though these misguided mistakes were very much real and present today, they do not excuse nor prevent us from the responsibility of being trained and ready with a faithful model. Thus, the purpose of the first weekly session was to communicate to the participants the need for their equipping with a ready, biblically-faithful and responsible method of ministering the gospel to children.

Week 9 - Session 2

Session 2 of instruction presented the first step of gospel ministry to children, developed by the researcher as *Gathering Data for Gospel Ministry with Children*. This first step of gathering careful information from any adult(s) present and then the child is rooted in the biblical wisdom literature. James 1:19 commands every believer in saying,

⁷See appendix 6.

“let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak.”⁸ Hearing must precede speaking with children, and sharers of the gospel must be quick to hear before speaking any pronouncement of salvation over a child’s life. Similar is the injunction of Proverbs 18:13 that warns of the foolishness and shame in giving an answer before listening.⁹ Therefore, this component of instruction sought to lead participants in slowing down their approach with children, not being quick and hurried through models that condense the gospel and a child’s commitment to a single moment of time. Methods of sharing that rush in to give cliché answers and easy assurances to children before discerning the heart of the child were cautioned against.

Accordingly, participants read from the wisdom of Proverbs 20:5 that the purposes of a person’s heart can be complex, even in children.¹⁰ But with patient understanding they can be drawn forth.¹¹ With this in mind, two sets of questions were given to equip the adults in training to better discern and listen to the hearts of those

⁸“Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger” (Jas 1:19).

⁹“If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame” (Prov 18:13).

¹⁰“The purpose in a man's heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out” (Prov 20:5).

¹¹How much can be known of the intentions and motives of the human heart by anyone other than God Himself, is a much debated topic. For example, Jay Adams, asserts that, “There are people in counseling who think that they can read the hearts of their counselees so as to learn what “idols” they have in their hearts. That is an impossible task, and should not be pursued.” While Adams is speaking to the specific instance of counseling a believer, not the context of this project, the cautionary point is well made. None but the Holy Spirit can perfectly discern the heart of a child. Nevertheless, every gospel-sharer, minister and church will have to decide at what point

present in a gospel ministry moment. Questions given for any parent(s) or guardian(s) present with a child were as follows:

1. What help do you and your child need?
2. How old is your child, and what do you think the next step is for him/her?
3. Does your child have any special needs that I should consider in my communication with him/her?¹²
4. What have you been doing at home, or what has happened recently that might lead your child to seek help?
5. What did your child say or do that prompted your action, and how long has this been a topic?
6. What evidence have you seen of the Holy Spirit's work in your child's life?

The caveat to these questions is that unless the gospel-sharer is approached or has opportunity to make direct contact with the child's parents or guardians, which is becoming increasingly difficult for community children, then these questions would be for private consideration only. Children whose parents are unbelievers, would be of limited help in their answers. Also, in some instances, the actual sharer would be the parent/guardian. In these cases, the gospel-sharer was encouraged to use these questions as a preparatory guide for discernment and consideration before sharing with their child.

However, any gospel-sharer fulfilling the purpose of this project would

they admit and acknowledge a child as believer in Jesus Christ. Jay Adams, "The Heart of the Matter," entry posted May 7, 2012, accessed June 15, 2015, <http://www.nouthetic.org/blog/?p=792>.

¹²Here is a much neglected area and need for a response in our churches in regards to ministry to special needs children and adults. Recent examples current to the church where this project was conducted have included sharing the gospel with a child suffering from Tourette's syndrome, and with children diagnosed on the autism spectrum.

anticipate the direct opportunity to engage children with wise questions. Participants were cautioned against using questions that had simple yes/no answers, since children are often eager to please and are easily manipulated in giving the answer that they expect would be most well received. To mine the heart deeper, without such manipulation of motive, the following questions were given and discussed as examples for children with whom the gospel is going to be shared:

1. What can I help with? Do you have any questions?
2. How old are you?
3. Has something happened recently that is making you think about this?
4. How long have you had questions about this, or how long have you been talking about it?
5. Can you tell me about your interest in becoming a Christian?
6. How does God talk to people? Does He talk to you? If so, what is He saying?

Again, a caveat to the phrasing of these questions is the assumption that the child has approached the participant with some initial inquiry about the gospel, baptism, salvation, or other spiritually related concerns. Participants who were neither parents nor guardians of yet unconverted children, nor leaders nor volunteers in current children's ministry were encouraged to take these questions and convert them to the following template that might open spiritual conversations with children they encounter otherwise.

The possible changes discussed to the questions above would then become:

1. Do you ever feel like you need help or have questions about God, the Bible and Jesus?
2. Can you tell me old you are? This helps me know you better.
3. Have you ever had something happen in your life that has made you think about God, Jesus and salvation?

4. If so, how long have you had these thoughts or questions?
5. Do you have any interest in knowing more about what it means to be a Christian?
6. Has anyone ever shared with you how God talks to His people, and what He says in the Bible about them?

This discussion ended with the caution and carefulness that any gospel-sharer should take in approaching an unknown child, or engaging any children alone. In a church context, it was discussed that any conversation should only occur in the presence of another believer as a witness, as some of the questions above could bring up very sensitive and private information, or could be misinterpreted and misconstrued by the child or others in a negative and potentially harmful manner. Participants were instructed never to engage children alone in such an intimate conversation due to the unfortunate nature of predation and accusation that afflicts the church today. The delicate balance between being a ready witness, but also an above-reproach sharer ended this time of instruction.

Week 10 - Session 3

In the week of session three, instruction presented the second step of *Gauging the Heart of Children*. Participants were shown a biblical example of ministry discernment from the lives of Eli and Samuel from 1 Samuel 3:1-10 with the challenge to view their roles as guiding discerners rather than entertaining persuaders. This session introduced the *Four Common Heart Types of Children*. The first of these four types is the *Closed* heart. Participants were given the examples of Lydia,¹³ prior to conversion

¹³In Acts 16:14 it is said that Lydia heard the gospel, but “the Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.”

and the pair on the Emmaus road,¹⁴ none of whom could fully hear and see unto salvation until the Lord acted. Therefore, a *Closed* heart type is one in which the child may be described as insincere towards conversion conversations, may be pressed by parents or peers, but spiritual interest is not demonstrated or developed yet in the child.

Secondly, the *Curious* heart was introduced, and offered as the type most likely to be encountered initially by the participants. These children come seeking information and asking questions, but lack personal awareness or application of the answers that they receive. Biblical examples were given from the questioning crowd of Mark 12¹⁵ and the “hearer of the word” in James 1:22-24 who looks into the word with intention, but walks away without any move towards personal application. *Curious*-hearted children may marvel at Jesus’ answers and wisdom, about the workings of the church and often come asking about the ordinances of baptism and communion, but have not yet reached the most important and distinguishing third stage of the heart.

Participants were asked, and agreed, that the most pressing question with any child who was having the gospel shared with them, was “How do we know when they are truly ready to receive it as their own?” They were instructed to look for the third heart type, which is one of *Conviction*. This would be demonstrated in a child who articulates personal awareness of sin and a need for salvation as given by the *Fruits of Conviction*

¹⁴Luke 24:32 says that the pair’s “eyes were opened,” and only then they recognized Jesus.

¹⁵The hearers of Mark 12:17 “marveled at Him,” that is, at the wisdom of Jesus, but few later followed Him by their actions.

from 2 Corinthians 7:10-11. Participants were given examples of convicted hearts from the “cutting” of Acts 2:37¹⁶ and the “hearts burning within” of Luke 24:32.¹⁷

From this heart type the *Fruits of Conviction* were introduced and explained from Paul’s description in 2 Corinthians 7:10-11. Participants were encouraged to look for these signs of conviction within the hearts of children by observing the following:

1. *Earnestness* – a sincerity and seriousness concerning the condition of one’s soul.
2. *Eagerness* – a desire to clear oneself of guilt and be right with God.
3. *Indignation* – a frustration and growing hatred of one’s own sin nature.
4. *Fear* – of God’s wrath, of judgment and of Hell.
5. *Longing* – for reconciliation and peace with God, and fellowship with other believers.
6. *Zeal* – for the works of God, and for knowledge of Him through His Word and worship.
7. *Punishment* – a willingness to admit oneself as a sinner and suffer for the sake of this acknowledgment and for righteousness.

It is these *Fruits of Conviction*, while in various stages and measures, different and more prevalent in their growth and development, that participants were encouraged to look for as signs of readiness to receive Christ.

Lastly, participants were made aware of encountering the final heart type of *Conversion*, in which they may encounter children who could give testimony of prior conversion. This testimony could be measured by the developing *Fruits of the Holy*

¹⁶“Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’ ” (Acts 12:37).

¹⁷“They said to each other, ‘Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?’ ” (Luke 24:32).

Spirit as given in Galatians 5:22-23.¹⁸ Participants were encouraged that these children may be in need of further biblical counsel in the assurance and perseverance of salvation, or may have other needs that come in the guise of asking salvation questions.¹⁹ Biblical examples of *Convicted*, yet questioning hearts were given from the foot-washing experience of Peter in John 13:1-10, who already having been cleansed internally by Jesus, only needed to submit externally and also from the believing father in Mark 9:14-24, who simply needed help with his doubts and weakness of faith in a moment of crisis.²⁰ Session 3 ended as participants were encouraged to consider gospel readiness

¹⁸“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law” (Gal 5:22-23).

¹⁹Children may, in the perceived safety of another believer, share matters of confidence including past or present history of family problems, abuse, and even criminal activity at home. They may ask questions relevant to the understanding of their age about the world they live in, changes experienced in growth into adolescence, or whatever may spring to mind. A recent example of the church hosting this project was a girl coming during gospel ministry inquiry times at Vacation Bible School because she had a joke to tell!

²⁰“And when they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd around them, and scribes arguing with them. And immediately all the crowd, when they saw him, were greatly amazed and ran up to him and greeted him. And he asked them, “What are you arguing about with them?” And someone from the crowd answered him, “Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit that makes him mute. And whenever it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. So I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able.” And he answered them, “O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to me.” And they brought the boy to him. And when the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. And Jesus asked his father, “How long has this been happening to him?” And he said, “From childhood. And it has often cast him into fire and into water, to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.” And Jesus said to him, ““If you can’! All things are possible for one who believes.” Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, “I believe; help my unbelief!” (Mark 9:14-24). Obviously the

through the previously introduced biblical lens of conviction. Participants were also given a visual summary addendum that focused on the necessity of the Holy Spirit for genuine conversion.²¹

Week 11 - Session 4

In the week of session 4, instruction was delivered in *Giving the Gospel to Children* that led participants to rely on the sufficiency of Scripture, and prepared them to do so by having a more readily accessible and theologically comprehensive presentation of gospel-redemption history using an adaptation of the *7 C's of History*, developed by Ken Ham and Stacia McKeever. These seven C's are *Creation, Corruption, Catastrophe, Confusion, Christ, Cross* and *Consummation*.²² For the purpose of this project, and with mindfulness to the knowledge level of children, they were renamed the *5 C's of the Gospel*. *Catastrophe* and *Confusion* were dropped from the presentation, for the sake of time that the gospel-sharer may have with children and the attendant attention spans involved. *Consummation*, was renamed *Completion*, to help children have a greater familiarity of the concept through the usage of a word more likely to be in their vocabulary. Participants marked a *5 C's of the Gospel* presentation in their bibles as follows.

man had a rudimentary level of faith in Jesus that caused him to seek Christ out for healing, but did not fully grasp that in all instances Jesus was abundantly able to do what was needed.

²¹See appendix 7.

²²Ham and McKeever, *The Seven C's of History*, 2011.

Creation, as noted in Genesis 1:1 was marked,²³ teaching God as Creator of all things, including mankind in His own image. The margin was marked to point to Genesis 1:27, and also 2:16-17 to denote that obedience to God was commanded of His creation.

Corruption followed by participants including Genesis 3:1-6 and 22-24 in their notations, showing the introduction of sin into the relationship of God and man, and the subsequent effect on all of creation.

Christ followed in participants' guided presentation, and they were instructed that at this point they may share in narrative form the details of His birth, death on the Cross and Resurrection. The application of the words and work of Christ in these details was marked in participant bibles as follows,

1. *John 3:3* – noting that being born-again is a necessity to enter the Kingdom of God.
2. *Romans 1:16* – that the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the power of God to save everyone who believes.
3. *Romans 2:1-4* – demonstrating that the knowledge of right and wrong in a child proves guilt worthy of Hell, but God is kind and patient to offer us repentance.
4. *Romans 3:23* – that the above facts apply to all mankind, who is sinful by nature.
5. *Romans 5:8* – that although all have sinned and are liable to the judgment of God, His love has sent Christ to die for us. This is the great good news of the gospel.
6. *Romans 6:23* – that the kindness and patience of God leaves us a choice, the payment of our sin, which is death and the punishment of Hell, or the free gift of salvation in Jesus. Being a free gift, it cannot be merited, paid for, or earned.

The fourth C of *Conversion* was marked at Romans 10:9-10 and 13, explaining that the gift of salvation comes through belief of the heart and confession of the mouth.

²³See page 8 of appendix 6.

Participants were instructed and discussed in agreement together, that for most of their instruction as children, this was the only portion of the entirety of the redemption story that was shared, without consideration of whether conviction was actually present.

The final C of *Completion* was marked at Revelation 21:22 through 22:5. This passage emphasizes the coming Kingdom of God when Jesus returns and the promise of redemption of all genuine believers but also the shutting out to Hell of the unrepentant. The purpose of this session was accomplished when participants had completed their markings and were able to articulate an understanding of the gospel that was more comprehensive as a broader counsel of the Word of God, rather than constriction to a limited set of verses contained in only one epistle.

Week 12 - Session 5

Week 5 of instruction focused on *Guiding Children in Confession*.

Participants were given the scenario of having shared their marked gospel outlines with a child that demonstrated evidence of the previously discussed *Fruits of Conviction*. The need for careful listening and questioning was reemphasized as participants were given example questions to follow *Giving the Gospel* that included asking the child these:

1. Do you understand what we have shared? Is there anything that you want to ask or need me to further explain?
2. What have you come to know from these verses? What do you feel about what we have shared? What do you need to do about what we have shared?

Participants discussed that these questions were especially formulated to connect with children on the level of cognition (knowing), emotion (feeling), and volition (doing). Since all people are commanded to love the Lord their God with all heart, soul,

mind and strength,²⁴ participants were encouraged to move away from relying on emotional responses alone as a gauge of genuine readiness for confession. Once again, instruction was given to avoid simple yes/no responses that would involve pleasantries and guesswork on the child's part, substituting instead questions that allow the child to fully articulate in their own words what they were experiencing at the moment.

Having said this though, the class was instructed that the ultimate choice of receiving or rejecting the gospel gift of Christ is a yes or no decision in our lives. Therefore, they were given a closing question to implement with the child they were ministering to by asking, "Has God opened your heart to believe and your mouth to confess the gospel we have shared?" The group was instructed that a child might need that question articulated more simply, but if the answer ultimately was "No," or "I'm not sure or ready," then the appropriate response was to pray with, and over the child, for a continuing work of God's Spirit to convict, to continue and to bring a complete salvation for their lives.

If the child answered "Yes," indicating their readiness to receive Christ by confession, and all possible human discernment had been exercised in looking for genuine conviction, the class was instructed to avoid using formulaic or "Sinner's Prayers." A definition and discussion of sacramentalism was given at this point, with biblical examples of the only two recorded prayers of salvation in Scripture.²⁵

²⁴"You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might" (Deut 6:5).

²⁵The only recorded prayers that Jesus promised brought salvation were, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner" (Luke 18:13) and "Jesus, remember me when you come into

Participants were encouraged to be free from previous fears of “getting it wrong” and “needing professional clergy” at this point with children by learning to use a Directed Prayer model.²⁶ This model guides children to use Jesus’ model prayer²⁷ and address God as Father. After which, the gospel-sharer then acts as a gentle guide rather than a rote director. Directed prayer, after address to God the Father taught participants to guide children by:

1. Having the child tell God what they know and believe to be true from what they have heard from the Word shared.
2. Telling God what they have come to feel about their sin, and what He did for them in Christ.
3. Asking God what they want Him to do for them, and sharing what they are committing to do with their lives.

A possible anticipated child’s response was role-played before the group with myself posing as the child. A model response that was given was of the order that

Father, I believe I am a sinner, you are my creator and that Jesus died on the cross for my sins and is risen again. I am sorry for my sins, and I want you to forgive me and save me. I want to be a Christian and follow you.

Instruction of week five ended by making clear to the participants that Romans 10:10 does indeed make verbal confession a necessity,²⁸ but nowhere does the Bible specify the

your kingdom” (Luke 23:42). Neither of these prayers lend any similarity to warrant a definitive formula.

²⁶Doherty, *U-Can Lead Children to Christ*, 2011.

²⁷ Matt 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4, have unfortunately inherited the name, “The Lord’s Prayer,” which could never be His own because He never needed pray it for sin’s forgiveness. Most appropriately, it is understood as the disciple’s prayer model. As such, Jesus teaches us to address God as “Father in Heaven.”

exact content of that confession, nor should we insist on any such formula. The discussion period of the week ended with the rare cases in which a child may be rendered mute by uncontrollable circumstances, already known to God and may use other forms of communication (ex: writing, storyboarding, signing or assistive technology) to articulate their confession before God.

Week 13 - Session 6

The final week of instruction led the group in *Going Further with Growing Children* and challenged the group to understand conversion as the beginning of a journey with God through sanctification, rather than the end and completion as an excuse to rest and relax. Participants were given examples of Scripture to be used in ongoing discussions of the assurance of perseverance, particularly highlighting John 10:27-30 in which Jesus tells believers that they are in His hand and cannot be snatched away.²⁹ This was relayed of utmost importance to communicate, to prevent genuinely convicted and converted children from being misled into false doctrines that deny the unique and once-for-all nature of true salvation. In balance to this, the class was reminded that while saved, we all remain sinners, albeit with a new remorse and hatred of it within.³⁰

²⁸“For with the heart one believes and is justified, and *with the mouth one confesses and is saved*” (Romans 10:10, emphasis mine).

²⁹“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one” (John 10:27-30).

³⁰Many commentators agree (i.e., Calvin-quoting also Augustine, Lange, Schaff, Fay, Hurst & Riddle, Matthew Henry, and more contemporarily R. C. Sproul), that this is the war Paul references in Rom 7, particularly in v. 23 as applied here.

First John 1:9 was given for instruction to children who will struggle to ask, “If I am saved, why do I still sin and what do I do about it?”

Beyond conversion, participants were encouraged to use Acts 2:36-38 to demonstrate that baptism should follow genuine repentance.³¹ The class discussed whether there was a biblical warrant for an intervening *walking an aisle* or *making it public* moment made necessary between salvation and baptism. The group was encouraged to note that, while required and expected of many churches, the true biblical demonstration of one’s salvation is made public by baptism, not by walking an aisle at an end-of-service invitation. Again, the issue of the danger of imparting sacramentalism through such practices was discussed. Along with this, the group was shown from Scripture that only the blood of Jesus is sufficient to remove sins, and that children should be carefully instructed not to view the water of baptism as sacred sin-washing.³²

The instruction period ended with a discussion for parents/guardians, or how

“But I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members” (Rom 7:23).

³¹“Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.” Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:36-38).

³²Heb 9:22, saying, “Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins” and Col 1:20, “and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross” make the necessity and reality of Jesus’ blood atonement plain.

the gospel-sharer may help them in gauging the genuine conversion of their children by the ongoing growth of the *Fruits of the Spirit*. As such, the group discussed the caution that should be taken in quick judgment, as the analogy of Scripture given to us of fruit would prevent us from planting a seed and expecting a complete harvest simultaneously. Discussion ensued that saved children, will still be sinful children, and that growth of the *Fruits of the Holy Spirit* should be observed over enduring periods of time, not singular moments. Sanctification was presented as a life-long process in which each of the following Fruits would progressively develop in all believers:

1. *Love* – a willingness to sacrifice in obedience to God for the good of others.
2. *Joy* – taking delight in the gifts of God.
3. *Peace* – a contentment, inwardly with God, and outwardly with others.
4. *Patience* – the ability to wait upon the Lord in trust of His timing.
5. *Kindness* – good service in awareness of the needs of others.
6. *Goodness* – a pattern of seeking the good of others.
7. *Faithfulness* – persevering in held beliefs, staying true and trustworthy.
8. *Gentleness* – the practice of considering others first and treating them accordingly.
9. *Self Control* – movement towards mastery of temptation and sin.

This discussion ended with the warning that if a child, or any professing believer for that matter, does not respond to the discipline of God's Word and the rebuke of another believer and the Holy Spirit with repentance and change, also showing no signs of the ongoing development of the *Fruits of the Holy Spirit*, then there should be sufficient cause for concern of the genuineness of a reported conversion experience.

The session ended with the ability of parents/guardians and the church to share in the ordinance of communion with converted and baptized children. The need was

noted for individual instruction with the child to properly discern the body and blood of Jesus Christ prior to communion and the individual and corporate responsibilities and blessings of the occasion.

Week 14: Concluding Session

At the conclusion of the instructional sessions, only those participants who had been in attendance for all previous instruction were given a post instruction summative objective assessment to gauge their comprehension and retention of the material presented.³³ Participants also completed a post-instruction survey, identical to the pre-instruction survey for t-test comparison to gauge statistically-valid changes in attitudes and competencies in ministry of the gospel to children.³⁴ Concluding questions were fielded, and final thoughts, successes and suggestions were discussed.

Post-Instruction Analysis (Week 15)

The final week of the project included the scoring of the post-instruction summative objective assessments to be used as indicators of group comprehension and retention of the ministry curriculum. Pre and post-instructional surveys were compiled and spreadsheet tabulated for the t-test comparison of dependent samples.³⁵ This analysis will be used to measure any statistically significant gains in the participant group's attitudes and abilities towards gospel ministry to children. The conclusion of week

³³See appendix 5.

³⁴See appendices 1 and 3.

³⁵See appendix 8.

fifteen was a time of reflection on the overall strengths and weaknesses of the project towards the fulfillment of its stated purpose.

CHAPTER 5
EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter will be to evaluate the project, “Equipping Adults at Beacon Hill Baptist Church of Somerset, Kentucky for Gospel Ministry to Children.” Evaluation of the project’s purpose and goals will be conducted using statistical analysis from the data collected during the course of the teaching implementation of the project.

Strengths and weaknesses of the project will be informed from this data, in addition to participants’ written and verbal reflections. From compilation of the above data and observations, it will be possible to propose corrections to the project implementation that would have further enhanced achievement of the project purpose.

Theological reflections of the project will follow, through objective and subjective analysis of the impact of the project upon the attitudes, conceptions and behaviors of the church congregation. Theological assumptions will be compared with methodological corrections within the church ministry practices, and the objective results in the ministry to children that have resulted. Subjective analysis of these assumptions will be considered, through the challenges and questions received throughout the course of the implementation process.

Finally, personal reflections upon the project will be offered from the view of myself as Senior Pastor, and the perceived cumulative impact the project has had on a

personal and congregational level. Challenges to theological and methodological assumptions and attitudes in sanctification and servanthood will be discussed in relation to how they will shape my future faithfulness as a minister of the gospel and pastor-leader of the local church.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

Properly restated, the purpose of the project was to, “teach a biblical approach that will equip families and adult volunteers of Beacon Hill Baptist Church to responsibly minister the gospel to children.” The pre-survey finding that only 46 percent of participants indicated receiving any past helpful training in sharing the gospel with children reinforced the necessity of such a project purpose. When participants were asked to respond above the level of *somewhat agree* on the Likert scale, this degree of participant certainty dropped to 8 percent. None of the 26 total participants *strongly agreed* that they had received helpful training in the purpose area of the project.¹

Further, the project purpose was affirmed in that only 27 percent of pre-survey respondents agreed that they “were confident in [their] ability to talk with individual children about salvation.”² As in the prior question, none of the participants indicated *strong agreement* with their confidence in response to this initial survey question.

Once more pre-survey findings were able to validate the project purpose by

¹ See appendix 1. To the statement, “I have received helpful training in how to share the gospel with children,” only 12 of 26 responded in agreement. Two were in *agreement*, 10 were in *somewhat agreement*.

² Ibid. Seven participants *agreed* with the statement and 11 *agreed somewhat*.

demonstrating that only 38 percent of participants were able to respond with any level of agreement towards being knowledgeable, ready and willing to share the gospel with children at a high level of confidence. Most of this number, were only able to *agree somewhat*, while a very concerning 15 percent were able to *agree* and none were able to identify with *strong agreement*.³

The raw data collected from the total sample of 26 participants who completed the course, initially indicated that the project had a much-needed purpose in the ministry plan of Beacon Hill Baptist Church. In response to the questions most specifically designed to reveal the readiness and competency of the participants in gospel ministry to children (questions 1, 3, and 23 of the pre-instruction survey), a total of only 17 percent of participants were able to give a favorable response above the level of *agree somewhat* in questions of self-assessment in the areas of equipping and eagerness for gospel ministry to children.⁴ Such result, clearly demonstrated the need for the project in the context of this particular congregation, and affirmed my suspicions as reported in the first chapter's ministry context. Beacon Hill Baptist Church, as represented by this sample, was neither objectively, nor subjectively reporting a consensus readiness for gospel ministry to children.

³Appendix 1. A combination of the responses from pre-instruction survey questions 1 and 3.

⁴Ibid.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

Having statistically validated the need for the project's purpose, its goals must also be shown to have had statistically valid impacts in addressing the needs discovered. The first goal, of having 25 participants from a weekly worship attendance average of 475, was exceeded by one. The sample size reported here, of $n=26$, reflects only those who were able to participate in the project from inception to completion. Participants who began the course, but did not see it to completion were not included in the reported data. While it was fortunate for the research, that this first goal of 25 participants was met, it was narrowly exceeded by merely one member which will cause additional concerns with the project data to be discussed subsequently.

Assessment of the second goal, of creating of a biblically faithful curriculum of gospel ministry, was a far more subjective evaluative process. There was no obvious way to statistically validate the hermeneutical and theological approach taken by the research, save from the self-reporting and recommendation of the three consulted specialists. Since there was an inherent self-bias in the selection of the number, qualifications, and identity of these specialists, this also creates evaluative concerns of researcher bias that will be addressed as a weakness. Nonetheless, neither the Director of Missions, Biblical Counselor, nor Children's Director who were consulted, indicated less than a *sufficient* mark on their initial review of the teaching curriculum. At the surface, this does indicate a small trend by which one may perhaps infer that the curriculum preparation did not grossly miss the mark in its stated goal.

The third and final goal of the project was to increase the awareness and

competency of the teaching group towards their future gospel ministry opportunities with children. This was to be objectively measured by comparison of results from the pre-instruction and post-instruction surveys, in addition to the end-training summative objective assessment. Of the twenty-four questions included on the pre and post-instruction surveys, sixteen anticipated an increased response of agreement as a positive indicator of instructional objectives. Seven of the questions anticipated increases of disagreement as positive indicators of instructional objectives. One question, described later as a project weakness, was poorly constructed and could not aid in the validity of the project. Therefore, the highest maximum score and best outcome for the agreement questions for any single participant based on a six-point Likert scale would have been a score of 96. Likewise, the highest maximum score, and best outcome for the disagreement questions for any single participant, based on an inverted six-point Likert scale would have been a score of 42. Thus, the highest achievement score anticipated by the Likert scale survey, based on instructional objectives would have been a cumulative total of 138.

Twenty-six participants scored a mean of 88 on the pre-instructional survey, and 118 on the post-instructional survey. While these numbers would seemingly indicate success in instructional objectives, it was necessary to perform a t-test statistical analysis to confirm the validity of these findings.⁵ The null hypothesis states that there would be no difference between these means. The research hypothesis anticipates a statistically validated increase in the competencies and positive attitudes in children's gospel ministry

⁵See appendix 8.

throughout the participant group. A t-test for dependent samples rejected the null hypothesis and confirmed that the instruction had indeed succeeded in producing significant means that demonstrated gains in the competencies and attitudes of the participant group with levels of confidence of 95 percent, 99 percent and 99.5 percent as shown below.

n = 26
df = 25
Sum difference = 786
Sum difference² = 29268
n*(sum diff.)² = 790,968
t-test value = 10.386363
p.05 critical value (95% confidence) = 2.05
p.01 critical value (99% confidence) = 2.79
p.005 critical value (99.5% confidence) = 3.08

Because the t-test value result exceeds the confidence level ranges of 2.05 to 3.08, it may be validated that the instruction provided in the project, as measured by the pre and post-instructional surveys, achieved the goal of increasing awareness and competency amongst the teaching group towards future opportunities of gospel ministry with children

A lesser reliable measure used for the research project was the objective summative assessment, which consisted of end-instruction multiple-choice and fill-in-the blank questions aimed at measuring the level of content retention by participants.

Of a perfect score of 15, the group scored a mean of 12.46, or 83 percent, with modes and medians of 13. A calculated range of 8, resulted in a rather high standard deviation of 2.2491 and variance of 5.0585 for the assessment.⁶ As mentioned earlier, because of such a small sample size, it is difficult to assign confidence in such results, as a minimal

⁶See appendix 5.

number of outliers who performed poorly can dramatically skew results. By fault of the research design in not setting a hypothesized mean score, a single tail t-test reveals confidence only at levels that would anticipate 75 percent or less in response accuracy. Further interpretation of these results and the associated problems will be addressed in the weaknesses of the project section that follows.

Strengths of the Project

A noted strength of the project should be the high degree of confidence, as evidenced by the t-test scores, in the increase of the attitudes and competencies measured by the pre and post-instructional surveys. It is clear by these computations that positive gains were made in critical areas that the project intended to address. A review of the survey, given as an appendix, demonstrates that participants in the instructional group reported;

1. Having received helpful training.
2. More confidence in their ability to engage and minister to children.
3. Less dependence upon a methodical or staff-seeking approach.
4. More awareness of key issues to consider in gospel ministry to children.
5. Increased knowledge of Biblical and theological concepts of salvation.
6. Greater understanding of anticipated difficulties and pitfalls in past methods.

Therefore, by strength of measurement into levels of high confidence, it can be affirmed that the project demonstrated competency of achievement in the aforementioned areas.

Another strength of the project, although not objectively measured, but noted by simple observation, was the variety of the church demographic involved as participants. While the project primarily targeted either families, or those who worked in

ministry contexts that directly involved children, there were several surprising participants who came from a senior-adult demographic who felt that their training was important as leaders and legacy-sharers within their church. Challenging, encouraging and equipping this group, to engage evangelistically across multiple generations is certainly an unexpected but desirable outcome of such a project. In a church that is age-segregated in its small-group discipleship, and further isolated from one another by multiple service times, the outcome of having an older, leading, bridging generation of gospel-legacy sharers is an exciting outcome for the project that can greatly strengthen the church. Ultimately, this is how the strength of the project must be measured in the future days, upon the merit of whether it has served to strengthen, or leave unchanged the current church that it serves.

Weaknesses of the Project

While strengths of the project will likely have a ripple effect into the yet unseen future, it is far easier, in hindsight, to identify many weaknesses in the project that one wishes could have been anticipated and eliminated. The first of these is having too small a sample size. Although the sample size chosen was adequate for statistical analysis, the overall impact of 26 participants is somewhat overshadowed by the church's average attendance of 480 on a given Sunday morning. A more desirable outcome would have been to increase the participating instruction group, so that at least one leader or lay-member that had received training could have impacted every major ministry program. The logistics of space, scheduling and competition with secular activities all worked in some measure against the growth of a larger group. However, those who have received instruction can be encouraged to multiply what they have received by training others. In

hindsight, a weakness of the project was that participants were not challenged enough to go beyond learners, but also given opportunities and examples of how their learning might be used by self-replication in being leaders.

Another glaring weakness, as previously mentioned in the goal evaluation section above, is the lack of forethought in the implementation of the objective summative assessment. For verification of statistical validity, and hence any significant contribution to the evaluation of the project, it would have been necessary to repeat the assessment some weeks after the conclusion of the instruction for comparison. Had repetition occurred, results could have been usefully compiled as a true measure of the retention of some of the specific points of instruction given. Scores could have been compared, and specific areas of low retention could have been given revision to be taught in a more meaningful and memorable way for the future.

As also discussed in the goal evaluation section, question 21 of the pre and post-instruction survey was deemed invalid during the pre-survey implementation. The research group expressed great confusion over the intended meaning of the question and vocally expressed frustration in how to respond. Hearing their valid critique, but being unable to reconstruct the survey at the moment of implementation, they were instructed to ignore the question and continue forward with the remainder of the survey. The question under scrutiny asks for agreement to the statement that, "I believe that any Christian should be responsibly ready to share their faith in Christ, but that differences may apply in the case of children." The statement failed its intended purpose for two reasons. First, it mixed two desired outcomes in a single statement. The belief that any Christian should be responsible and ready to share their faith in Christ should have been a stand-alone

statement for agreement response. Secondly, and likewise, how to share faith with children is also a stand-alone topic and was poorly worded. The true intention of the survey question was to measure to what level participants in the group agreed that there should be differences between the content of a presentation of the gospel to children as compared to that of adults. By poor construction and wording, the question failed to serve this intended purpose and had to be discarded.

Lastly, a noticeable weakness of the project was the limited time that an hour afforded for instruction. While sixty minutes was an acceptable time frame to distribute course materials and present instruction with the participant group, it left no time for discussion, group interaction and questions. Because of this lack of time, but impossible to validate due to the previously mentioned lack of foresight with the summative assessment, I feel that retention of content was greatly sacrificed by the reduction of instruction. This reduction was due largely to confinement to only one presentation method and appeal to only one learning style. For group participants to retain content, their learning strengths had to lie in an auditory style of instruction that consisted largely of lecture presentation. A weakness of the project is that it was not designed to incorporate multiple learning styles, nor provide group interaction time.

Proposed Corrections to the Project

Based upon the weaknesses noted above, one proposed correction to the project would be greater enlistment of participants. More time could be allotted in the initial planning phases to incorporate multiple modes of communication and recruitment. Since the inception of this project, Beacon Hill Baptist Church has included smart-televisions that scroll multi-media announcements, has subscribed to the One Call Now™

voice, text and messaging service and has greatly enhanced its social-media presence through Facebook™, Twitter™, and Instagram™. These improvements could have been potentially effective in getting more enlistments to participate in the project.

Additionally, instruction could have been recorded and streamed through Beacon Hill's USTREAM™ Internet video provider, for viewing by participants on their own schedules. Pre and post-instruction surveys could have easily been generated and offered online for these participants using Survey Monkey™ or Google™ Forms. The use of technology to enlist and accommodate more project participants would be a foremost-proposed correction.

Corrections, as mentioned, were also needed in the project instruments.

Statement 21 of the pre and post-instruction surveys should have been corrected to read as proposed, "Children require a gospel-presentation that is different in content from that of one shared with adults." This correction would have more accurately addressed the attitude that the researcher desired to measure. Additionally, in regards to instrumentation, the summative assessment should have been repeated after a sufficient and pre-determined length of time had passed from the completion of the project so that it could prove useful in statistical comparison. Correcting these flaws in the research design could have added more statistical certainty to the project findings.

Lastly, while it would not have been beneficial to lengthen any of the time for the delivered vocal instruction in the sessions, I underestimated the actual time required for delivery of each session's material. If the instructional time had been expanded from 60 to 90 minutes, an additional period of question and answer, participant guided questions and small group role-play could have been incorporated. By varying the

learning environment and modes of instruction to accommodate multiple learning styles, greater comprehension and retention could have been achieved. In this way, there would have been greater opportunity for participants to be not only hearers, but also doers, by implementing what they were hearing in a safe and constructive environment with the researcher transitioning to a group facilitator during these times.

Theological Reflections Upon the Project

One of the overarching goals of this project would be to move ministry from a linear-addition model to an exponential-multiplication model. While it would most-likely never be accepted as a stated theological principle of a Southern Baptist Church, for all practical purposes when the pastor (or any other ministry staff member) serves as the gate-keeper and approval stamp for conversion, the church is reverting back to a sort of Old Covenant priesthood. When the response of the church at-large to the questions that accompany salvation are simply, “You need to talk to the pastor,” both pastor and church are failing to fulfill the Great Commission and the priesthood of believers granted by 1 Peter 2:9.⁷ In reflection, one of the theological strengths of this project was to accurately assess the existing model of gospel ministry operating within the church and endeavor to change the culture of the congregation into one that takes responsibility for

⁷“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Pet 2:9). Notice that Peter’s address to the “elect exiles” of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia – a broad range of churches, considered them all a priesthood equally worthy of proclaiming the excellencies of the gospel.

the ministry of the gospel in a way that moves away from professional priesthood towards personal participation.

A second theological emphasis of this project, which was shown statistically to be successful, was to move the understanding of the participants away from a traditional methodology that overemphasized a truncated gospel presentation, a rote Sinner's Prayer method of confession and a mental assent to the gospel, rather than the fruits of genuine conviction. Statistical results given here, and ongoing anecdotal evidence in the continued ministry of the church demonstrate a shift towards a more comprehensive, Bible-based gospel presentation in children's ministry, an abandonment of repeated Sinner's Prayers in favor of a Directed Prayer method and a Biblically grounded understanding of the characteristics and components of conviction which lead to repentance. These successes, will not only provide for an enhanced and more effective gospel ministry to children, but will serve to grow the church in all its Great Commission efforts. It is the strongly held-belief of this project, that the current church has reaped an unregenerate membership largely in part to gospel ministry methods that have sown a lack of adherence to the sufficiency of Scripture, the necessity of conviction and an understanding of genuine confession.

A final theological success of the project was to impart an understanding to the participants that there are common responses and heart-types that may be anticipated in gospel ministry. Doing so, according to the statistical results, greatly reduced the anxiety of those who need to be involved in ministry, and enhanced their confidence and competence, not in themselves alone, but in the equipping of the Word of God and the Spirit of God to prepare them to be self-replicating disciples. Ultimately, the only full

measure of the theological success of the project is whether its participants were further equipped and encouraged to love the Lord their God with all through the commitment of making disciples of all.

Personal Reflections Upon the Project

In personal reflection upon this project, I have been greatly challenged to replicate and duplicate the findings, failures and successes in an effort to aid the local church at both Beacon Hill, and abroad. All current ministry staff, children's teachers and Vacation Bible School volunteers are now required to complete an abbreviated training adapted from this project. It has changed how the church at Beacon Hill practices gospel ministry to children. As a result, myself and the Children's Director have spent time in prayerful repentance before God for what are now viewed as well-intended, but ignorant and ill-informed former methods of gospel ministry that could have granted a testimony of false assurance. The current ministry team has adopted a motto of "No child hurried – No child hindered" to be reminded of the necessity of a thorough-going approach to gospel ministry that is faithful to Scripture and aimed at initially multiplying what lay solely at the pastor's feet throughout each ministry team member, and then throughout increasingly more of the congregation.

Greater opportunities are being granted by the grace of God to share these findings at the level of the local church through the state convention of Kentucky.⁸ This

⁸Methodology from this project will be shared at the *KBC South and East Regions Revitalization Pastors Seminar Series* under the title, "Revitalization Pastors Take the Lead in Evangelism" as referenced in appendix 9.

will be accomplished by leading other pastors in a training that introduces them to the *Four-Heart Types* of gospel hearers, the *5 C's of the Gospel* presentation, the *Fruits of Conviction* from Scripture and the *Directed Prayer* method of confession.

In this way, it is prayed that what I have gleaned from personal study can be multiplied and shared by pastor-leaders throughout their local churches, which will impact and change the approach of gospel ministry to children and adults in Southern Baptist life. Long range plans for the project and its findings would be reproduction in print through a small book that could be disseminated to other pastors and churches in search and need of considering a more biblically faithful and responsible method of sharing the gospel with children.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is the heartfelt prayer of this project that its impact would be a dramatic shift in the approach of gospel ministry to children. That it would shift, however much deemed by God, away from viewing all children as equally prepared recipients of the Gospel without regard to the convicting work of the Holy Spirit; away from abandoning ineffective methods of gospel ministry that have relied on truncated Gospel presentations, and away from mere mental assent to the recitation of scripted prayers. In doing so, it is the theological and methodological assertion of this project that the local church will then begin to reap a harvest that is genuine, faithful, and biblical.

APPENDIX 1

PRE-INSTRUCTION SURVEY

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure your perceptions and practices regarding ministering the gospel to children. For the purpose of this research, you will be asked to answer the following questions, both before and after we provide you with training and resources in gospel ministry to children. Any information or responses that you offer will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this project is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time.*

By your completion of this Pre-Instruction Survey, and checking the appropriate box below, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

I agree to participate I do not agree to participate

Personal Code _____

Date _____

Please circle the response that most agrees with each statement given.

1. I have received helpful training in how to minister to children.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

2. I feel that training will improve my ability to minister the gospel to children in a biblical and responsible manner.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

3. I am confident in my ability to talk with individual children about salvation.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

4. I frequently engage with kids in personal spiritual conversations.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

5. I would be able to discern when a child is ready to receive Christ as Savior.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

6. My first response to a child with questions about salvation would be to seek help from someone more qualified.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

7. The most effective method to guide a child to verbally confess Christ is to have them repeat a "Sinner's Prayer".

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

8. I am able to correctly identify the difference in meaning between the following terms; *conviction, regeneration, repentance, salvation.*

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

9. I am aware of how the term *sacramentalism* relates to the discussion of evangelism.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

10. I have confidence in my ability to discern when a child is ready to receive baptism and communion.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

11. I am likely to avoid gospel ministry to children for fear that I might make a mistake and do or say something wrong.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

12. As long as a child can mentally understand the gospel, he or she is ready to become a Christian.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

13. The most important role of the person ministering the gospel to a child is to persuade the child to make a decision.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

14. A presentation of the gospel for children *must* include a discussion of sin and hell.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

15. I know where to go in my Bible for help in sharing the gospel.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

16. I am aware of important questions that need to be asked of a child seeking information on salvation.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

17. I feel that ministry of the gospel to children should be handled primarily by an expert, such as a pastor or specific church staff member.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

18. The term “gospel presentation” is best understood to apply to a narrow range of New Testament verses.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

19. I am familiar with the difference between the terms “repeated prayer” and “directed prayer”.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

20. I can anticipate common categories of readiness that may be encountered in gospel ministry to children.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

21. I believe that any Christian should be responsibly ready to minister the gospel of Christ, but that differences may apply in the case of ministry to children.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

22. I have a ready Bible outline that could be used to direct someone towards faith in Jesus Christ.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

23. I would rate my current knowledge, readiness and willingness to minister the gospel to a child as being very high.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

24. I expect God to give me the opportunity in the near future to share the gospel with a child.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

APPENDIX 2

CURRICULUM QUESTIONNAIRE

Agreement to Participate

The evaluation being requested of you is provided to measure the effectiveness of a biblical curriculum designed to increase the knowledge and confidence of adult volunteers in sharing gospel ministry with children. This research is being conducted by Donavon Burton for the purposes of a ministry project at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. Participation in this evaluation grants the researcher the right to use your responses for the purposes of curriculum development and project improvement as well as the right to include your name and official title as an independent evaluator in final written analysis of the project.

Name of Evaluator: _____

Official Title: _____

Agency or Institution: _____

After review of the instructional curriculum and description of use provided, please complete the following evaluation and return to the researcher as indicated.

1. Has the curriculum sufficiently summarized the overall task of ministering the gospel to children in the Five Steps of *Gathering Data*, *Gauging the Heart*, *Giving the Gospel*, *Guiding Confession* and *Going Further*?

1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary

2. Has the curriculum included sufficient and relevant questions for both parents and children in its *Gathering Data* section?

1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary

3. Has the curriculum sufficiently and accurately anticipated the possible responses and readiness of children to receive the gospel in its Four Heart Types of *Closed*, *Curious*, *Convicted* and *Converted* in the *Gauging the Heart* section?

1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary

4. Has the curriculum sufficiently demonstrated the importance and recognition of conviction in a manner that is a faithful interpretation and application of the meaning of 2 Corinthians 7:10-11?

1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary

5. Has the curriculum sufficiently presented the necessary themes of redemption through its adaptation of the *Seven C's of History* model in the *Giving the Gospel* section?

1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary

6. Has the curriculum sufficiently presented both a rationale for the use, and a reasonable example of directed prayer in its *Guiding Confession* section?

1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary

7. Has the curriculum sufficiently provided instruction that will aid adults in recognizing spiritual growth in children and readiness for baptism and communion?

1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary

8. Has the curriculum sufficiently been prepared in a manner that would anticipate usefulness in group-instruction that is aimed at increasing competence and confidence in gospel ministry to children for participants?

1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary

9. Has the curriculum sufficiently presented itself as a representative of a biblically faithful and responsible example of training adults to minister the gospel to children?

1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary

10. Has the curriculum sufficiently demonstrated itself to be prepared and ready for use in the equipping of adults to minister the gospel to children?

1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary

APPENDIX 3

POST-INSTRUCTION SURVEY

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure your perceptions and practices regarding ministering the gospel to children. For the purpose of this research, you will be asked to answer the following questions, both before and after we provide you with training and resources in gospel ministry to children. Any information or responses that you offer will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this project is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time.*

By your completion of this Pre-Instruction Survey, and checking the appropriate box below, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

I agree to participate I do not agree to participate

Personal Code _____

Date _____

Please circle the response that most agrees with each statement given.

1. I have received helpful training in how to minister to children.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

2. I feel that training will improve my ability to minister the gospel to children in a biblical and responsible manner.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

3. I am confident in my ability to talk with individual children about salvation.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

4. I frequently engage with kids in personal spiritual conversations.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

5. I would be able to discern when a child is ready to receive Christ as Savior.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

6. My first response to a child with questions about salvation would be to seek help from someone more qualified.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

7. The most effective method to guide a child to verbally confess Christ is to have them repeat a "Sinner's Prayer".

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

8. I am able to correctly identify the difference in meaning between the following terms; *conviction, regeneration, repentance, salvation.*

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
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9. I am aware of how the term *sacramentalism* relates to the discussion of evangelism.

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SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

14. A presentation of the gospel for children *must* include a discussion of sin and hell.

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15. I know where to go in my Bible for help in sharing the gospel.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

16. I am aware of important questions that need to be asked of a child seeking information on salvation.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

17. I feel that ministry of the gospel to children should be handled primarily by an expert, such as a pastor or specific church staff member.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
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18. The term “gospel presentation” is best understood to apply to a narrow range of New Testament verses.

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Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
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20. I can anticipate common categories of readiness that may be encountered in gospel ministry to children.

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21. I believe that any Christian should be responsibly ready to minister the gospel of Christ, but that differences may apply in the case of ministry to children.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

22. I have a ready Bible outline that could be used to direct someone towards faith in Jesus Christ.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

23. I would rate my current knowledge, readiness and willingness to minister the gospel to a child as being very high.

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SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

24. I expect God to give me the opportunity in the near future to share the gospel with a child.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

APPENDIX 4

FOUR-HEART TYPES OF CHILDREN ABSTRACT

The Four Common Heart Types of Children

1. **Closed** – child is insincere, or has been pressed by parents or peers. Others have a spiritual interest not yet developed in the child.

Biblical Example: Lydia (prior to *Acts 16:14*), Emmaus two (*Luke 24:16 & 27*)

- Lydia could not hear, and the disciples could not see until the Lord acted.
2. **Curious** – child is seeking information and answers to general questions, but does not demonstrate personal awareness of need or personal application of answers received.

Biblical Example: The questioning crowd in *Mark 12*, *James 1:22-24*

- They marvel at Jesus' answers and consider them to be wise and well, but do not apply what they hear.
 - They look into the content of the word, but there is no move to application and the answers are quickly forgotten.
3. **Convicted** – Child demonstrates knowledge of personal need and exhibits the fruits of conviction given in *2 Corinthians 7:10-11*.

Biblical Example: *Acts 2:37*, Emmaus two (*Luke 24:32*)

- Those who come are “cut” to the heart
 - Their hearts “burn” within them at the hearing of the Word
4. **Converted** – Child gives testimony of prior conversion and has demonstrated growth in the fruits of the Spirit given in *Galatians 5:22-23*. Lacks in assurance or has other counseling needs.

Biblical Example: Peter (*John 13:1-10a*), the father of the mute (*Mark 9:14-24*)

- Peter, was already clean and only needed explanation.
- The mute's father believed, but needed help with doubts.

APPENDIX 5

POST-INSTRUCTION SUMMATIVE OBJECTIVE ASSESSMENT

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure your perceptions and practices regarding ministering the gospel to children. For the purpose of this research, you will be asked to answer the following questions, after receiving training and resources in gospel ministry to children. Any information or responses that you offer will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this project is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time.*

By your completion of this Post Instruction Assessment, and checking the appropriate box below, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

I agree to participate I do not agree to participate

Personal Code _____

Date _____

1. Which of the following terms represents the most important factor in determining whether a child is ready to proceed with praying to receive Christ as Savior?
 - a. regeneration
 - b. conviction
 - c. conversion
 - d. salvation

2. Name two errors that are to be avoided when leading a child to verbal confession of faith in Christ.

_____ & _____

3. Match the four heart types given below with the correct definition.

_____ Closed

_____ Curious

_____ Convicted

_____ Converted

- a. Child is seeking gospel information, but does not yet know personal need.
- b. Child gives testimony of prior conversion.
- c. Child is unready or has been pressed by parents or peers.
- d. Child knows the personal need and is ready to hear the gospel.

4. Which passage of Scripture of the following is most useful in helping identify the presence of genuine conviction?

- a. Galatians 5:22-23
- b. Romans 10:8-13
- c. Acts 2:38-39
- d. 2 Corinthians 7:10-11

5. Which of the following passages of Scripture is most useful in demonstrating the necessity of verbal confession as an expression of repentance?
- a. Galatians 5:22-23
 - b. Romans 10:8-13
 - c. Acts 2:38-39
 - d. 2 Corinthians 7:10-11
6. Which of the following passages of Scripture is the most useful for adults in follow-up observations of children to help discern the presence of genuine conversion?
- a. Galatians 5:22-23
 - b. Romans 10:8-13
 - c. Acts 2:38-39
 - d. 2 Corinthians 7:10-11
7. Place the following steps in the order that they would appear in counseling a child to salvation.

_____ Give the Gospel

_____ Gauge the Heart

_____ Get to the Close

_____ Gather Data

_____ Go Further

APPENDIX 6

CURRICULUM INSTRUCTION MANUAL

Session 1

Introduction – Rationale

Imagine the following;

Scenario: An adult brings a child to talk to you, or a child approaches you as a parent, teacher or friend at church and asks you the following;

Adult w/Child to Adult

- *Can you talk to _____ about being a Christian/baptism?*
- *I think _____ is at the age where they need to become a Christian. Can you help?*
- *I think _____ is ready to make a commitment and needs to talk to someone.*

Or,

Child to Adult

- *What does it mean to be a Christian?*
- *I want to be baptized, be a Christian, join the church, take communion, go up front, etc.*

What is your/the most likely response?

Common Response:

“You’re going to need to talk to the pastor/youth pastor/children’s director, etc.”

Problem: The problem with this response is that it does not grow you in competence and confidence in the gospel. Secondly, it limits the witness of the church to a linear model rather than an exponential one. It interprets the Great Commission as a professional vocation rather than a congregational commitment.

If we are going to maximize our opportunities in obedience to the Great Commission, we must move away from a linear-professional model to an exponential-congregational model of evangelism and discipleship.

Common Objection:

What prevents us from doing so?

F-E-A-R.

The most common objection is that we will “not know what to say, not have an answer, do something wrong” or just plain “mess it up.” Granted, none of us wants to mislead a child in matters of eternal salvation, and we all may know of, or perhaps have lived our own examples, where the help given was a hindrance because of misleading, muddled or manipulative methods.

However, the fact that many children have been given false assurances in scenarios like the ones above, does not excuse us from the responsibility of being trained and ready with a faithful model of our own. The truth that gospel ministry with children may have been done wrong by someone, somewhere at some time does not prevent anyone, anywhere at the present time from learning to do it better!

Purpose: The purpose of this six-week project will be to equip you with a biblically faithful and responsible method of ministering the gospel to children.

Sessions 2-6: The task in the following sessions will be to introduce and instruct you in a biblically faithful and responsible method of ministering the gospel to children that is comprised of 5 steps.

Essential components of this 5-step method will be;

- Introduction to the *4 Heart Types of Children*
- Examination of the Fruits of Conviction
- Illustration of a “5C’s of the Gospel” Bible Outline
- Application of the Directed Prayer method of Verbal Confession
- Consideration of Spiritual Growth and Ordinance Participation

I. Step One: Gathering Data for Gospel Ministry with Children

The First Step in our approach to sharing the gospel with children should be to gather careful information about the need. Gather this information from any adult(s) present first, and then from the child.

A. Scriptural Context:

James 1:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger;

Hearing should precede speaking. When sharing with children, we should be quick to hear before we speak.

Proverbs 18:13 (ESV)

¹³ If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame.

Wisdom listens before it answers. The folly and shame of so many methods of sharing the gospel with children are that they rush in to give answers and assurances before discerning where the child is in preparation of the heart.

Proverbs 20:5 (ESV)

⁵ The purpose in a man's heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out.

Motives of the heart can be drawn out with patience and understanding. The only path to determining whether a child is ready to proceed by faith will come through drawing out the depths of their hearts.

With this in mind, some helpful guiding questions are given below.

B. Parent(s)/Guardian Questions

1. What help do you and your child need?
2. How old is your child, and what do you think the next step is for him/her?
3. Does your child have any special needs that I should consider in my communication with him/her?
4. What have you been doing at home, or what has happened recently that might lead your child to seek help?
5. What did your child say or do that prompted your action, and how long has this been a topic?
6. What evidence have you seen of the Holy Spirit's work in your child's life?

C. Child Only Questions

1. What can I help you with? Do you have questions?
2. How old are you?
3. Has something happened recently that made you think of talking about this?
4. How long have you had questions about this, or how long have you been thinking about it?
5. Can you tell me about your interest in becoming a Christian?
6. How does God talk to people? Does He talk to you? If so, what is He saying?

II. Step Two: Gauging the Heart of Children

Scenario: The primary question that any person will struggle with in sharing the gospel with children is always going to be; “Are they ready to make this commitment to Christ, and how can I be sure?” Although it is not possible for any individual to know with absolute certainty the condition of any other’s heart before the Lord, it is possible to use Biblical discernment in gauging the gospel readiness of a child.

The most important role of the person sharing the gospel with children is one of discerning guidance, not persuasion.

Scriptural Context:

1 Samuel 3:1–10 (ESV)

¹ Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD in the presence of Eli. And the word of the LORD was rare in those days; there was no frequent vision.
² At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his own place.
³ The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was.
⁴ Then the LORD called Samuel, and he said, “Here I am!”
⁵ and ran to Eli and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” But he said, “I did not call; lie down again.” So he went and lay down.
⁶ And the LORD called again, “Samuel!” and Samuel arose and went to Eli and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” But he said, “I did not call, my son; lie down again.”
⁷ Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him.
⁸ And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” Then Eli perceived that the LORD was calling the boy.
⁹ Therefore Eli said to Samuel, “Go, lie down, and if he calls you, you shall say, ‘Speak, LORD, for your servant hears.’” So Samuel went and lay down in his place.
¹⁰ And the LORD came and stood, calling as at other times, “Samuel! Samuel!” And Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant hears.”

Samuel, as still a boy, did not yet know the Lord. Eli perceived that the Lord was calling Samuel and was able to guide him in the appropriate response to this call. Eli, in this instance, serves as an appropriate model for what is aspired to in those ministering to children, a discerning guide to help a child hear and heed the call of the Lord.

In ministry with children, it is helpful to have a grid of understanding that anticipates one of four possible responses based upon the preparedness or condition of the child’s heart at the time of sharing.

A. The Four Common Heart Types of Children

5. **Closed** – child is insincere, or has been pressed by parents or peers. Others have a spiritual interest not yet developed in the child.

Biblical Example: Lydia (prior to *Acts 16:14*), Emmaus two (*Luke 24:16 & 27*)

- Lydia could not hear, and the disciples could not see, until the Lord acted.
6. **Curious** – child is seeking information and answers to general questions, but does not demonstrate personal awareness of need or personal application of answers received.

Biblical Example: The questioning crowd in *Mark 12*, *James 1:22-24*

- They marvel at Jesus' answers and consider them to be wise and well, but do not apply what they hear.
 - They look into the content of the word, but there is no move to application and the answers are quickly forgotten.
7. **Convicted** – Child demonstrates knowledge of personal need and exhibits the fruits of conviction¹ given in *2 Corinthians 7:10-11*.

Biblical Example: *Acts 2:37*, Emmaus two (*Luke 24:32*)

- Those who come are “cut” to the heart
 - Their hearts “burn” within them at the hearing of the Word
8. **Converted** – Child gives testimony of prior conversion² and has demonstrated growth in the fruits of the Spirit given in *Galatians 5:22-23*. Lacks in assurance or has other counseling needs.

Biblical Example: Peter (*John 13:1-10a*), the father of the mute (*Mark 9:14-24*)

- Peter, was already clean and only needed explanation.
- The mute's father believed, but needed help with doubts.

¹**Conviction** - The action of the Holy Spirit upon the heart of a person in which they are made aware that, “their sin has alienated them from God and exposed them to his condemnation, hostility and wrath, so that their first need is a relationship with him” - J.I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*.

²**Conversion** – “The first step of Christian life...in the act of turning from one's sin in repentance and turning to Christ in faith” – Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology, 2nd Ed.*

B. The Fruits of Conviction from 2 Corinthians 7:10-11

There is a delineation of the “cutting”³ and “burning”⁴ within the heart that leads to salvation. In *2 Corinthians 7:10-11*, Paul refers to this distinction as deathly and worldly grief over against repentant and Godly grief.

2 Corinthians 7:10–11 (ESV)

¹⁰ For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.

¹¹ For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, but also what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what punishment! At every point you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter.

The Fruits of Conviction

Earnestness – sincerity and seriousness about the condition of the soul

Eagerness – desire to clear oneself of guilt and be right with God

Indignation – a hatred and frustration of one’s own sin and nature

Fear – of God’s wrath, judgment, and Hell

Longing – for reconciliation and peace with God, for fellowship with other believers

Zeal – for the works of God, for knowledge of His Word and for worship

Punishment – a willingness to suffer against sin for the sake of righteousness

³**Acts 2:37 (ESV)**

37 Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”

⁴**Luke 24:32 (ESV)**

32 They said to each other, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?”

III. Step Three: Giving the Gospel to Children

Scenario: In your time of Gathering Data, the child has given evidence of not being closed to a time of sharing.

Scriptural Context: Philip and the Ethiopian (*Acts 8:35*). This passage tells us that Philip “opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus.” We must place our confidence in the content of the gospel, not the giftedness of the person sharing. It is an absolute necessity that children should hear the gospel from the very words of the Bible. It is taught to us from Scripture itself that “faith comes through hearing...the word of Christ” (*Romans 10:17*).

5 C’s of the Gospel⁵

Create a marked outline in your Bible of this gospel presentation that points forward to the next verses.

Ex: Highlight or underline *Genesis 1:1* in your Bible. Somewhere near this marked verse write in small print *Gen 1:27* to point you to the next verse you wish to share. Continue this process until you reach the *Genesis 3:22-24* passage, where you will write in small print *John 3:3* to point you forward.

The Beginning of Creation

1 In the ^abeginning, God created the heavens and the earth. **2** The earth was ^bwithout form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. **GEN 1:27**

⁵Gratefully adapted from the *7 C’s of History* by Ken Ham & Stacia McKeever.

Proceed likewise through the rest of the verses given below. You may also wish to add the 5 C's outline in the margin of each of the pages you have marked for your own memory.

1. Creation – *Genesis 1:1, 1:27 & 2:16-17*

- God as Creator, man as creation in His image
- Obedience of man to God is commanded

2. Corruption – *Genesis 3:1-6, 22-24*

- Satan tempted the man and woman, and they disobeyed God in sin.
- This sin has affected all men and women, and has separated them from God's holiness.

3. Christ – Birth, Death and Resurrection

(The details of Christ's birth, death on the cross and Resurrection may be shared in narrative form.)

The application of these facts follows the outline below;

- *John 3:3* – Being born again is necessary to enter the Kingdom of God.
- *Romans 1:16* – The gospel is God's power to save everyone who believes.
- *Romans 2:1-4* – My knowing right and wrong, proven by my judgment of others demonstrates my worthiness for judgment and Hell. But God's kindness gives me this opportunity to repent.
- *Romans 3:23* – All need to repent, for all have sinned.
- *Romans 5:8* – Although all have sinned and are liable to judgment, God's love sent Christ to die for us. This is the good news of the gospel.
- *Romans 6:23* – The kindness of God leads us to a choice, the payment of sin which is death and Hell, or the receiving of a free gift of salvation in Jesus. Because salvation is a free gift, it must be actively received and cannot be bought, merited or paid for.

4. Conversion

- *Romans 10:9-10, 13* – The gift of salvation is received by believing the gospel in one's heart and confessing the Lord Jesus with the mouth.

5. Completion

- *Revelation 21:22-22:5* – The Kingdom of God is coming when Jesus returns, and believers will live with Him forever. Those who do not repent and believe and are not recorded by faith in Christ, will never enter in and be shut out in Hell forever.

IV. Step Four: Guiding Children in Confession

Scenario: In your time of Giving the Gospel, the child is demonstrating to the best of your discernment, the fruits of conviction.

A. Further Questions

1. Do you understand what we have shared? Is there anything that you want to ask or need me to explain more?
2. What have you come to know from these verses? What do you feel about what they have shared? What do you need to do about what we have shared?

B. Closing Question

1. Has God opened your heart to believe and your mouth to confess the gospel we have shared?
 - If *no* or *not ready*, prayer for continuing work of God
 - If *yes*, move to a directed prayer (adapted from Sam Doherty's examples in U-Can Lead a Child to Christ)

Directed Prayer Example:

Jesus taught us to address God as "Our Father in Heaven," so you can pray "Father God,"

Tell God what you know and believe to be true from what you have heard from His Word.

Tell God what you have come to feel about your sin and what He did for you in Christ.

Ask God what you want Him to do for you now, and what you are going to do with your life.

Special Considerations:

- *The Necessity of Verbal Confession*

While the Bible **does** make it clear that we should call to the Lord for our salvation (i.e. Romans 10:10), **it nowhere specifies what we are to say**. This fact leads us to the next caution.

- *The Sinner's Prayer and Sacramentalism*

Although it is granted, that a person can make a genuine confession of salvation with a modeled Sinner's Prayer, the best practice from Scripture shows a more spontaneous and heart-felt confession as being blessed by God.

The only two recorded “Sinner’s Prayers” in the Bible⁶, which both come with Jesus’ own promise of the assurance of salvation, were each respectively a sentence long and are far-removed from the formula used in today’s evangelism.

What we must be careful of, is in making the mystery of salvation dependent upon any man-made method. One of the problems with formulaic Sinner’s Prayers is that they are prone to take the form of sacramentalism⁷. From Scripture, we see that Jesus blessed the concern in the asking, not the content. What is most important is the motive of the asker, not the method of the prayer. For this reason, a best practice with children is gentle guidance rather than demanded repetition.

⁶“God, be merciful to me, a sinner” (Luke 18:13, ESV) and “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom” (Luke 23:42, ESV).

⁷**Sacramentalism** – is the attribution of grace to necessary outward mechanics, motions and methods rather than internal transformation. Someone holding a sacramental understanding of salvation confession would insist on the necessity of including certain language or phrases into a prayer (ex. “asking Jesus into my heart”), or may be concerned that something “important” was left out of a prayer that might keep the one who is praying from being saved. Someone who struggles with sacramentalism will be necessarily anxious about “messing it up” and worries about “getting it right” rather than trusting God to “much more... give the gift of the Holy Spirit to those who ask him” (Luke 11:13, ESV).

V. Step Five: Going Further with Growing Children

A. With Child

1. The Nature of Assurance from *John 10:27-30* and *1 John 1:9*

The nature of assurance we are given by Jesus in this passage is that those of His flock-His sheep, will believe upon hearing His voice. He knows them, and they will follow Him. Consequently, He gives them eternal life and they are held in His hand, which is one in the same as God's hand. His sheep have assurance because they are held, not because they do the holding. Children who have heard the voice of Jesus through conviction and have demonstrated a following-through obedience may be taught the promise of Jesus' holding and the unique, one-time nature of conversion.

While assured by Jesus of preservation, His sheep are not granted immediate perfection. For this reason, it is necessary for the believer to continue in a life-long pattern of repentance for known sins as demonstrated in *1 John 1:9*.

2. The Need for Baptism from *Acts 2:36-38*

The first step of the obedient life of a follower of Jesus is baptism. As given by Peter, this baptism should follow repentance. When children have come to repentance and faith in Jesus, they should as soon as possible be counseled in receiving baptism. Notice from this passage, that there is no intervening requirement between repentance and baptism. That is, there is no biblical warrant for demanding that a person "walk an aisle" to request baptism or confirm their salvation. Again, such a practice can take the form of sacramentalism if it is demanded as a matter of principle rather than church preference.

Baptism should be clearly explained to the child as being received because one is saved, not as a necessity to complete salvation. Children should be instructed in the meaning and mode (immersion) of baptism, including a counter-understanding that many people mistakenly hold of baptism as a "washing away of sins".

B. With Parents

1. Observing growth in the Fruits of the Spirit from *Galatians 5:22-23*

Parents and adults often struggle with the question of knowing whether a child has genuinely been converted. While it is not possible to serve as the Holy Spirit for any other person, Jesus' command is that we would be able to discern the identity of the tree from the fruit it bears.⁸ As such, the Bible makes clear that the true distinguishing

⁸Luke 6:34-35

characteristic of all who are genuinely converted is the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.⁹ Because of this, the Bible has given us the fruits of the Spirit that we may observe in converted children.

These fruits, as given in *Galatians 5:22-23* are:

- **Love** – willingness to sacrifice in obedience to God and for the good of others
- **Joy** – taking delight in the gifts of God
- **Peace** – a contentment, both within towards God, and without towards others
- **Patience** – the ability to wait upon the Lord in trust of His timing
- **Kindness** – good service in awareness of the needs of others
- **Goodness** – a pattern of seeking the good of others
- **Faithfulness** – persevering in held beliefs, staying true and trustworthy
- **Gentleness** – the practice of considering others first and treating them accordingly
- **Self-Control** – movement towards mastery of temptation and sin

All genuine converts of Jesus Christ will show progressive growth in these fruits. However, one must keep in mind, that being not yet perfected requires that we base our observations over a period of time. We simply cannot be hasty to make a judgment on a single action of any individual as evidence or refutation of their salvation.

Converted children, will still be children, in which foolishness is yet bound in their hearts!¹⁰ Growth may also be accelerated and stimulated in certain areas sooner than others. So the patient observation is made over the course of time, looking regularly for increases in a child's growth in these spiritual disciplines. Where they are faltering, we may take the opportunity to challenge our children to examine their profession of faith in light of their current actions, searching for correction and repentance in their hearts. If a child, or anyone for that matter, does not respond to the discipline of God's Word and the rebuke of another believer with repentance and change, and also shows no sustained growth in the Fruits of the Spirit there is sufficient cause for concern over the genuineness of conversion.

⁹Romans 8:9

¹⁰Proverbs 22:15

2. Sharing communion together with your child

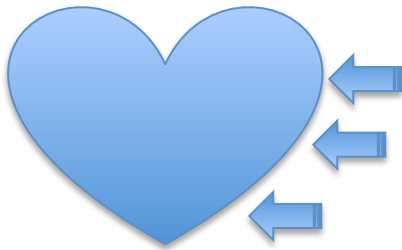
Children, as baptized believers should follow in the further obedience of receiving the church ordinance of communion, the Lord's Supper. Each observance of the Lord's Supper is a visible reminder and proclamation of what Christ has already accomplished in the heart of the child. Special emphasis and instruction should take place before the first receiving of communion, in which the child is led to properly "discern" the body and blood of Christ.¹¹

¹¹1 Corinthians 11:28-29

APPENDIX 7

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN CONVERSION
AND SANCTIFICATION

A) Holy Spirit acts
“ON”
the heart



CONVICTION

Godly Grief
2 Cor. 7:10-11
earnestness
eagerness
indignation
fear
longing
zeal
punishment

B) Holy Spirit dwells
“IN”
the heart



CONVERSION

Repentance & Salvation
Ezekiel 36:26-27
new heart
new Spirit
walk & obey

C) Holy Spirit lives
“OUT”
from the heart



SANCTIFICATION

Life in the Spirit
Galatians 5:22-23
love
joy
peace
patience
kindness
goodness
faithfulness
gentleness
self-control

APPENDIX 8

t-TEST TABULATIONS

PARTICIPANT PRE- INSTRUCTION RESPONSES
SORTED BY DEGREE OF AGREEMENT

Positive Anticipated Response Questions n=26	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA	Negative Anticipated Response Questions n=26	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
1	2	8	4	10	2		6		4	6	7	8	1
2					15	11	7	4	8	5	5	4	
3	1	2	5	11	7		11	2	3	10	7	4	
4		6	4	7	5	4	12	3	5	5	8	5	
5		4	5	10	6	1	13	8	11	5	2		
8		1	2	12	10	1	17	1	11	6	6	2	
9	2	13	5	6			18	1	7	6	6	6	
10	1	3	5	12	5								
14		3		9	11	3							
15		1	4	11	10								
16		6	6	9	5								

19	3	4	6	7	6								
20	1	7	9	6	3								
22	1	9	3	6	7								
23	3	5	8	6	4								
24		1	2	9	10	4							

PARTICIPANT POST - INSTRUCTION RESPONSES
SORTED BY DEGREE OF AGREEMENT

Positive Anticipated Response Questions n=26	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA	Negative Anticipated Response Questions n=26	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
1	1				3	22	6	3	11	7	5		
2	1			1	4	20	7	23	1	2			
3	1			4	14	7	11	6	16	2	1	1	
4		1	2	12	8	3	12	9	12	1	1	3	
5				6	14	6	13	21	5				
8				1	19	6	17	8	13	5			
9				1	15	10	18	7	13		3	3	
10				5	15	6							
14	1	2			10	13							
15				1	13	12							
16				4	16	6							
19				2	15	11							
20		1		3	17	5							
22		1	1	2	10	12							
23		1	1	4	17	3							
24			1	4	15	6							

PARTICIPANT PRE AND POST INSTRUCTION
SCORES COMPILED FOR
T-TEST ANALYSIS

Participant #	Pre-Instruction Survey Score	Post- Instruction Survey Score	Difference
1	115	129	+14
2	77	103	+26
3	103	119	+16
4	83	128	+45
5	94	115	+21
6	79	119	+40
7	67	127	+60
8	84	111	+27
9	85	116	+31
10	90	117	+27
11	73	125	+52
12	98	111	+13
13	100	116	+16
14	103	112	+9
15	76	118	+42
16	80	134	+54
17	87	118	+31
18	89	135	+46

19	94	104	+10
20	78	106	+28
21	80	116	+36
22	89	135	+46
23	89	103	+14
24	79	121	+42
25	97	113	+16
26	91	115	+24

APPENDIX 9

KENTUCKY BAPTIST CONVENTION REVITALIZATION PASTORS SEMINAR SERIES

Revitalization Pastors Seminar Series Fall 2015

All sessions will meet at Corinth Baptist Church in London, KY.

Thursday, August 27, 6:30—8:45 p.m.

"Revitalization Pastors Lean into Conflict" Steve Rice
"Revitalization Pastors Take Risks" Donnie Fox

Thursday, September 17, 6:30—8:45 p.m.

"Revitalization Pastors Work on Relationships" Paul Chitwood
"Revitalization Pastors Implement Change" Andrew Dyer

Tuesday, October 20, 6:30—8:45 p.m.

"Revitalization Pastors Lead with a Vision" Chuck McAllister
"Revitalization Pastors Depend on God" Bill Haynes

Saturday, November 14, 10:00 a.m.—3:15 p.m.

"Revitalization Pastors are Lifelong Learners" Don Mathis
"Revitalization Pastors Develop Leaders/Laborers" Tim Searcy

Lunch

"Revitalization Pastors Celebrate Wins" Daryl Cornett
"Revitalization Pastors Take the Lead in Evangelism" Donavon Burton

Seminar Leaders

Steve Rice, Church Consulting and Revitalization Team Leader, KBC
Donnie Fox, President, Clear Creek Baptist Bible College
Paul Chitwood, Executive Director, KBC
Donavon Burton, Senior Pastor, Beacon Hill Baptist Church
Chuck McAllister, Evangelism, Ch. Planting, Collegiate Ministry Team Leader, KBC
Bill Haynes, Senior Pastor, Grace Baptist Church
Don Mathis, Evangelist, Former Pastor, LifeWay, & State Convention Executive
Tim Searcy, Senior Pastor, Allen Baptist Church
Daryl Cornett, Senior Pastor, FBC-Hazard
Andrew Dyer, Senior Pastor, Corinth Baptist Church

- Each participant will receive a book per session.
- Participants who attend all 4 sessions will receive a bonus book.
- The names of participants who attend all 4 sessions will be placed in drawing for a new iPad.

Registration

You may register for all sessions, or any individual session, by calling or emailing Mary Livingston at the KBC office. Mary.livingston@kybaptist.org or 866-489-3338

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ABSTRACT

EQUIPPING ADULTS AT BEACON HILL BAPTIST CHURCH OF SOMERSET, KENTUCKY FOR GOSPEL MINISTRY TO CHILDREN

Donavon Ray Burton, D.Min.
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015
Chair: Dr. Stuart W. Scott

This project was concerned with the development and teaching of a biblical approach that would equip adults to minister the gospel to children. Goals of the project were to gauge participant's understandings and attitudes towards this ministry, to develop a training curriculum that could be applied in a broad context for ministry preparation and to increase awareness and competence with regards to future opportunities for ministry to children.

Biblical and theological supports for the project were drawn from exegesis of the Great Commandment and Great Commission. Particular theological emphases of the project were the need for renewal in commitments to understanding conviction and affirming the sufficiency of Scripture.

Theoretical support for the project was drawn from a comparison of current and historical methodologies of childhood evangelism. Particular methodological emphases of the project focused on the need for a more robust presentation of Scripture and the avoidance of sacramentalism.

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