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LEADING BELIEVERS TO EVANGELIZE PERSONALLY  
THROUGH EXPOSITORY PREACHING

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A Thesis  
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the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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Doctor of Ministry

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by  
John Noel Denby  
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**APPROVAL SHEET**

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THROUGH EXPOSITORY PREACHING

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To my beloved wife,

Amanda Lee Denby.

Your desire to see me further my education is a blessing from the Lord.

You spur me on by your continual support and sacrifice.

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## PREFACE

The Lord has refined this thesis for His kingdom. God cares about the host of lost souls in this world, and He desires His under-shepherds to lead His children to faithfully share His gospel. He has grown me as a pastor, and I pray He will do the same for pastors who read this material. I am grateful for Dr. Hershael York and his vision for our cohort. The Lord has used and will continue to use him mightily.

Two individuals have invested personal time towards this project. First, Jonathan Saunders has been a life-long friend. His background has made him an invaluable resource for grammatical and content-related recommendations. He has gone above and beyond to critique my work. Second, my wife, Amanda Denby, has been a support for me and has sacrificed much. To these two, I am indeed grateful.

When I first considered returning to school, I had no idea how it would be possible; however, God provided through the support of Granny Lout, Kenneth and Karol Denby, Walt and Sue Roberts, Jimmy and Lillie Hanks, and First Baptist Church of Spurger, Texas, who all sacrificially gave.

John Noel Denby

Nacogdoches, Texas

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Evangelism has too often become optional. As Russell Moore explains, evangelism is like flossing. Many Christians desire to evangelize more often than they actually do.<sup>1</sup> This attitude may be directly correlated to the decline in salvations especially among Southern Baptists, one of the largest evangelical denominations that pride themselves on evangelism. To the apostle Paul, this is unacceptable. "How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?" (Rom 10:14).<sup>2</sup> Spurgeon was bold enough to say, "Have you no wish for others to be saved? Then you're not saved yourself, be sure of that!"

Thom Rainer, in a recently published open letter, expresses his burden for the lack of evangelism in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). "We are reaching fewer people for the gospel today than we did decades ago when we were a much smaller group."<sup>3</sup> He refers to the Annual Church Profile data computed by LifeWay. In 2012, Southern Baptist churches grew in number yet declined in membership, average attendance, baptisms, and total giving. The saddest statistic concerns baptisms. Marty

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<sup>1</sup>Dan DeWitt, "Evangelism: An Introduction," in *A Guide to Evangelism*, ed. Dan DeWitt (Louisville: SBTS Press, 2013), 10.

<sup>2</sup>Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the New American Standard Bible.

<sup>3</sup>Thom Rainer, "An Open Letter to My Denomination: Have We Lost Our First Love?," *The Thom S. Rainer Blog*, January 13, 2014, accessed February 25, 2014, <http://thomrainer.com/2014/01/13/an-open-letter-to-my-denomination-have-we-lost-our-first-love/>.

King, director of communications at LifeWay Christian Resources, notes, "Reported baptisms have declined six of the last eight years with 2012 the lowest since 1948."<sup>4</sup>

What is it going to take for churches to rightly understand the Great Commission as a command instead of an option? How will the people of God become more faithful in evangelizing the lost? Will it happen by chance? What role do pastors play in believers evangelizing? Pastors play an important role in God's redemptive plan. If churches desire God to mightily advance His kingdom through them, then pastors must lead through the preaching of the NT evangelism mandate.

Not just any preaching will do. It should be expository preaching. Albert Mohler writes, "*I believe that the only form of authentic Christian preaching is expository preaching.*"<sup>5</sup> John Stott is convinced that "all true Christian preaching is expository preaching."<sup>6</sup> Haddon Robinson proposes, "The type of preaching that best carries the force of divine authority is expository preaching."<sup>7</sup> Greg Heisler makes a convincing point:

The doctrine of inspiration demands exposition because God the Holy Spirit inscripturated his truth in words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs. Therefore, a Spirit-led approach to preaching is naturally linked with the expository understanding of preaching because exposition at its core is testifying to what has been deposited already by the Holy Spirit in the Bible.<sup>8</sup>

Therefore, expository preaching has power when a preacher explains a passage of

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<sup>4</sup>Marty King, "Number of Southern Baptist Convention Churches Increased Last Year; Members, Attendance and Baptisms Declined," *The LifeWay Blog*, June 6, 2013, accessed February 25, 2014, <http://blog.lifeway.com/newsroom/2013/06/06/number-of-sbc-churches-increased-last-year-members-attendance-and-baptisms-declined/>.

<sup>5</sup>R. Albert Mohler, *He Is Not Silent: Preaching in a Postmodern World* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2008), 49.

<sup>6</sup>John Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Preaching Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 125.

<sup>7</sup>Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 20.

<sup>8</sup>Greg Heisler, *Spirit-Led Preaching: The Holy Spirit's Role in Sermon Preparation and Delivery* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007), 22.

Scripture according to the inspired author's intent and exhorts the audience to respond. Until pastors lead through expository preaching, hardly any movement will transpire towards addressing the evangelism problem.

### **Familiarity with the Literature**

Below is an examination of books that come close to addressing how pastors lead believers to evangelize through expository preaching. Some of the books are for evangelizing and have scarcely anything about preaching. Others are for expository preaching with almost nothing on evangelism. Few advocate leading through preaching.

In *Total Church Life: How to Be a First Century Church in a 21st Century World*, Darrell Robinson outlines a threefold approach for a church ("Exalt the Savior," "Equip the Saints," "Evangelize the Sinner"). He devotes a large portion of his book for equipping the saints, which Robinson believes is primarily done through the saints' spiritual gifts. He includes a small portion on how the pastor can equip from the pulpit. "Much equipping happens as God's Word is taught and the Holy Spirit applies it to the hearts and minds of the hearers."<sup>9</sup> In his third approach, "Evangelize the Sinner," Robinson places a heavy burden on the pastor. Without his leadership, direction, and example, the church will not be an evangelistic church. In chapter 11, "The Personnel for Evangelism," he lays out a plan detailing how to involve the laity in evangelism. While Robinson proposes a holistic approach, he does not specifically call pastors to lead believers to evangelize through expository preaching.

In *The Trellis and the Vine: The Ministry Mind-Shift That Changes Everything*, Colin Marshall and Tony Payne make a convincing case that churches should focus on gospel growth (the vine) because they neglect it to build church structures (the trellis). For Marshall and Payne, all Christians clearly should participate in evangelism. They

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<sup>9</sup>Darrell W. Robinson, *Total Church Life: How to Be a First Century Church in a 21st Century World* (Nashville: B&H Publishers, 1997), 112.

would go so far to say that the evangelist should disciple the person to maturity and not just see them converted. Chapter 8, “Why Sunday Sermons Are Necessary but Not Sufficient,” is a particularly pertinent chapter to this thesis. “The pastor is a prayerful preacher who shapes and drives the entire ministry through his biblical, expositional preaching.”<sup>10</sup> As the chapter title suggests, the authors believe that leading through preaching is not enough. They advocate that preaching is a springboard for training, and the remainder of the book is dedicated to applying this concept. A section entitled “Step 1: Set the Agenda on Sundays”<sup>11</sup> has a word on changing the culture of a church toward disciple-making and training through preaching, but it is too brief to discern what this practice looks like in a local church.

Michael Quicke, author of *360-Degree Leadership: Preaching to Transform Congregations*,<sup>12</sup> is convinced that preachers are leaders and have been throughout Christian history. He is careful to include preaching as part of leadership and offers the steps to develop a preacher/leader. While he places great emphasis on preaching as part of leadership, even focusing on leading through preaching, he does not discuss leading through *expository* preaching or how to lead believers *to evangelize*.

Paul Borden has written some books pertaining to leading people to the mission field such as *Make or Break Your Church in 365 Days* and *Direct Hit: Aiming Real Leaders at the Mission Field*.<sup>13</sup> In another book, *Assaulting the Gates: Aiming All*

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<sup>10</sup>Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine: The Ministry Mind-Shift That Changes Everything* (Kingsford, NSW: Matthias Media, 2009), 99.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 158-59.

<sup>12</sup>Michael J. Quicke, *360-Degree Leadership: Preaching to Transform Congregations* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006).

<sup>13</sup>Paul D. Borden, *Make or Break Your Church in 365 Days: A Daily Guide to Leading Effective Change* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2012); *idem*, *Direct Hit: Aiming Real Leaders at the Mission Field* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006).

*God's People at the Mission Field*,<sup>14</sup> Borden sets out a revitalization plan for churches to be on mission. His books focus on leadership strategy and implementation. Most of the books emphasize leading through an evangelistic process, not leading through preaching.

In *Strategic Preaching: The Role of the Pulpit in Pastoral Leadership*, William E. Hull emphasizes pastoral leadership by linking preaching with leading. The first half of the book assists the reader in preparing intentional sermons, and the second half of the book focuses on strategic leading. He desires "to balance our twin concerns for preaching and leadership."<sup>15</sup> He does note that preaching can lead a congregation towards an intended goal. Concerning evangelism, Hull argues predominately for a pastor to lead but not specifically through expository preaching.

Charles H. Spurgeon's *The Soul Winner* is a classic.<sup>16</sup> Here Spurgeon advises the reader how to be a soul-winner. In chapter 4, "Sermons Likely to Win Souls," he proposes seven principles on how to craft and deliver sermons when preaching for conversions. In chapter 6, "How to Induce Our People to Win Souls," Spurgeon recommends gathering believers who desire to win souls and pouring into them. However, no direct instructions are given as to how a pastor should lead his congregation to become soul-winners through preaching.

James Kennedy wrote *Evangelism Explosion*, now in its fourth edition, which has become a classic in evangelism.<sup>17</sup> His intent is to equip the leader to train the laity, and this book would be an excellent resource for creating an evangelistic system. Yet, the

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<sup>14</sup>Paul D. Borden, *Assaulting the Gates: Aiming All God's People at the Mission Field* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2009).

<sup>15</sup>William E. Hull, *Strategic Preaching: The Role of the Pulpit in Pastoral Leadership* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2006), vii.

<sup>16</sup>Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Soul Winner*, ed. by David Otis Fuller (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1948).

<sup>17</sup>D. James Kennedy, *Evangelism Explosion: Equipping Churches for Friendship, Evangelism, Discipleship, and Healthy Growth*, 4th ed. (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1996).

system does not specifically include leading through preaching.

William Fay and Linda Shepherd composed a helpful book on personal evangelism entitled *Share Jesus without Fear*.<sup>18</sup> Several helpful chapters identify whether the gospel takes root into the new believer and explain how to overcome objections. This book does not address leading through preaching, though there has been curriculum developed from the book that could be useful in training.

*Tell the Truth: The Whole Gospel to the Whole Person by Whole People*, by Will Metzger, is a primary source for personal evangelism and could be used as a training manual.<sup>19</sup> He covers the whole gamut from the theology behind evangelism to the practicality of how to evangelize. Metzger however does not write about how to lead through preaching. At best, he equips a leader to train people for evangelism.

Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix joined forces to write *Power in the Pulpit: How to Prepare and Deliver Expository Sermons*.<sup>20</sup> The book is an update and combining of Vines' prior books, *A Practical Guide to Sermon Preparation* and *A Guide to Effective Sermon Delivery*.<sup>21</sup> As evident in the title, the book proposes how to preach expositionally. While leading through preaching is not explicit, an underlying tone is evident. Vines is known for his evangelistic ministry, but he does not indicate in the book if or how he led believers to evangelize through expository preaching.

### **Void in the Literature**

Books upon books are available for preaching and for leading, but seldom are

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<sup>18</sup>William Fay and Linda Shepherd, *Share Jesus without Fear* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999).

<sup>19</sup>Will Metzger, *Tell the Truth: The Whole Gospel to the Whole Person by Whole People*, 3rd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002).

<sup>20</sup>Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit: How to Prepare and Deliver Expository Sermons* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999).

<sup>21</sup>Jerry Vines, *A Practical Guide to Sermon Preparation* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985); idem, *A Guide to Effective Sermon Delivery* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986).

those two aspects brought together. Preaching is such a wide topic that one could find a plethora of books. Expository preaching seems to be a trending style, and many opinions abound on how to define expository preaching, with many books to follow. Out of all the books on preaching and leading, few authors bring the two subjects together. William Hull notes, "As best I can tell, no one has written at any length about the relationship between preaching and leadership."<sup>22</sup> Separating preaching from leading is common. Many authors focus on leading in practical aspects of evangelism such as training, events, or programs instead of leading through preaching. Even pastors separate preaching and leading by failing to recognize that the preaching of God's Word breathes life into their evangelistic ministries, and authors are not writing books to help marry leading and preaching. Michael Quicke's book, *360-Degree Leadership: Preaching to Transform Congregations*, is the best resource on leading through preaching. He boldly claims "you can lead without preaching but you cannot preach biblically without leading."<sup>23</sup> Quicke advocates leading through preaching, yet he does not insist it be through expository preaching. Furthermore, no author has written at great length on how a pastor should lead believers to evangelize through expository preaching. Therefore, the void in the literature is that virtually no author insists that pastors lead believers to evangelize personally through expository preaching.

### **Thesis Statement**

Expository preaching represents the best way for pastors to lead church members to evangelize personally. Through faithful, expository preaching of God's Word, believers will be convinced of their responsibility to spread the gospel. Even then, most believers will not personally evangelize without being led. Through his preaching ministry, a pastor

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<sup>22</sup>Hull, *Strategic Preaching*, viii.

<sup>23</sup>Michael J. Quicke, *360-Degree Leadership: Preaching to Transform Congregations* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006), 73.

ought to first expound the biblical mandate that commands all believers to evangelize. Second, preaching expositionally through Acts is an effective way for a pastor to lead his congregation to be more faithful, personal witnesses. Third, a pastor needs to implement a biblical model in the life of his congregation through his expository preaching ministry. This thesis will examine Jerry Vines' ministry to see how personal evangelism may be implemented in a local church.

If this thesis is affirmed and proved through the Scriptures and real-life example, then implications exist for the local church. Through his expository preaching ministry, a pastor will lead church members to evangelize personally. His preaching will focus on the biblical mandate for all believers to evangelize, on how believers evangelized in the NT, and on how believers can evangelize in their daily lives. He will be a key figure in determining the local church's strategy to evangelize faithfully in their community and to the ends of the world.



## CHAPTER 2

### EXPOUNDING THE BIBLICAL MANDATE FOR ALL BELIEVERS TO EVANGELIZE PERSONALLY THROUGH EXPOSITORY PREACHING

#### **Introduction**

The task of motivating believers towards personal evangelism is arduous.

Surely some believers elevate other biblical commands over personal evangelism:

When asked if they have a personal responsibility to share their faith with others, 73% of born again Christians said yes. When this conviction is put into practice, however, the numbers shift downward. Only half (52%) of born again Christians say they actually did share the Gospel at least once this past year to someone with different beliefs, in the hope that they might accept Jesus Christ as their Savior.<sup>1</sup>

With the statistics in mind, a preacher will find it impossible to coerce a believer into sharing Jesus. The only way to have lasting results is through the conviction of the Holy Spirit. If the preacher preaches the inspired Word of God, then he will have the authority of Scripture and power of the Holy Spirit. An excellent way for him to lead believers is through expository preaching, specifically expounding the biblical mandate for all believers to evangelize. A case will be made from 2 Timothy 4:1-5 that the preacher must "preach the Word." One of the best approaches for preaching is expositionally, consequently an extensive argument for expository preaching will be developed. In conclusion, a faithful preacher must preach the evangelism mandates found in the NT by applying them to all believers.

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<sup>1</sup>Barna Group, "Is Evangelism Going Out of Style?" last modified December 18, 2013, accessed September 29, 2014, <https://www.barna.org/barna-update/faith-spirituality/648-is-evangelism-going-out-of-style#.VCmuc77ZGFs>.

## Second Timothy 4:1-5

In Paul's last letter, he carefully instructs Timothy how to propagate the gospel. Second Timothy reads like Paul's last will and testament. Chiah Ek Ho observes, "Although staring execution and death in the face, Paul continues to be concerned about the missionary enterprise and the welfare of his band of co-workers."<sup>2</sup> If the gospel is going to spread, then it will through faithful preachers like Timothy. John Phillips explains the gravity of the situation:

As Paul continued his letter, the shadow of the executioner's ax lengthened and grew darker. The apostle's work on earth was almost done. His busy pen would soon be still forever. All that remained for him to do was to charge and challenge his young colleague. In 2 Timothy 4, we sense a new urgency in Paul's words. He was laying siege to Timothy's heart and pressing the attack on all fronts.<sup>3</sup>

Paul is also concerned that the gospel remain pure. He fears that it could become tainted or diluted, so he pleads with Timothy to "preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction" (2 Tim 4:2).

Understanding the magnitude of the situation, Paul charges Timothy.

### The Gravity of the Charge

Paul sets the tone with "I solemnly charge you" (2 Tim 4:1). The word *διαμαρτύρομαι*<sup>4</sup> means "to admonish or instruct with regard to some future happening or action, with the implication of personal knowledge or experience—'to warn.'"<sup>5</sup> Paul also invokes the forceful word in 1 Timothy 5:21. George Knight notes, "The first person

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<sup>2</sup>Chiah Ek Ho, "Mission in the Pastoral Epistles," in *Entrusted with the Gospel: Paul's Theology in the Pastoral Epistles*, ed. Andreas J. Kostenberger and Terry L. Wilder (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 261.

<sup>3</sup>John Phillips, *Exploring the Pastoral Epistles: An Expository Commentary, The John Phillips Commentary Series* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2003), 430.

<sup>4</sup>Unless otherwise noted, all Greek Scripture references are from Eberhard Nestle et al., *The Greek New Testament with McReynolds English Interlinear*, 27th ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993).

<sup>5</sup>Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 1:436.

singular form gives the charge a direct and forceful quality and conveys the fact that the charge is given by Paul in his apostolic ministry."<sup>6</sup>

Paul grounds his charge "in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom" (2 Tim 4:1). Hence, Paul desires Timothy to grasp the eschatological reality and recognize that he will answer to Jesus Christ. Just as Moses reminds the Israelites to whom they were accountable (Deut 4:26), Paul reminds Timothy that he will stand before a heavenly court. Philips captures the scene,

It is a serious matter to be brought into a human court and sworn in. Timothy, however, was charged before the supreme court of the universe; he was put on notice that the proceedings were being watched closely by God, and he was reminded that in a coming day he would be called to account by the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>7</sup>

Paul calls on the most reliable witnesses obtainable, God and Christ Jesus.

Paul stresses the seriousness with two expressions. First, Jesus is the one "who is to judge the living and the dead" (2 Tim 4:1). Christians would use this phrase to describe the future judgment, when Jesus will judge those who are physically alive, as well as, the resurrected dead. No one, not even Paul, will escape the final judgment. Knight writes, "Just as the thought of the judgment by Christ of all people motivated Paul (2 Cor 5:9-11), so Paul wanted it to motivate Timothy."<sup>8</sup>

Second, Jesus will judge "by His appearing and His kingdom." At Christ's coming, Timothy will give an account of his ministry. Philip Towner remarks, "Future promises, grounded in the past event, were now in the Spirit in the process of fulfillment; God's future had begun to shape the present."<sup>9</sup> Paul aptly links Jesus' first and second

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<sup>6</sup>George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1992), 452.

<sup>7</sup>Phillips, *Exploring the Pastoral Epistles*, 431.

<sup>8</sup>Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 452.

<sup>9</sup>Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, The New International

appearances, and "the future event can already make its mark on the present age."<sup>10</sup> Paul uses the future promise as a present-day encouragement to persevere so that "Timothy himself will receive the crown of righteousness at Christ's appearing and be safely brought into Christ's future heavenly kingdom."<sup>11</sup> Consequently, "Christ's kingdom is then the ultimate reality with which Timothy should be concerned."<sup>12</sup>

Paul's eschatological perspective is clear in the commissioning of Timothy. According to Towner, "He swears (adjures) on these eschatological realities (judgment, parousia, kingdom) because these symbols represent the fulfillment of the bedrock realities that were formerly sworn on—'heaven and earth,' and even 'Jerusalem'—all undeniable proofs of God's existence, creative activity, and presence among his people."<sup>13</sup> Paul thereby entreats Timothy to orient his present life according to the future promises. Towner writes, "Salvation has really begun; so, too, the events that await future consummation are capable of shaping Timothy's character and motivating him to faithful fulfillment of this charge."<sup>14</sup> Paul imparts the gravity of the charge and now announces the commands.

## **Preach**

Paul exhorts Timothy with five consecutive commands, and the first command, κήρυξον τὸν λόγον, "is the basis for all others. The command urged Timothy to declare the gospel. Every command that follows in this verse told Timothy how he should

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Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 599.

<sup>10</sup>Towner, *Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 599.

<sup>11</sup>Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 453.

<sup>12</sup>Crossway Bibles, *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 2342.

<sup>13</sup>Towner, *Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 599.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 600.

proceed about the task of preaching the word."<sup>15</sup> Hence, the meaning of κήρυξον is crucial to understanding 2 Timothy 4:2 and must be Timothy's priority. Philips explains κήρυξον:

It simply suggests a picture of an imperial herald, trumpet in hand, standing at attention in a public place and conveying a mandatory proclamation in the emperor's name. There is no room for discussion or debate. The herald is not there to argue the pros and cons of the demand; he is there to proclaim it and call for instant obedience.<sup>16</sup>

Preaching therefore calls the hearers to be obedient to God's Word.

The command to preach is clear, but the content of what to preach is not as Louw and Nida articulate, "In a number of languages it is impossible to translate κηρύσσω without indicating the content of what is preached."<sup>17</sup> Paul commands Timothy not only to preach but specifically to "preach the Word."

### **Preach the Word**

Paul admonishes Timothy to be unlike the false teachers (2 Tim 3:1-9) and to know he will be tempted to depart (2 Tim 4:3-4) from the strict command to "preach the Word." Paul insists "the Word" be the object of preaching, so Timothy has a trustworthy guide. If Paul commands Timothy to "preach the Word," then preaching must be grounded in the Word, or it is not true preaching. Robinson writes, "When preachers speak as heralds, they must cry out 'the Word.' Anything less cannot legitimately pass for Christian preaching."<sup>18</sup> Elsewhere, Robinson asserts, "Yet when they [ministers] fail to preach the Scriptures, they abandon their authority. . . . God speaks through the Bible."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 34 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 242-43.

<sup>16</sup>Phillips, *Exploring the Pastoral Epistles*, 432.

<sup>17</sup>Concerning 33.256 κηρύσσω, in Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 416.

<sup>18</sup>Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 21.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 20.

Authority then comes from the Word, not from the office of pastor.

Paul's usage of "the Word" is essential to understanding 2 Timothy 4:1-5. Marshall explains, "ὁ λόγος by itself is 'the Christian message'; it is usually qualified in some way 'the word of God', 'the word of truth', etc., but by this point in the letter no fuller description is needed."<sup>20</sup> Daniel Wallace contends, "Here τὸν λόγον most likely goes back to 3:16, in which it is stated that πᾶσα γραφὴ θεόπνευστος καὶ ὠφέλιμος."<sup>21</sup> Second Timothy 3:16 further connects ἱερὰ γράμματα which "are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim 3:15). At the time Paul pens these words, "the sacred writings" refer to the OT. By no means is a preacher to exclusively preach from the OT. The crux of this thesis depends on the preacher preaching from the NT because the clearest evangelical commands are found in the NT. As a result, an explanation is forthcoming.

The command to "preach the Word" includes the OT and NT. Concerning the "sacred writings" (2 Tim 3:15), Marshall notes, "The reference is purely to the OT Scriptures, although later this and similar phrases were used for the Bible as a whole."<sup>22</sup> Paul's inclusion of the NT is shown in his epistles. For example, Paul quotes Luke 10:7 in 1 Timothy 5:18 and declares Luke's writing ἡ γραφή. Even though Luke's Gospel is not part of the OT, Paul considers it on the same level as the OT. Similarly, Peter declares Paul's epistles are equivalent to "the rest of the Scriptures" (2 Pet 3:15-16). Wallace observes,

Greek *graphē*, here translated 'Scriptures,' occurs 51 times in the NT, and every time it refers to the canonical OT Scripture, and not to any other writings, except that twice (here and 1 Tim. 5:18) some NT writings are also included. This indicates that

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<sup>20</sup>I. Howard Marshall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999), 800.

<sup>21</sup>Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament with Scripture, Subject, and Greek Word Indexes* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 220.

<sup>22</sup>Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 789.

NT books written or authorized by Christ's apostles were recognized, at a very early date, to be God's Word.<sup>23</sup>

Throughout church history and especially today, the twenty-seven books known as the NT are included in the Scriptures. Even if Paul did not specifically state what is now known as the NT, the inferred principle encompasses the OT, as well as the NT.

Consequently, a preacher is commanded to "preach the Word," which will entail the NT mandate to evangelize. Towner supports the idea,

Although it may be artificial to distinguish rigidly between proclamation to the church and to those outside the faith, this language is the sort associated with the Pauline mission to the Gentiles (1:11), which suggests that its scope is not limited solely to the church (4:5). Timothy is stepping into Paul's place in the worldwide mission.<sup>24</sup>

With the subject matter of preaching determined, a preacher must consider how to "preach the Word." Not any type of preaching will do. While the duty is clear, the prescribed way to preach is not. While no biblical writer specifically prescribes how to prepare and/or communicate a sermon, Scripture gives descriptions of sermons and examples of delivery. In Nehemiah 8:8, leaders first read God's Word and then explain its meaning to the crowd. The Levites likely walk among the crowd interpreting the Scriptures, so everyone could understand. The people receive no benefit from the reading if it is not explained to them, so they can apply it. Preaching should include reading a passage of the Bible, as well as explaining and applying it to the hearers.

Moses' preaching is an excellent model. Peter Adam rightly notes that Moses' preaching ministry in Deuteronomy incorporates exposition, application, and exhortation.<sup>25</sup> In Moses' first sermon, he expounds the law (Deut 1:5). His second sermon retells the Ten Commandments, and he concludes with a sermon pertaining to God's covenant. His goal is to explain the law before his death and the conquest of the promised

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<sup>23</sup>Crossway Bibles, *The ESV Study Bible*, 2423.

<sup>24</sup>Towner, *Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 600.

<sup>25</sup>Peter Adam, *Speaking God's Words: A Practical Theology of Preaching* (Vancouver, BC: Regent College Publishing, 1996), 39-40.

land. Preaching should aim to explain the Scripture, just as Moses does in Deuteronomy, but explanation alone is insufficient. Moses applies the law to the congregation before they enter the promised land and urges them to obey, specifically in Deuteronomy 4:1, 6:13, 8:1, and 10:12-13. The preaching ministry of Moses is a worthy model.

In the NT, Peter's first sermon in Acts 2 follows the same model found in Moses' sermons. After the Holy Spirit descends, Peter boldly explains the situation. He quotes Joel 2:28-32 and claims the disciples are fulfilling the prophecy. Next, he seizes the opportunity to expound Jesus. After elevating Christ, Peter pointedly applies the sermon to the Jews by accusing them of crucifying Jesus (Acts 2:36). Being "pierced to the heart" (Acts 2:37), Peter urges them to respond in repentance but does not stop with one appeal. "And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, 'Be saved from this perverse generation!' " (Acts 2:40). Peter, like Moses, explains, applies, and exhorts the audience in his sermon.

Philip is another NT example. In Acts 8, God leads him to an Ethiopian eunuch reading God's Word, and the eunuch requests Philip to explain Isaiah 53:7-8, "Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him" (Acts 8:35). As displayed again with Philip, a preacher must explain the passage so the audience can understand in order to "preach the Word." As is clearly ascertained from the Ethiopian eunuch, people cannot apply what they do not comprehend. Preachers should follow the model of exposition, application, and exhortation to best reflect the biblical pattern. Each aforementioned biblical example points to expository preaching.

**Expository preaching.** Faithful preaching of "the Word" is best accomplished through expository preaching. Mark Dever writes, "The first mark of a healthy church is expositional preaching. It is not only the first mark; it is far and away the most important of them all, because if you get this one right, all of the others should follow. This is the



crucial mark."<sup>26</sup> Greg Heisler is strongly convinced that the Holy Spirit anoints expository preaching. He writes, "The prime reason for wedding the Holy Spirit to a ministry of exposition is that the same Holy Spirit who inspired the biblical text will minister through that same text when it is rightly divided and passionately proclaimed to our contemporary audience."<sup>27</sup> So what makes preaching expository? Is there an agreed upon definition? While unanimity is ideal, a clear definition is unfortunately nonexistent. Since expository preaching is vital to the argument, this thesis warrants a thorough explanation of both preaching and expository.

Preaching must be defined properly before expository. Of the two concepts, preaching is the most widely accepted, and should be set apart by its source from all other forms of communication. Mohler explains, "We should define exactly what we mean when we say 'preach.' What we mean is, very simply, reading the text and explaining it - reproving, rebuking, exhorting, and patiently teaching directly from the text of Scripture. If you are not doing that, then you are not preaching."<sup>28</sup> While the Bible is the source for preaching, the preacher must urge the audience to obey. Otherwise, a preacher delivers a lecture, not a sermon. Adam writes that "preaching depends not only on having a God-given source, the Bible, but also a God-given commission to preach, teach and explain it to people and to encourage and urge them to respond."<sup>29</sup> With a clear call, preaching is explaining God's Word and urging the audience to respond.

Preaching expositionally is an important matter because it describes how a preacher expounds the Word of God. Robinson strongly expresses, "The type of

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<sup>26</sup>Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, expanded ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 39.

<sup>27</sup>Greg Heisler, *Spirit-Led Preaching: The Holy Spirit's Role in Sermon Preparation and Delivery* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007), 22.

<sup>28</sup>R. Albert Mohler, *He Is Not Silent: Preaching in a Postmodern World* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2008), 52.

<sup>29</sup>Adam, *Speaking God's Words*, 37.

preaching that best carries the force of divine authority is expository preaching."<sup>30</sup> If a preacher is to have authority from God while preaching His Word, then expository preaching is the best approach, yet it is not the only approach.

To more clearly understand expository preaching, the three major types of preaching will be explored. First, topical preaching is the method in which the preacher joins together various verses throughout the Bible based on a particular theme. Francis Rossow gives a fitting definition:

I call a sermon 'topical' when the preacher is free to choose a text from the Bible rather than preach on a pericope assigned by the lectionary; when the preacher has an idea and then searches for a biblical text (or texts) treating that idea; even when the preacher writes on an assigned text but feels free to develop the sermon without rigid adherence to the structure of the text and without the compulsion to deal fully with every verse, phrase, or word in that text.<sup>31</sup>

Fabarez rightly gives warning to this type of preaching: "Those who try to preach from multiple texts in the same sermon often end up using the Scriptures to preach their own message. Most preachers will find it safer to make a regular practice of seeking to convey the message of God in one passage per sermon."<sup>32</sup> Fabarez further explains why topical sermons are more difficult to preach faithfully when he writes: "Mastery of both systematic and biblical theology is required to preach multiple texts without violating the integrity of each one."<sup>33</sup> Second, textual preaching is the method in which the preacher selects usually one to three verses and derives a particular subject. Evans provides a reasonable definition: "The textual sermon is one in which the text becomes the theme, and the parts of the text are the divisions of the sermon and are used to suggest the line of thought."<sup>34</sup> Further, a textual sermon resembles a topical sermon if the preacher is not

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<sup>30</sup>Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 20.

<sup>31</sup>Francis C. Rossow, "Topical Preaching," in *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching*, ed. Michael Duduit (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 85.

<sup>32</sup>Fabarez, *Preaching that Changes Lives*, 16.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>J. Ellwood Evans, "Expository Preaching," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 111, no. 441

bound by the text. John Broadus clarifies, "If we simply take the topic and the heads which the passage affords, and proceed to discuss them in our own way, that is not an expository sermon, but a text-sermon."<sup>35</sup> Al Fasol notes that some textual preaching resembles topical preaching, "The textual sermon is an extension of the topical sermon because the textual sermon draws both its topic and its divisions from the text."<sup>36</sup> Third, expository preaching is the method in which the preacher selects a passage of Scripture and seeks to understand, explain, and apply its meaning. While this is not a finished definition, one can eliminate other preaching types. Topical preaching and textual preaching are certainly not expository preaching.

To gain further understanding, one should investigate what expository preaching is *not*. A sermon may be biblical (that which does not contradict Scripture) and biblically sound, but not expository. Additionally, a preacher that stands before the people and explains every verse is not necessarily preaching an expository sermon. Mayhue weighs in: "It is not a commentary running from word to word and verse to verse without unity, outline, and pervasive drive."<sup>37</sup> Also, expository preaching that explains the text without exhorting the congregation to respond cannot be faithful, expository preaching. Mayhue continues, "It is not the ordinary devotional or prayer meeting talk that combines running commentary, rambling remarks, disconnected suggestions, and personal reactions into a semi-inspirational discussion, but lacks the benefit of the basic exegetical-contextual study and persuasive elements."<sup>38</sup> A disjointed sermon that does not aim to

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(1954): 55.

<sup>35</sup>John A. Broadus, *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 5th ed. (Philadelphia: Smith, English & Co., 1873), 309.

<sup>36</sup>Al Fasol, "Textual Preaching," in *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching*, ed. Michael Duduit (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 78.

<sup>37</sup>Richard L. Mayhue, "Rediscovering Expository Preaching," *Master's Seminary Journal* 1 (Fall 1990): 116.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*

expose the meaning of the text and apply it to the hearers is not expository preaching.

On the affirmative, exposition is explaining the passage's meaning. In expository preaching, the passage drives the sermon. Fabarez provides insight, "To preach expositively is to actually *preach* Bible verses. To truly derive our messages from the Bible means that we are going *to the Bible* to find out what we will say. In the end the preacher does not use the Bible to preach his own message; *instead, it is the Bible that uses the preacher to preach its message.*"<sup>39</sup> As generally agreed, an expository sermon must expose the meaning of the passage.

Yet, how does one discern the meaning of the passage? The preacher cannot come to the Bible with a preconceived notion. Greg Sharf writes, "Our task as preachers is not to say whatever comes to mind when studying the Bible but to discern what God had in mind, what he intended, when inspiring the human author to write it, and to show how that intent is relevant for our hearers."<sup>40</sup> An expository sermon must expose the authorial intent through diligent exegesis. Haddon Robinson plainly states, "We try to pull up our chairs to where the biblical authors sat. We attempt to work our way back into the world of the Scriptures to understand the original message."<sup>41</sup> The power of the Holy Spirit comes when the preacher rightly asserts what the Holy Spirit intended through the original author.<sup>42</sup>

In order to reveal accurately the authorial intent, the preacher must diligently study. Robinson writes that an expository sermon must be "derived from and transmitted

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<sup>39</sup>Fabarez, *Preaching that Changes Lives*, 16.

<sup>40</sup>Greg R. Scharf, "God's Letter of Intent," in *The Art & Craft of Biblical Preaching: A Comprehensive Resource for Today's Communicators*, ed. Haddon Robinson and Craig Brian Larson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 230.

<sup>41</sup>Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 25.

<sup>42</sup>Heisler, *Spirit-Led Preaching*, 22. Heisler makes a convincing argument as already noted on p. 2.

through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context."<sup>43</sup> The preacher must consider where the passage is in biblical and world history, as well as where it is in the metanarrative of the Bible. The context, grammar, and genre of the passage must also be taken into account. In other words, a preacher needs to perform careful exegesis in order to discover the meaning of the text, then he should preach the vital parts of his research to expose the true meaning. Fabarez notes, "We must purpose to explain the passage in a way that would evoke from God and the biblical author a comment like, 'That's right – that's what we were talking about!'"<sup>44</sup> Horrendous consequences await if the preacher abuses the author's intended meaning. Fabarez agrees, "Though many intend to base a sermon on a text of Scripture, incompetent handling of the text can lead the preacher to reach unbiblical conclusions and thus waylay his congregants."<sup>45</sup>

The components of diligent exegesis are outlined by David Alan Black. He suggests ten steps of analysis: historical, literary, textual, lexical, syntactical, structural, rhetorical, tradition, theological, and homiletical.

We have seen that the aim of biblical exegesis is to explain what the text meant to its original audience and what it means to hearers today. The primary exegetical principle is that the meaning of the text is the author's intended meaning and not 'what it means to me.' It is within these parameters of authorial intent and grammatical form that faithful biblical interpretation takes place. In short, the basic goal of exegesis must always be to determine as exactly as possible just what the writer meant by the words he wrote.<sup>46</sup>

Determining authorial intent is paramount to developing an expository sermon. William Tolar warns,

To fail to use proper grammatical rules or to ignore those historical contexts is most

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<sup>43</sup>Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 21.

<sup>44</sup>Fabarez, *Preaching that Changes Lives*, 19.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>46</sup>David Alan Black, "Exegesis for the Text-Driven Sermon," in *Text-Driven Preaching: God's Word at the Heart of Every Sermon*, ed. Daniel L. Akin, David L. Allen, and Ned L. Mathews (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 150.

certainly to guarantee failure in understanding the writers' intended meanings. It is a moral imperative for the interpreter to do his or her best to understand the text correctly so as to discover the meaning placed there by the original author. Anything less is intellectually dishonest and spiritually immoral and unworthy of a person of integrity.<sup>47</sup>

A faithful preacher performs rigorous exegesis to determine authorial intent.

But how long must the passage be for an expository sermon? Some preachers are specific in the length of the passage while others are lenient. Walter Kaiser is dogmatic about the length:

An expository sermon is that method of preaching that has as its source at least one paragraph (or strophe) of Biblical text and receives both the shape (its major points) and content of its message from that Biblical text itself. The paragraph (or in poetry the strophe) is the smallest unit of thought, and hence we cannot become any more atomistic than that and still claim an expository stance.<sup>48</sup>

John Stott and Merrill Unger concern themselves less with the length of the passage and focus on the content. Stott writes, "The size of the text is immaterial, so long as it is biblical. What matters is what we do with it."<sup>49</sup> Unger proposes, "The valid criterion, it would seem, is not the length of the portion treated, whether a single verse or a larger unit, but the manner of treatment."<sup>50</sup> In the end, the preacher must handle with care whichever text he chooses. Most pastors may feel comfortable choosing a paragraph or complete thought.

After the preacher determines the size of the passage and the author's intended meaning, he applies the passage to the congregation. If the preacher fails to apply the text, then he has not preached. Expository preaching requires the preacher to reveal the

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<sup>47</sup>William B. Tolar, "The Grammatical-Historical Method," in *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Comprehensive Introduction to Interpreting Scripture*, ed. Bruce Corley, Steve Lemke, and Grant Lovejoy (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 217.

<sup>48</sup>Walter Kaiser, review of *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature*, by Sidney Greidanus, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 34, no. 3 (September 1991): 409.

<sup>49</sup>John Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Preaching Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 126.

<sup>50</sup>Merrill F. Unger, "Expository Preaching," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 111, no. 444 (1954): 332-33.

meaning and apply it to the congregation. Robinson explains the process well: "First, as exegetes, we struggle with the meanings of the biblical writer. Then, as people of God, we wrestle with how God wants to change us. Finally, as preachers, we ponder what God wants to say to the congregation through us."<sup>51</sup> Ramesh Richard vividly writes, "Biblical exposition without application leads to spiritual constipation."<sup>52</sup> Application therefore is an important component to any sermon and the most subjective element in an expository sermon. While exegesis can be verified, application cannot. A preacher has to be careful because exegesis can be misapplied. Robinson said, "More heresy is preached in application than in Bible exegesis."<sup>53</sup> Also, a preacher must know his congregation in order to apply the passage well. Multiple applications may be appropriate, but the most fitting applications serve the congregation best. Therefore, a definition for expository preaching is the method in which a preacher opens God's Word, accurately reveals the original author's intended meaning of the selected passage, applies it to the contemporary audience, and urges the listeners to respond in obedience, all in the power of the Holy Spirit.

With expository preaching defined, the preacher should evaluate the purpose of preaching. Life transformation is the purpose. In 2 Timothy 3:16, Paul grounds preaching in the life-transforming Word which is "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." Paul echoes the same theme in Colossians 1:28-29 where he writes that the purpose of proclamation is "so that we may present every man complete in Christ." If a preacher wants to see life transformation in his people, then he preaches

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<sup>51</sup>Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 27.

<sup>52</sup>Ramesh Richard, *Preparing Expository Sermons: A Seven-Step Method for Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2001), 113.

<sup>53</sup>Haddon Robinson, "The Heresy of Application: An Interview with Haddon Robinson," *Leadership* 18, no. 4 (Fall 1997): 20-27.

the Word. The preacher cannot use the Bible for personal gain, to criticize the congregation, or for any other reason except for building up mature Christians. Paul specifies how to achieve this aim, by preaching Christ, "We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom" (Col 1:28). Again, Paul declares the way is to proclaim Jesus, so true preaching must be Christ-centered preaching. Hence, 2 Timothy 4:2 sums up the main duty of every minister, "preach the Word." Fabarez summarizes the responsibilities of the preacher, "With this appropriately high view of the value and power of Scripture, we can rest in doing our job: to preach expositively, while trusting God to do His: to change lives."<sup>54</sup>

A further argument will be made not only for expository preaching but for systematic exposition. Preaching through whole books or sections of the Bible in a systematic way benefits the health of the local church. Stott contends, "I commend the practice of systematic exposition, that is to say, of working steadily through a book of the Bible or a section of a book, either verse by verse or paragraph by paragraph."<sup>55</sup> Benefits of systematic exposition are numerous. First, it enables the preacher to build on the context and helps the congregation link passages together. Wayne McDill writes,

Preaching an expository series through a book of the Bible has a distinct advantage for your study. You are always aware of the context of the passage. The writer is the same. The circumstances of writing may be the same. The characters and themes may be constant. This kind of preaching is basically text driven. You are allowing the Bible to set the agenda and supply the content. This is expository preaching in its truest sense.<sup>56</sup>

Second, the preacher will find passages more difficult to preach out of context. Third, systematic exposition forces the preacher to preach on perplexing texts. Stott agrees, "The first benefit of this scheme is that it forces us to take passages which we might

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<sup>54</sup>Fabarez, *Preaching that Changes Lives*, 16.

<sup>55</sup>Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 315.

<sup>56</sup>Wayne McDill, *The 12 Essential Skills for Great Preaching*, 2nd ed. (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2006), 18.



otherwise have overlooked, or even deliberately avoided."<sup>57</sup> Fourth, systematic exposition requires less work than other preaching types. To properly preach, every Scripture reference should be placed in context. The study time is more efficient if the preacher systematically preaches through a book of the Bible because he can build on his prior study. Fifth, "Expositional preaching keeps preachers away from ruts and hobby horses."<sup>58</sup> The congregation does not have to ascertain at whom the sermon is aimed. Stott gives a personal example, "If I had suddenly, out of the blue, preached on divorce, church members would inevitably have wondered why."<sup>59</sup> Finally, systematic exposition reveals to the congregation the seriousness of God's Word. The preacher desires to get the meaning of the text correct and accomplishes this through systematic exposition of the Bible.

The utilization of expository preaching has changed over the years. John Broadus preached to a different culture in 1879. He encouraged the congregation at Second Baptist Church in St. Louis to embrace the music portion of the service, as well as the preaching.<sup>60</sup> In late nineteenth-century America, the preaching of the Word was primary and has since faded. The condition of our culture has drastically changed, and Mohler includes a whole chapter in his book *He Is Not Silent* entitled "Preaching as Worship."<sup>61</sup> He defends the primacy of preaching in worship and bemoans the decline: "In far too many churches, the Bible is nearly silent."<sup>62</sup> Preaching and the Bible cease to be the center of worship, and personal experience reigns. Paul warned of the day when

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<sup>57</sup>Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 315.

<sup>58</sup>Mayhue, "Rediscovering Expository Preaching," 126.

<sup>59</sup>Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 316.

<sup>60</sup>John A. Broadus, *Sermons and Addresses*, 7th ed. (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1886), 19-20.

<sup>61</sup>Mohler, *He Is Not Silent*, 23-38.

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*, 37.

people would want to have their ears tickled and turn away from the truth (2 Tim 4:3-4). Peter Adam sums up the current situation: "People prefer a God who does not speak because he makes less clear demands, asks no questions, makes no promises, and threatens no punishments."<sup>63</sup> Especially today in an eroding culture, preachers need to proclaim boldly the Word through expository preaching.

### **Do the Work of an Evangelist**

In 2 Timothy 4:1-5, all commands in verses 2 and 5 are subordinate to "preach the Word."<sup>64</sup> Paul admonishes Timothy to "be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction" (2 Tim 4:2). Paul communicates the struggle of Timothy's mission, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths" (2 Tim 4:3-4). While others neglect God's Word, Timothy is to remain faithful. Due to the troubling days ahead, Paul orders Timothy to "be sober in all things, endure hardship" (2 Tim 4:5) because Timothy will face opposition.

Paul further directs Timothy to "do the work of an evangelist." Likely, Timothy's evangelistic work transpires among those who delight when their ears are tickled by false teachers. Since "do the work of an evangelist" is subordinate to "preach the Word," one must consider it in context. In order to "do the work of an evangelist," one has to "preach the Word." Preaching as a result should be done from the pulpit and outside the pulpit. Therefore, the "work of an evangelist" certainly includes both public preaching and personal evangelism. The perpetuity of the gospel depends on every believer calling the lost to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus. God intends for His

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<sup>63</sup> Adam, *Speaking God's Words*, 23-24.

<sup>64</sup> "Every command that follows in this verse told Timothy how he should proceed about the task of preaching the word." Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 242-43.

kingdom to expand through all believers, not just preachers.

In 2 Timothy, Paul writes to Timothy, a third-generation believer. Timothy's mother, Eunice, and grandmother, Lois, pass the gospel to him (2 Tim 1:5 and 3:14-15). Now, Timothy's job is the same as his mother and grandmother. So what does Paul mean by "do the work of an evangelist"? εὐαγγελιστής is "one who announces the gospel. . . . Though the term εὐαγγελιστής indicates only an individual who 'announces the gospel,' early usage would suggest that this was often a person who went from place to place announcing the good news."<sup>65</sup> Further, the word *evangelist* is rare in the NT, occurring elsewhere only in Ephesians 4:11 and Acts 21:8. In Ephesians 4, *evangelist* occurs alongside offices such as apostles, prophets, pastors, and teachers. Evangelist also describes Philip in Acts 21. At first glance, one may think an evangelist is an office of leadership, but "it was so evidently the duty of every Christian to 'spread the Gospel' that the existence of a special class of 'evangelists' would have seemed otiose."<sup>66</sup> Significantly, Paul does not command Timothy to be an evangelist, nor does he call Timothy an evangelist. Rather, he demands him to "do the work of an evangelist." Timothy therefore must continue to "preach the Word" to unregenerate souls, both publicly and privately.

Knight explains the situation well:

This description of Philip's work together with the inherent significance of the term εὐαγγελιστής shows what the evangelist's task was. Paul wants Timothy to continue to evangelize even though he is working in a more settled situation and is not in a new and unevangelized territory as Philip was. This use of εὐαγγελιστής may indicate that Timothy is the 'evangelist' or 'missionary' for Ephesus and that Paul is encouraging him to continue that work.<sup>67</sup>

Towner writes that Paul's purpose for Timothy is to continue the

ongoing work within the apostle's mission to the Gentiles rather than specifically as work within the Ephesian church in a particular office. However, hard-and-fast distinctions between, for example, evangelism and teaching or between local and

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<sup>65</sup>Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 541.

<sup>66</sup>C. K. Barrett, *The Pastoral Epistles*, The New English Bible (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 117.

<sup>67</sup>Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 457.

itinerant ministries are not safely made, as the orbits of these activities would have overlapped to a significant extent. The safer distinction may be one of audience or intention, and the ministry would have been carried out both within the church (Rom 1:15; cf. 2 Tim 2:24-26) and outside of it (2 Cor 10:16).<sup>68</sup>

Towner deduces Paul's intended meaning, so Timothy's approach to the audience dictates whether he is doing the work of an evangelist or not. No matter the audience, Timothy is to "preach the Word," yet the audience determines how he persuades them, believers to obedience and unbelievers to salvation. Paul means "do the work of an evangelist" by the latter. A pastor must seek to persuade the lost both in his preaching ministry and personal life. He will not effectively lead his congregation to evangelize personally if he is not actively evangelizing the lost. By faithful obedience, Timothy and all pastors are closer to fulfilling their ministry.

### **Fulfill Your Ministry**

Paul's final command is "fulfill your ministry" (2 Tim 4:5), an all-encompassing command. In order for Timothy to fulfill his ministry, he must succeed in all of the preceding commands. The grammatical and lexical analyses indicate that Timothy would not fulfill his ministry if he did not implement all nine commands listed because these commands are in close proximity to "fulfill your ministry."

What does Paul mean by πληροφωρέω? πληροφωρέω means to fulfill or accomplish. It also carries the idea of fully paying back a debt.<sup>69</sup> Knight notes, "The fourth command, τὴν διακονίαν σου πληροφόρησον, functions as a summary exhortation embracing the preceding imperatives and any other aspect of Timothy's ministry."<sup>70</sup> Significantly, Paul "is passionate about the gospel being preached and kept complete and unadulterated for future generations."<sup>71</sup> Phillips illustrates the situation well:

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<sup>68</sup>Towner, *Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 608.

<sup>69</sup>Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 804.

<sup>70</sup>Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 457.

<sup>71</sup>Ho, "Mission in the Pastoral Epistles," 266-67.

It paints a picture of a ship moving along with all sails set. Timothy needed to set his sails and make an all-out effort because there was still a fair wind in Ephesus. A storm might well be coming, but no sails needed to be shortened. Timothy was to keep moving forward, whether under full sail with a favorable wind or with sails furled because of the howling tempest.<sup>72</sup>

Knowing these are some of Paul's last words gives them a gravity because he realizes he is

already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing (2 Tim 4:6-8).

Paul emphasizes the seriousness of the matter. His death is imminent, and he encourages himself with the same thoughts he charges Timothy in verse 1. Both Paul and Timothy will give an account of their ministries, so Paul challenges Timothy with his own life of faithfulness. Paul's command to "do the work of an evangelist" is not exclusive to Timothy or even pastors. God mandates through the NT that all Christians are to do the work of evangelists to fulfill their ministry.

### **NT Command for All Believers to Evangelize Personally**

Evangelism must be an utmost priority of a church in order to be faithful to Jesus and His commission. David Larsen realizes the importance of evangelism:

Our essential argument here is that evangelism so defined must be construed as the chief and uppermost priority in the church and in the lives of all Christians who comprise the church. Evangelism is not simply one of many important things we are to do, but is in fact the first priority in all we do. All else flows from and follows it.<sup>73</sup>

Thomas Lea and Hayne Griffin further the argument, saying,

Although it is true that some Christians have the gift of evangelism more obviously than others, that fact must not discourage active sharing of the gospel by all believers. The Great Commission (Matt 28:19–20) and the example of the Book of Acts make clear that witnessing is not simply a responsibility for ordained leaders but for all believers. No single spiritual obligation is more natural for committed

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<sup>72</sup>Phillips, *Exploring the Pastoral Epistles*, 437.

<sup>73</sup>David L. Larsen, *The Evangelism Mandate: Recovering the Centrality of Gospel Preaching* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1992), 14-15.

believers or more important than the practice of this conviction.<sup>74</sup>

Preachers persuade believers to evangelize through preaching, not guilt. In order for Timothy to fulfill his ministry, he needs to "do the work of an evangelist" *and* lead church members to do the same through his preaching ministry. If the gospel is to continue perpetually, Timothy had to be an evangelist and lead others to do the same. Otherwise the gospel would cease with the disciples Timothy made. Paul cannot desire Timothy to make disciples but Timothy's disciples not to make disciples. If so, the gospel would have discontinued after the first generation of disciples. Therefore, Timothy and pastors are to lead church members in personal evangelism. What Scriptures might a preacher use to promote personal evangelism? The following passages are the most compelling in the NT for leading believers to evangelize.

#### **Matthew 28:18-20**

The last verses Matthew records are momentous. Jesus gathers His eleven apostles and issues "marching orders." Jesus commences with "all authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Matt 28:18). Jesus uses His authority (ἐδόθη is taken as a divine passive)<sup>75</sup> to commission His apostles. "Because of this authority, Jesus has the right to issue his followers their 'marching orders,' but he also has the ability to help them carry out those orders,"<sup>76</sup> Blomberg writes. Jesus gives His apostles a single command, μαθητεύσατε. Even though Jesus is with His eleven apostles, skeptics may say this command was not given to all Christians. Is it possible that Jesus intends the Great Commission to be fulfilled solely by eleven apostles? The answer is in the meaning of μαθητεύσατε as Jesus uses it. One way the apostles "make disciples" is by "teaching them to observe all that I commanded you." Jesus commands them to "make disciples" who

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<sup>74</sup>Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 245-46.

<sup>75</sup>Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 431.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

follow Him and in turn make more disciples who do the same. Thus, the Great Commission extends to every disciple. If not, Christianity would have ceased long ago, yet the opposite is true. Jesus' promise at the end of the Great Commission continues to be fulfilled, "and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt 28:20). Jesus guarantees success to the apostles and all disciples who take the Great Commission seriously.

Another objection could be that the command to "make disciples" only applies to missionaries, based on the phrase "of all the nations." Does Jesus only intend the command to "make disciples" for missionaries? πορευθέντες aids in answering the question. In order to fulfill the command to "make disciples," some believers need to leave their homeland to be a missionary. Blomberg further explains, "but Jesus' main focus remains on the task of all believers to duplicate themselves wherever they may be."<sup>77</sup>

Also, the command to "make disciples" is a lifelong process. The initial step for a new disciple is baptism. If a new disciple says he/she wants to follow Christ but does not follow through in baptism, then he/she has not become a disciple as Jesus intends. Yet, baptism is not the final goal of a disciple. The intense commitment of disciple making is explained by, "teaching them to observe all that I commanded you." An indication of true discipleship occurs when a disciple starts making disciples.

Disciples perpetuate the gospel which is the aim of making disciples. Blomberg notes,

Evangelism must be holistic. If non-Christians are not hearing the gospel and not being challenged to make a decision for Christ, then the church has disobeyed one part of Jesus' commission. If new converts are not faithfully and lovingly nurtured in the whole counsel of God's revelation, then the church has disobeyed the other part.<sup>78</sup>

The end goal of evangelism cannot be conversion or baptism. The end goal of evangelism

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<sup>77</sup>Blomberg, *Matthew*, 431.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., 432.

must be perpetuity. Spurgeon writes,

If you are yourself saved, the work is but half done until you were employed to bring others to Christ. You are as yet but half formed in the image of your Lord. You have not attained to the full development of the Christ-life in you unless you have commenced in some feeble way to tell others of the grace of God; and I trust that you will find no rest to the sole of your foot till you have been the means of leading many to that blessed Saviour who is your confidence and your hope.<sup>79</sup>

A preacher finds preaching implications here. He cannot preach evangelistically and think he fully obeys the commands to "make disciples" or "do the work of an evangelist." He must "balance between evangelistic proclamation and relevant exposition of all parts of God's Word, including the more difficult material best reserved for the mature (cf. 1 Cor 2:1–5 with 2:6–10)."<sup>80</sup> On a personal level, a preacher cannot think his evangelistic responsibility is fulfilled because he preaches an evangelistic sermon because he must also "do the work of an evangelist" outside the pulpit.

The task Jesus imparts to His apostles is impossible, but He promises that He will be with them. In His absence, Jesus explains the Holy Spirit's presence. Matthew ends his gospel with the faithfulness of Jesus even when the faithfulness of His followers is in question. A faithful pastor will preach the mandate for all believers to "make disciples" starting with Matthew and moving to other NT passages.

### **The Great Commission in Other NT Texts**

The Gospels are primary sources for Jesus' teachings. While Matthew records the strongest and clearest rendition of the Great Commission, Mark includes the Great Commission (Mark 16:15). Even though most scholars doubt Mark 16:9-20 is from Mark,<sup>81</sup> early copyists believed the Great Commission was significant enough to add in

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<sup>79</sup>Spurgeon, *The Soul Winner*, 131.

<sup>80</sup>Blomberg, *Matthew*, 432.

<sup>81</sup>R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark*, *The New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 687-88. France concludes, "The almost unanimous conclusion of modern scholarship is that both the Shorter and Longer



the more acceptable ending.

Although Luke 24:45-49 does not present the Great Commission as directly as Matthew, the basic tenets are present. In Luke's account, Jesus promises the apostles will proclaim the gospel but tells them to wait "until you are clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). Clearly, the apostles have an evangelistic mandate from Jesus at the end of Luke, and Acts serves as the evidence that the Great Commission extends to all believers.

In reference to the Great Commission in John 20:21, D. A. Carson writes,

There is sufficient comprehensiveness both here and elsewhere to make Christians aware that they never have an excuse to rest on their laurels, or to define their task too narrowly; perfect obedience to the Son, modelled on Jesus' perfect obedience, is as daunting a challenge as the command to teach others to obey *all* that Jesus has commanded (Mt. 28:20). At the same time, what is central to the Son's mission - that he came as the Father's gift so that those who believe in him might not perish but have eternal life (3:16), experiencing new life as the children of God (1:12-13) and freedom from the slavery of sin because they have been set free by the Son of God (8:34-36) - must never be lost to view as the church defines her mission.<sup>82</sup>

Gerald Borchert agrees that "there is no warrant for assuming that the 'disciples' who were given the peace and likewise commissioned in this story are to be limited to 'ten' (namely, the twelve less Judas and Thomas)."<sup>83</sup> So, the Great Commission in John is not exclusive to the apostles.

Matthew, Luke, and John contain clear teachings for all of Jesus' followers to preach the gospel to unbelievers. Most modern translations contain the addition from a later copyist in Mark promoting the early church to evangelize the lost.

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Endings, in their different ways, represent well-meaning attempts, probably sometime in the second century, to fill the perceived gap left by the 'unfinished' ending at 16:8, in the case of the Longer Ending by drawing eclectically on what had by then become the familiar traditions of the post-apostolic church, and that these endings, particularly the longer, established themselves in general usage so that by the fourth century they appeared in many MSS, though by no means yet all (so Eusebius and Jerome)."

<sup>82</sup>D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 649.

<sup>83</sup>Gerald L. Borchert, *John 12-21*, The New American Commentary, vol. 25B (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2002), 307.

The book of Acts starts with Jesus' final words and moves into the fulfillment of them. Acts 1:8 is significant in the Great Commission and is considered the theme verse of Acts. John Polhill writes, "The geographical scope of Acts 1:8 provides a rough outline of the entire book: Jerusalem (1–7), Judea and Samaria (8–12), the ends of the earth (13–28)."<sup>84</sup> Jesus tells the apostles how they will be successful. Their success is not because of their ingenious strategy or persuasive speech, but because of the power of the Holy Spirit that will come upon them (Acts 1:8). Further, He does not tell them to hurry to the lost and dying world with the gospel, rather He wants them to wait for the power of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, Jesus guarantees "you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). In both parts of Acts 1:8, Polhill notes, "The future tense here has an imperatival sense: 'you *will* [must] receive power'; 'you *will* be my witnesses.'<sup>85</sup> Hence, the Holy Spirit guarantees their success when evangelizing the lost.

In Acts, Luke links preaching and evangelism. The events in Acts 8:1-5 are important when considering whether or not apostles are the only ones to evangelize. In Acts 7:2-53, Stephen essentially preaches the gospel even though Luke does not use a word for "preach." Then because of Stephen's stoning, "a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles" (Acts 8:1). What Luke writes in Acts 8:4 is compelling, "those who had been scattered went about preaching the word." The word "preaching" is not κηρύσσω but εὐαγγελίζω which means "to communicate good news concerning something (in the NT a particular reference to the gospel message about Jesus)."<sup>86</sup> While κηρύσσω and εὐαγγελίζω do not have the same meaning, they are similar. "The referent

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<sup>84</sup>John B. Polhill, *Acts*, The New American Commentary, vol. 26 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 86.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid.

<sup>86</sup>Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 411.

of κηρύσσω (33.256) is essentially similar to that of εὐαγγελίζω (33.215), for both expressions may refer to the content of the gospel."<sup>87</sup> Here is conclusive evidence that the early church did not intend evangelism to be done just by the apostles because the apostles are not included in Acts 8:4. Also, Philip is called an εὐαγγελιστής in Acts 21:8, and he is not an apostle. Although he is chosen to do deacon-type work in Acts 6, the evidence in Acts 8:4, along with that found in Acts 21:8, supports evangelism is not only for the apostles.

Peter reiterates Jesus' command in Acts 10 when he preaches at Cornelius's house. Peter says, "And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead" (Acts 10:42). Notably, Peter uses παρήγγειλεν implying that he takes Jesus' command as an order and not an option. Peter also uses the same language Paul does in 2 Timothy 4:1 showing the gravity of preaching (κηρύσσω is used in Acts 10:42 and 2 Tim 4:2). In totality, the book of Acts begins fulfilling the command to "make disciples of all nations" (Matt 28:19). Larsen expands,

The Great Commission is unavoidably the primary responsibility for the Christian church in this age. The book of Acts narrates the blessing of the outpoured Spirit upon the followers of Christ as they obediently carried out His instructions. The epistles provide theological analysis of the ecclesiological implications of evangelism. And Revelation discloses the final triumph of the gospel.<sup>88</sup>

Ultimately, the NT indicates the Great Commission is a top priority, and a pastor should lead the local church likewise. He will guide the church members to be personal evangelists most effectively through expository preaching.

In 2 Timothy 4:1-5, Paul clearly instructs Timothy to "preach the Word." Preaching is a difficult task both in the days of Timothy as seen in 2 Timothy 4:3-4 and also in the current hostile culture. If a preacher takes the command to "preach the Word"

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<sup>87</sup>Ibid., 416n.

<sup>88</sup>Larsen, *Evangelism Mandate*, 16-17.

seriously, then he must preach the mandates for all believers to evangelize personally. The optimum way a preacher leads his congregation is by preaching expositionally through Acts, which this thesis will explore in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 3

### ESTABLISHING AN EXPOSITORY PREACHING STRATEGY FROM THE BOOK OF ACTS TO LEAD CHURCH MEMBERS TO EVANGELIZE PERSONALLY

#### **Introduction**

The early church experienced extensive growth after Jesus' departure because He is fulfilling His promise from Acts 1:8, "you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." With the power of the promised Holy Spirit, the early church began to fulfill the Great Commission, but Acts is not a complete fulfillment because "the remotest part of the earth" is only beginning to be reached by the end of Acts. John Polhill weighs in:

The ends of the earth are never reached in Acts. The mission goal is never completed. It remains open, yet to be fulfilled. Paul continued bearing his witness in Rome. The abrupt ending of the book is open-ended. There are many 'completed' missions in Acts. Each of Paul's has a sort of closure with his return to Antioch or Jerusalem. But each ending is the starting point for a new beginning. Perhaps that is the missionary message of Acts. The story remains open. There must always be new beginnings. The 'ends of the earth' are still out there to receive the witness to Christ.<sup>1</sup>

Pastors should accentuate Acts 1:8 as a promise of Great Commission success and preach expositionally through Acts in order to strategically lead church members in personal evangelism.

At the beginning of Acts, Jesus instilled the Great Commission to His followers before He ascended to heaven. The Great Commission likely overwhelmed the small band of uneducated and insignificant followers of Jesus. Acts 1:8 and Matthew 29:20 stand as assurances that Jesus fully intended this doubtful group to herald the

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<sup>1</sup>John B. Polhill, *Acts*, The New American Commentary, vol. 26 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 63.

gospel to the ends of the earth. Preaching expositionally through Acts is an effective way for a pastor to lead his congregation to be more faithful, personal witnesses. Vines records, "It is a thrilling and challenging book because it is the account of real people taking seriously the command of Jesus to win others to Christ."<sup>2</sup> The Holy Spirit inspires Acts as an encouragement to witness boldly. Preachers should bolster this idea from the pulpit. As Vines proposes, "Acts provides many wonderful opportunities for evangelistic preaching to the lost, as well as equipping proclamation to believers."<sup>3</sup> In Acts, Luke records the beginning of the Great Commission being fulfilled. Vines contends,

It is thrilling to note that some form of what we can call the Great Commission is found in each of the first five books of the NT (Matt 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-49; John 20:21; Acts 1:8). It seems the Holy Spirit has gone to some length to impress upon Christians the urgency of winning others to Jesus. This certainly indicates to us that personal soul-winning must be the priority item of every church and every individual Christian.<sup>4</sup>

The book of Acts only begins the fulfillment of the Great Commission which is ongoing until Jesus' return.

This chapter will draw upon key passages from the book of Acts in order to establish an expository preaching strategy designed to lead a congregation to evangelize personally. In considering Acts, a few clarifications are essential. First, Acts is a transitional book within the NT. Apart from the issue of signs and wonders, the fulfillment of the Great Commission is normative and will be the concentration of this chapter. Jesus promises the apostles will "receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you" in order to be witnesses. Ultimately, the Holy Spirit enables the apostles to be effective witnesses. As a hermeneutical approach, the normative and evangelistic elements of Acts which are expected for believers of all time to fulfill the Great

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<sup>2</sup>Jerry Vines, "Evangelist Preaching and the Book of Acts," *Criswell Theological Review* 5, no.1 (1990): 83.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 84.

Commission will be the main consideration for this chapter because, as Marshall insists, "The main story-line in Acts is concerned with the spread of this [gospel] message."<sup>5</sup> As demonstrated in Acts, the evangelists urge people to respond to the gospel. According to Larkin, "It is the word of God, the gospel message, to which persons must respond in faith. When they come to saving faith in response to signs and miracles, Luke usually notes that preaching of the word was also present."<sup>6</sup> Luke explains the miracles support the gospel message as found with Paul and Barnabas in Acts 14:3, "Therefore they spent a long time there speaking boldly with reliance upon the Lord, who was testifying to the word of His grace, granting that signs and wonders be done by their hands." Larsen explains,

The Great Commission is unavoidably the primary responsibility for the Christian church in this age. The book of Acts narrates the blessing of the outpoured Spirit upon the followers of Christ as they obediently carried out His instructions.<sup>7</sup>

Second, preachers need to accentuate the Great Commission elements in order to lead their church members to be personal witnesses. Vines agrees, "Acts is intended to make us personal witnesses."<sup>8</sup> The focus of this chapter will be how a pastor should preach the evangelistic elements of Acts to lead believers toward personal evangelism. Since a pastor does not have authority over all believers, the emphasis will be him leading the believers in his care which are church members.

Each following section will be categorized to cover broad principles for leading believers in personal evangelism. Within each section, an exegesis of important passages will follow in support of the broad principle. When a pastor comes to these

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<sup>5</sup>I. Howard Marshall, *Acts*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 5 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 26.

<sup>6</sup>William J. Larkin Jr., *Acts*, IVP New Testament Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1995) 26-27.

<sup>7</sup>David L. Larsen, *The Evangelism Mandate: Recovering the Centrality of Gospel Preaching* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1992), 16.

<sup>8</sup>Vines, "Evangelist Preaching and the Book of Acts," 83.

passages in preaching expositionally through Acts, he should consider calling attention to the following key points in his sermons. The key points of exegesis will highlight the early church's effectiveness in evangelism, and the preacher should promote church members to recognize the efficacy of the early church. In the rest of this chapter, suggestions will be made how a pastor could preach passages expositionally in Acts to lead church members in personal evangelism.

### **Preach the Promise That All Christians Are Witnesses**

After Jesus ascended and left His disciples, He ensured the success of the infant church. Jesus' commands to His apostles then pertain to all modern-day followers as well. A pastor must ground all future sermons of Acts in the first few verses with special attention given to theme verse of the book (Acts 1:8).

#### **Acts 1:1-11**

As Luke continues his account to Theophilus in Acts, he carefully resumes where he leaves off in his Gospel account. While Jesus declared it is written that "repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47) and that His disciples would be the vehicle for the proclamation, He commanded them to stay in Jerusalem until they were "clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). The specifics of this power are not given in detail until Acts 1.

Even though Jesus physically left the earth in Acts 1, He builds His church as promised. Luke writes "about all that Jesus began to do and teach" (Acts 1:1) with the idea that Jesus is the one continuing and guaranteeing the work. In essence, the book of Luke describes where Jesus "began," and the book of Acts is where He continues. From Acts 1:1 Polhill observes, "The work and words of Jesus continue throughout Acts in the ministry of the apostles and other faithful Christian witnesses. It still goes on in the work



of the church today."<sup>9</sup> Thus, Acts is not where Jesus left His disciples alone but actively fulfilled all His promises through them, and He still prevails today.

Luke goes to great lengths in Acts 1:3 to highlight that these apostles whom Jesus chose are all eyewitnesses of Jesus' resurrection. Later in Acts 1:21-22, Peter asserted Judas Iscariot's replacement must be an eyewitness. "The foundation witnesses," as Stott asserts, "had to be eyewitnesses. Judas' successor, Peter said, had to be someone who had been with the Twelve 'the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us' (1:21-22). And in particular he must be 'a witness with us of his resurrection' (1:22, cf. 10:41)."<sup>10</sup> The apostles were eyewitnesses willing to die for the truth they had seen. A pastor should capitalize on the reality that the apostles were persecuted and killed for following Jesus. They likely would not face such trials if they had not been eyewitnesses. Peter and John said, "We cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). A pastor can confidently proclaim the veracity of the gospel based on the apostles' account.

In one final exhortation, Jesus instructed the apostles to wait in Jerusalem until they were "baptized with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:5). After forty days of Jesus "speaking of things concerning the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3), the apostles still did not understand because they believed Jesus was "restoring the kingdom to Israel" (Acts 1:6). Jesus planned to build His kingdom through them. Stott captures the scene well:

Although they were not to know the times or dates, what they should know was that they would receive power so that, between the Spirit's coming and the Son's coming again, they were to be his witnesses in ever-widening circles. In fact, the whole interim period between Pentecost and the Parousia (however long or short) is to be filled with the world-wide mission of the church in the power of the Spirit. Christ's followers were both to announce what he had achieved at his first coming and to summon people to repent and believe in preparation for his second coming. They were to be his witnesses 'to the ends of the earth' (1:8) and 'to the very end of the

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<sup>9</sup>Polhill, *Acts*, 79-80.

<sup>10</sup>John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Acts: The Spirit, the Church and the World*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 35.

age.<sup>11</sup>

Jesus directed the apostles away from kingdom restoration towards His purpose of building a world-wide church.

In Acts 1:8, Jesus issued two promises that would accomplish His purpose. First, He assured the apostles, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you." Ten days later, Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit came in dramatic fashion during the celebration of Pentecost, and the rest of Acts displays how gospel preaching will be powerful. Bruce concludes, "The δύναμις is that supernatural power, imparted by the Holy Spirit, through which mighty works (δυνάμεις) were wrought and the preaching made effective."<sup>12</sup> Second, Jesus promised, "You shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

Larkin concludes,

The mandate, expressed with a future-tense verb (will be), can be taken as both a command and a prophetic promise. Luke may well have intended that it be understood in both ways. Not only does he show the church obediently carrying out this mandate, but he also shows how God intervenes at strategic points to give impetus and direction for taking the mission across another cultural threshold or into another geographical region. God in his grace makes sure the mandate is completely fulfilled.<sup>13</sup>

The remainder of Acts manifests the fulfillment of Jesus' promises. His disciples began in Jerusalem (Acts 1-5), moved outward to Judea and Samaria (Acts 6-8), and commenced reaching the ends of the earth (Acts 13-28). Acts abruptly stops, implying the fulfillment has only begun.

A pastor should highlight that Jesus is still building His church. Jesus began His church with "the apostles whom He had chosen" (Acts 1:2). They were not superhuman or significant in themselves but were empowered by Jesus through the Holy

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<sup>11</sup>Stott, *The Message of Acts*, 44.

<sup>12</sup>F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary*, 3rd rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 103.

<sup>13</sup>Larkin, *Acts*, 41.

Spirit to succeed in the Great Commission. Jesus did not have an elite squadron of disciples; they were quite the opposite. That is why Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit's power was monumental. Jesus guaranteed a group unable to fulfill the Great Commission in their own power would be "clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49) and "baptized with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:5) after a waiting period. Gempf stresses, "Their need to wait is no more binding on later Christians than the command to receive the Spirit in Jerusalem."<sup>14</sup> Christians no longer wait for the Holy Spirit's power because the Holy Spirit indwells them. The two-fold promise in Acts 1:8 indicates the fulfillment of the Great Commission is not in the power of the disciples but in the power and authority of Jesus. The same Jesus who called His apostles empowers all believers to be effective witnesses through His Holy Spirit. A pastor would be amiss to neglect the power Jesus gives through the Holy Spirit to accomplish an impossible mission.

Because of the promised power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus' disciples became witnesses. The order is precise because the disciples could not be witnesses without the power of the Holy Spirit. Stott captures,

Just as the Spirit came upon Jesus to equip him for his public ministry, so now the Spirit was to come upon his people to equip them for theirs. The Holy Spirit would not only apply to them the salvation which Jesus had achieved by his death and resurrection but would impel them to proclaim throughout the world the good news of this salvation. Salvation is given to be shared.<sup>15</sup>

Jesus therefore equips His followers to be successful witnesses by the power of the Holy Spirit. A narrow understanding of "witness" only refers to eyewitnesses of Jesus' ministry, death, burial, and resurrection. In Acts, Luke expands "witness" to encompass those who bear the faithful testimony of Jesus. Polhill weighs in, "The word 'witness' came in the later church to have just that connotation: a true witness is one who carries

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<sup>14</sup>Conrad Gempf, "Acts," in *New Bible Commentary*, 4th ed., ed. D. A. Carson et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 1070.

<sup>15</sup>Stott, *The Message of Acts*, 39.

his or her testimony to the death."<sup>16</sup> Jesus promised His disciples would be witnesses "even to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8), and His pledge is just as applicable to modern-day believers as it was to His apostles. Thus, a pastor must apply the command-promises of Acts 1:8 to church members. He should proclaim that Jesus promises the Holy Spirit will bring power for believers to be effective witnesses all over the world. Vines concludes, "Being a Christian never makes one's world smaller; it makes it larger."<sup>17</sup> Jesus' promise overcomes all fears and excuses concerning personal evangelism because the Holy Spirit emboldens believers to be effective witnesses. Believers evangelize in the Holy Spirit's power, not their own. This truth must be proclaimed from the pulpit.

In Acts 1:9-11, Jesus ascended to His heavenly throne, and one may conclude that Jesus abandoned the early church. He actually headed to the command post in heaven at the right hand of the Father and sent the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:33). While Jesus was on the earth, He was limited spatially, but now the Holy Spirit is unlimited. Jesus promised He would send the Holy Spirit (John 16:7), and as the rest of Acts reveals, His departure was advantageous. After Jesus left the disciples' sight, they gazed into the sky. Stott makes an interesting observation:

The angels implied, until Christ comes again, the apostles must get on with their witness, for that was their mandate. There was something fundamentally anomalous about their gazing up into the sky when they had been commissioned to go to the ends of the earth. It was the earth not the sky which was to be their preoccupation. Their calling was to be witnesses not stargazers. The vision they were to cultivate was not upwards in nostalgia to the heaven which had received Jesus, but outwards in compassion to a lost world which needed him. It is the same for us.<sup>18</sup>

As one detects in Acts, God used the unlikely disciples to radically change the world. Polhill suggests, "The story of Acts can perhaps be summarized in the single

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<sup>16</sup>Polhill, *Acts*, 69.

<sup>17</sup>Vines, "Evangelist Preaching and the Book of Acts," 83.

<sup>18</sup>Stott, *The Message of Acts*, 50-51.

phrase 'the triumph of the gospel.' It is a triumphant story of how the early Christian community in the power of the Spirit saturated their world with the message of God's salvation in Jesus Christ."<sup>19</sup> Through the book of Acts, God

speaks to us when discouraged, reminding us that all time is in God's hands, reassuring us of the reality of his Spirit in our lives and witness. It challenges us to open our hearts to the power of the Spirit that we might be faithful witnesses to the word and come to experience anew its triumph in our own time.<sup>20</sup>

Stott gives a notable reminder:

We need especially to remember that between the ascension and the Parousia, the disappearance and the reappearance of Jesus, there stretches a period of unknown length which is to be filled with the church's worldwide, Spirit-empowered witness to him. We need to hear the implied message of the angels: 'You have seen him go. You will see him come. But between that going and coming there must be another. The Spirit must come, and you must go – into the world for Christ.'<sup>21</sup>

A preacher therefore must apply Jesus' promises to all believers. He can do this by emphasizing the theme verse of Acts 1:8 and how the totality of the book shows Jesus' followers fulfilling His promise. The early church grew because the Holy Spirit empowered the believers to be witnesses, not because they had an impeccable strategy. A pastor then should encourage church members to be personal witnesses in the power of the Holy Spirit. He must anchor the evangelism mandate in the promises of Acts 1:8 and will want to show the promise of effective evangelism (Acts 1:8b) is an outpouring of the promised power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8a). In the end, the preacher must preach Jesus' promise that all believers are witnesses.

### **Preach That Christians Are to Be Prepared**

In Acts 1:12-14, one finds an example of preparation through prayer, and a pastor should encourage church members to pray before personal evangelism. Prayer should be a priority for personal evangelism because the Holy Spirit opens hearts (John

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<sup>19</sup>Polhill, *Acts*, 71.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>21</sup>Stott, *The Message of Acts*, 51.

3:5; Titus 3:5-6) and makes the Great Commission possible (Acts 1:8), hence a pastor should lead church members to pray in preparation for personal evangelism. Power comes through the Holy Spirit, and believers draw on that power through prayer. So a preacher should lead church members to prepare for personal evangelism through prayer, benefiting from the promise of the Holy Spirit's empowerment.

In Acts 3:1-10, one discovers an alertness to personal evangelism because Peter and John were presented with a divine appointment to evangelize. If they would not have been attentive, then they would have missed the evangelism opportunity and many more that ensued. Following the example of Peter and John, a preacher will wisely preach Acts 3:1-10 in such a way to encourage church members to be watchful for personal evangelism in their daily routines.

#### **Acts 1:12-14**

After Jesus ascended, the disciples returned to Jerusalem in order to obey Jesus' command "not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised" (Acts 1:4). Jesus did not command the early church to pray but only to wait. Yet, the 120 disciples utilized the waiting time to pray (Acts 1:14). Modern Christians should learn an important principle, as Oswald Chambers says, "Prayer does not equip us for greater works-prayer is the greater work."<sup>22</sup> The early church prioritized prayer; conversely, the modern church diminishes prayer. The early church did not receive the Holy Spirit and cease praying, instead they continually focused on prayer (cf. 1:24; 2:42; 3:1; 4:24; 6:6). Stott makes a striking observation, "We learn, therefore, that God's promises do not render prayer superfluous. On the contrary, it is only his promises which give us the warrant to pray and the confidence that he will hear and answer."<sup>23</sup> Gregory Frizzell

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<sup>22</sup>Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*, rev. ed., ed. James Reimann (London: Discovery House Publishers, 1992), entry for October 17.

<sup>23</sup>Stott, *The Message of Acts*, 54.

captures the consequence of the modern church's lack of prayer:

Where there is little prayer, there is little power. Conversely, where there is much prayer, there is much power. Unfortunately, many people are excellent organizers, good promoters, and brilliant strategists, but few are powerful prayer warriors. Thus in effect, we have totally reversed the practice and priority of the early church. We do everything else far more than we pray, while the New Testament church prayed far more than they did anything else! Consequently, the early church rapidly evangelized their world, while our baptism ratios have been in an alarming fifty year decline.<sup>24</sup>

Prayer is powerful, but prayer is costly. Paul Miller expresses, "Every minute spent in prayer is one less minute where you can be doing something 'productive.' So the act of praying means that you have to rely more on God."<sup>25</sup> The early church knew their dependence on the Lord and relied solely on Him. Miller concurs, "A needy heart is a praying heart. Dependency is the heartbeat of prayer."<sup>26</sup> The modern church is just as dependent as the early church, even though it may not recognize it. Chapell observes, "The Holy Spirit takes the prayers of weak, unwise, fallible humans and transforms them into the pistons of the heavenly engines that drive the material and spiritual universe so that all things work together for good."<sup>27</sup>

A pastor does well to preach the priority of prayer found in Acts 1:12-14. He should encourage believers who have never shared the gospel to pray Jesus' promises in Acts 1:8. Pray for the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8a) to be effective witnesses (Acts 1:8b). Believers who feel they do not have the ability to witness could be shown the early church's lack of training, knowledge, and experience. Despite the early disciples' adversities, the Holy Spirit overcame them all. Through prayer, the early church

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<sup>24</sup>Gregory R. Frizzell, *How to Develop a Powerful Prayer Life: The Biblical Path to Holiness and Relationship with God* (Memphis, TN: Bethany Press International, 1999), 4.

<sup>25</sup>Paul E. Miller, *A Praying Life: Connecting with God in a Distracting World* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2009), 49.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>27</sup>Bryan Chapell, *Praying Backwards: Transform Your Prayer Life by Beginning in Jesus' Name* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), 74-75.

continued to lean on the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome any obstacle. Prayer is the primary way a believer prepares to evangelize personally. What was true in the early church is still true today. "There is no effective witness without the Spirit, and the way to spiritual empowerment is to wait in prayer,"<sup>28</sup> Polhill concludes.

While the Holy Spirit indwells every Christian, many lack His power. "Being filled with the Spirit means more than being indwelt by Him. It is possible for the Holy Spirit to be present in the life without being president!"<sup>29</sup> Personal evangelism will be more powerful if church members pray for the power of the Holy Spirit. Church members can go forth with the gospel yet return with no results if done solely with man's power. The preacher should point to the early church who prayed that the Lord would "grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence" (Acts 4:29). He could then show how God answered their prayer because "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness" (Acts 4:31). Upholding the NT model, may preachers lead church members to become desperate and plea for the Holy Spirit to save lost souls through their personal witness, even in ordinary, everyday life.

### **Acts 3:1-10**

In Acts 3:1-10, Peter and John sought to be witnesses in their normal routine. They "were going up to the temple at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer" (Acts 3:1). The ninth hour was "the time of the evening *Tamid*, one of the two sacrifices held daily in the temple."<sup>30</sup> Large groups assembled at the temple for sacrifices, so Peter and John went to pray and were ready to witness. When preaching Acts 3, a preacher should highlight the mission-mindedness of Peter and John. While their motive to witness is implied, the

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<sup>28</sup>Polhill, *Acts*, 90.

<sup>29</sup>Stephen F. Olford with David L. Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 216.

<sup>30</sup>Polhill, *Acts*, 125.



remainder of the account seems to indicate their desire to witness. Church members who desire to witness long to meet lost people in order to witness. Mission-minded church members also see people with a potential future in Christ as their brother or sister, and not a person's current and unpleasant condition.<sup>31</sup> The setting indicates Peter and John were poised to be witnesses for Jesus.

In Acts 3:2, Luke introduces the lame man, and much like Peter and John Luke describes his normal routine. He was brought to his usual place "in order to beg alms of those who were entering the temple" (Acts 3:2). The lame man was over forty years old (Acts 4:22) and had been lame since birth (Acts 3:2), rendering him a burden to his caretakers who carried him to the temple every day. Being lame, he could not enter the temple proper, so he begged in the court of the Gentiles at the entrance to the sanctuary. While all three men were at the temple, the lame man's motive differed from Peter and John. The lame man likely desired to be at the temple for the ninth hour because he had more people in which to ask alms. Further, the people came to worship at that hour were more likely to donate. Polhill explains that

the rabbis taught that there were three pillars for the Jewish faith—the Torah, worship, and the showing of kindness, or charity. Almsgiving was one of the main ways to show kindness and was thus considered a major expression of one's devotion to God. With their minds set on worship, those who entered the temple for the evening sacrifice and prayer would be particularly disposed to practice their piety by generously giving alms to a lame beggar.<sup>32</sup>

Thus, all three men were in their ordinary routines, yet each had his own motive for attending the temple at the ninth hour. Just as Peter and John evangelized in their everyday practice, the narrative opens the opportunity for a pastor to emphasize how many chances to evangelize arise in common routines such as a husband with his wife, a parent with children over homework, a neighbor talking about gardening, an

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<sup>31</sup>Susie Rain, "13 Things Mission-Minded People Do Differently that Sets Them Apart," accessed October 3, 2015, <http://stories.imb.org/asia/stories/view/13-things-mission-minded-people-do-differently?cid=95916&cid=82836>.

<sup>32</sup>Polhill, *Acts*, 126.

acquaintance at the post office, or a coworker during lunch. As the encounter exhibits, Peter and John were eager to bear witness.

Most Jews likely passed over the lame beggar and doubtedly made eye contact. At best, they may have tossed a coin in his direction but would not have engaged him. Peter, unlike his fellow Jews, "fixed his gaze on him and said, 'Look at us!' " (Acts 3:4). Nothing thus far is supernatural. The lame man was in his familiar place, and Peter and John were on their way to worship as usual. What happened next is supernatural.

The lame man who had never walked was instantaneously healed "in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene" (Acts 3:6). The healing of the lame man is meaningful because it points to the spiritual healing within every new Christian. The lame man was as close as he ever could be to the temple because of his defect (Lev 21:16-18). Only by the healing power of Jesus, not Peter, the lame man "entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God" (Acts 3:8). Polhill observes,

For the first time he was deemed worthy to enter the house of worship. This theme will repeat itself in Acts. Those who were rejected as unworthy for worship in the old religion of Israel found full acceptance in the name of Jesus, whether a lame beggar, an Ethiopian eunuch, a woman, or a Gentile.<sup>33</sup>

Also of note, Luke elicits a rare word (*hallomai*) to describe the man's leaping. As the evidence indicates, Luke intends the reader to connect *hallomai* from Acts 3:8 to the Messianic age described in Isaiah 35:6: "the lame will leap like a deer."<sup>34</sup> Only the healing power of Jesus enabled the lame man to leap, and only the saving power of Jesus prepares anyone for the presence of God.

When preaching Acts 3:1-10, a pastor should encourage church members to meet not only physical needs but the underlying spiritual need of salvation. If someone hungers for food, should a Christian just provide a meal? If someone desires gasoline, should a Christian just furnish money for gasoline? Food and money will perish. Peter

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<sup>33</sup>Polhill, *Acts*, 128.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*

did not offer money to the lame man, rather he offered him Jesus who miraculously healed him and enabled him to enter the temple. Conversely, church members who only offer temporary help without eternal salvation, rob God of glory. Only Jesus saves, and when He does, people notice. Luke writes, "They were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him" (Acts 3:10). Even though the lame man was miraculously healed, the same miraculous transformation happens for every sinner who trusts Jesus, and God is glorified.

Peter's faithfulness to share Jesus changed the trajectory of the following events. Gempf observes, "In this unusually long narrative, one thing seems inevitably to lead to another. A happy and innocent beginning of a healing understandably attracted a crowd to whom Peter felt obliged to explain the event, and he did so evangelistically."<sup>35</sup> God used the lame man's salvation to providentially introduce more opportunities for Peter and John to witness.

When the people gathered "full of amazement" (Acts 3:11), Peter seized the moment to preach Jesus and informed the onlookers that the man was saved "on the basis of faith in His name" (Acts 3:16). Peter also accepted the occasion to be a witness before the religious rulers (Acts 4:5-12). He boldly declared, "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). After being released, Peter and John welcomed the opportunity to encourage fellow believers with a report (Acts 4:23).

God can sovereignly accomplish His plan however He desires, but here He chose Peter and John's faithful witness to create a "domino effect." What would have happened if Peter was not prepared to witness and had not seized the divine opportunity? Humanly speaking, the lame man would not be saved, no other opportunities would have come to pass, the number of believers would not be near five thousand (Acts 4:4), some

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<sup>35</sup>Gempf, "Acts," 1072.

of the priests may not believe (6:7), the disciples would have no adversity from religious leaders to draw them together (4:31-32), and the disciples would not find themselves in a place of discomfort for the Comforter to console (4:29-31). Thus, preachers do well to exhibit how faithfulness to witness could, by God's gracious plan, generate more opportunities to witness. Through his expository preaching ministry a pastor should encourage church members always to be prepared to witness.

### **Preach That Christians Are to Be Willing to Suffer and Face Opposition**

Jesus promised that His followers have power from the Holy Spirit to witness, but He never guaranteed the journey would be innocuous. Starting with the early church, Christians have endured persecution yet have continually fulfilled Jesus' promise to be witnesses. The more Christians press forward in the face of opposition, the more Jesus' promises of power and effectiveness hold true as demonstrated in Acts. Jesus' words ring true, "Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matt 5:11-12).

In Acts 5:12-42, the apostles faced opposition from the religious establishment but persisted to witness. Nothing dissuaded the apostles, and they even welcomed persecution, "rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name" (Acts 5:41). A pastor should exhort church members to embrace the example set forth by the apostles. Later in Acts 8:1-13, Philip preached the gospel in spite of opposition from Simon the magician. A pastor should implore church members to persevere as witnesses when opposition arises. He should also remind church members that Satan resists the expansion of God's kingdom, and they should not be surprised if he attacks. Pastors therefore should lead church members to accept, not shun, suffering and/or persecution when witnessing through his expository preaching ministry.

## Acts 5:12-42

In Acts 5:12-42, Luke establishes a precedent for Christians to endure suffering for the spread of the gospel. As Stott observes, "Luke is about to record the second wave of persecution by which the devil attempted to annihilate the church."<sup>36</sup> The first wave was in Acts 4, and the second was in Acts 5 with both originating from the religious leaders. Again, Jesus proved Satan's attacks only accomplish His purpose in building His church. Jesus started building His church through the apostles and continues through Christians.

Just as the Holy Spirit displayed power in Acts 4:31 and 4:33, His power was further evidenced through "the apostles many signs and wonders" (Acts 5:12). At this point, all who heard about the Holy Spirit's power and judgment (Acts 5:1-11) had to count the cost of following Jesus. Gempf asserts, "No one dared publicly listen unless they were willing to take the bigger step and actually join the believers."<sup>37</sup> Many people held the apostles "in high esteem" but did not dare associate with them. Polhill captures the decision well:

The power of the miracles attracts. The awesome power of the Spirit that judges also demands commitment and responsibility. Before that power the crowd kept its distance with healthy respect, unless they were willing to fully submit to that power and make a commitment. Many did, Luke said, making it clear this time that men and women became disciples and were added to the growing community of believers (v. 14).<sup>38</sup>

The same dilemma is presented to all who hear about Jesus, either to follow closely or not at all because following at a distance is not an option. If one wants to follow Jesus closely, then he/she must count the cost. Stott claims, "This paradoxical situation has often recurred since then. The presence of the living God, whether manifest through preaching or miracles or both, is alarming to some and appealing to others. Some

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<sup>36</sup>Stott, *The Message of Acts*, 112.

<sup>37</sup>Gempf, "Acts," 1075.

<sup>38</sup>Polhill, *Acts*, 163-64.

are frightened away, while others are drawn to faith."<sup>39</sup> As Luke records in Acts 5:17-42, those who commit to follow Jesus ought to be ready for suffering and persecution. Followers of Jesus should not think of the Christian life as just a heavenly destination, rather they should view the Christian life as a journey. When bringing glory to Jesus is the goal of life, even persecution and suffering can be embraced as God's perfect will. Jesus forewarned the apostles that they would share in His sufferings (John 15:18-25), and they now perceived Jesus' words to be true. In the same way the world hated Jesus, His followers should expect the same rejection.

As the account in Acts continues, the conflict intensified between the Christians and the religious establishment. In Acts 4, only Peter and John are persecuted and released with a warning. By the end of Acts 5, the conflict became worse and included more followers of Jesus due to the increasing popularity of Christianity, and the high priest and his associates, the Sadducees, "were filled with jealousy" (Acts 5:17). Polhill submits ζήλος which is translated "jealousy" can also mean "zeal."<sup>40</sup> With "zeal" as the interpretation, the religious leaders resolved to eliminate the growing Christian movement. They made a spectacle out of the apostles by putting them in a public jail, but God transformed the apostles' public shame into a display of His glory. Miraculously, "An angel of the Lord opened the gates of the prison" and announced, "Go, stand and speak to the people in the temple the whole message of this Life" (Acts 5:20). The apostles had already counted the cost, so they unswervingly obeyed God's command through the angel. Polhill believes, "They returned to the very spot where they had been arrested, preaching the same words of life for which they were arrested."<sup>41</sup> In an unexpected twist, the religious leaders who seemed to have full control were helpless, not

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<sup>39</sup>Stott, *The Message of Acts*, 112-13.

<sup>40</sup>Polhill, *Acts*, 165.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, 166.

the small sect of Jesus' followers.

Soon after, the religious leaders' first order of business was to question the apostles, but to their dismay no prisoners were found. Not only were the apostles missing from the public jail, they were publicly "standing in the temple and teaching the people" (Acts 5:25). Satan endeavored to thwart God's plan, but Jesus ceaselessly grew the infant church. Polhill comments,

The Sanhedrin was totally thwarted in its designs, totally helpless to control the situation. All was in God's hands. The only reason the apostles finally appeared before the Council was their own willingness to do so. And they were willing to do so because the events of the night had convinced them once more that they were very much in God's hands.<sup>42</sup>

No matter how hard the religious leaders and Satan tried to contain the apostles, Jesus continually built His church. A preacher who echoes this truth will assure church members of Jesus' dominance over Satan. The situation clearly was out of the religious leaders' hands, and Peter and the apostles seized the divine opportunity to witness. While the high priest reissued the command to stop teaching about Jesus, Peter again preached concerning obedience to God (Acts 5:29-32). Peter's purpose should be the same as every Christian, "to demonstrate that Christ is indeed the risen Savior and to urge repentance and commitment to his name."<sup>43</sup> In summary, "Peter was issuing an invitation to the Sanhedrin. They had indeed sinned in hanging Jesus on the cross, but there is forgiveness and salvation for Israel in him."<sup>44</sup> How inconceivable that Peter urged his accusers to follow the same Jesus he followed. Jesus promised the Holy Spirit would give His followers the words to say when arrested (Mark 13:11), and Peter proved Jesus' promise to be true. May pastors encourage church members that the Holy Spirit can allow them to be bold witnesses despite opposition.

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<sup>42</sup>Polhill, *Acts*, 167.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, 170.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*

The religious leaders poised themselves to kill the apostles until Gamaliel halted the execution. He presumed the apostles were not from God and would fizzle like the rebellions of Theudas and Judas of Galilee.<sup>45</sup> He recommended flogging and sending the apostles away to die out as an unruly sect. Polhill vividly describes their flogging: "With bared chest and in a kneeling position, one was beaten with a tripled strap of calf hide across both chest and back, two on the back for each stripe across the chest. Men were known to have died from the ordeal."<sup>46</sup> Despite the torture, the apostles were "rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name" (Acts 5:41). "In a society where honor and shame were so important, the irony of this statement ('worthy to be dishonored') would have been striking," Culy and Parsons deduce.<sup>47</sup> Being a witness is a pursuit to make Jesus famous. Christians should not be scared in sharing the gospel especially if the apostles were not afraid to be beaten for Jesus, and pastors need to embolden church members with the example of the apostles. Part of the apostles' effectiveness may have been based on their willingness to suffer. The apostle Paul writes in 2 Timothy 3:12 that anyone desiring to live a godly life is guaranteed persecution, and he also writes in Philippians 1:29-30 that suffering is to be valued. Everyone that encounters Jesus must decide how close they will follow. Will they follow close enough to be persecuted? If so, will they embrace the persecution as a witness and bring God glory? Stott assures, "Persecution will refine the church, but not destroy it. If it leads to prayer and praise, to an acknowledgment of the sovereignty of God and of solidarity with Christ in his sufferings, then—however painful—it may even be welcome."<sup>48</sup> A pastor who exemplifies the apostles' example to embrace suffering for the sake of the gospel does

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<sup>45</sup>Gempf, "Acts," 1076. Gempf agrees.

<sup>46</sup>Polhill, *Acts*, 174.

<sup>47</sup>Martin M. Culy and Mikeal C. Parsons, *Acts: A Handbook On the Greek Text* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2003), 106.

<sup>48</sup>Stott, *The Message of Acts*, 119.



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### **Acts 8:1-13**

Even though God uses persecution for His purposes, the infant church did not stand still while attacked. After the death of Stephen and heated persecution by Saul, the disciples of the early church "were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles" (Acts 8:1). Persecution is one way Jesus dispersed most of His followers except the apostles. The apostles witnessed in Jerusalem, and now the witnesses expanded to other disciples of Jesus.

In Acts 8:4, "Those who had been scattered went about preaching the word." Gempf asserts, "Persecution, rather than deliberate policy, was the reason for the first real missionary thrust in the church."<sup>49</sup> As great persecution scattered almost all the disciples, Philip emerged as a witness fulfilling the Great Commission. Philip was recognized as a man "of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom" (Acts 6:3), yet he was not an apostle or part of an elite squadron of evangelizers. Philip loved Jesus and committed to the command to "make disciples." Because of Philip's ordinary status, he is an encouragement to Christians and should be placed as an example for all Christians to follow in a preacher's sermon.

Due to the persecution, most of Jesus' followers were scattered (Acts 8:1, 4). As a result Philip went to Samaria and witnessed in enemy territory. Polhill summarizes the hostility: "The Samaritans were despised by the Jews as hybrids in both race and religion, as both heretics and schismatics."<sup>50</sup> While in Samaria, Philip was empowered for exorcisms and healing (Acts 8:7). Polhill recognizes Philip's success is not strictly due to the miracles: "Ultimately, it was the gospel they responded to, not the miracles (v. 12). Miracles can assist faith but never can be a substitute for it. When the miraculous

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<sup>49</sup>Gempf, "Acts," 1078.

<sup>50</sup>Stott, *The Message of Acts*, 147.

assumes priority, it can actually become a hindrance to faith. (Nowhere is that more clearly evident than in the story of Simon that follows.)"<sup>51</sup> Polhill also acknowledges the power of the gospel, saying, "The gospel is the great equalizer. In the gospel there are no 'half-breeds,' no physical rejects, no place for any human prejudices. There is acceptance for all, joy for all, 'great joy for all the people' (Luke 2:10)."<sup>52</sup> Philip's example epitomizes the participial phrase πορευθέντες which ties to the Great Commission command to "make disciples" (Matt 28:19). Using Philip's precedent, a pastor should emphasize the willingness for all church members to witness wherever they go and to whomever they encounter. Just as Philip effectively witnessed in a hostile territory, God enables Christians to witness anywhere He places them.

Obedience to God's commands does not guarantee the absence of opposition. In fact, it guarantees its presence. Paul asserted, "Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Tim 3:12). Philip unsurprisingly faced hostility from Simon the magician (Acts 8:8-13). When a Christian proclaims Jesus and threatens Satan's realm, conflict is likely to ensue. In Samaria, a battle for the people's attention rages. Simon originally captivated the crowds with his magic, but now "the crowds with one accord were giving attention to what was said by Philip" (Acts 8:6). Philip's message was undergirded by signs which are important in the transitional time, thus Luke contrasts the attention of Philip and Simon in 8:12 showing the power of the gospel is superior to magic. Opposition should be perceived as normal for Christians. Anytime Satan's realm is disturbed, one should expect he will lash out in retaliation.

As church members face opposition, the pastor must encourage them in his expository preaching ministry to share Jesus as the only hope for salvation. In Acts, Philip shared the good news "about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ"

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<sup>51</sup>Polhill, *Acts*, 215.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

(Acts 8:12) which is a model for all Christians. Peter's statement in Acts 4:12 likewise shows the sufficiency of Jesus, "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved." Philip, like Peter, proclaimed salvation in Jesus. A pastor should exemplify Philip's obedience and faithfulness to witness in the face of Simon the magician's opposition, as well as the apostles' willingness to be beaten for the sake of the gospel.

### **Preach That Christians Are to Be Obedient**

Jesus issued the Great Commission as marching orders to be obeyed, yet many Christians see the Great Commission as elective. Stetzer finds,

According to our research in the Transformational Discipleship Assessment (tda.lifeway.com), the typical churchgoer tells less than one person how to become a Christian in a given year. The number for more than half of respondents was zero. The second most frequent answer was one.<sup>53</sup>

Jesus expects every follower of His to take the Great Commission seriously, so a pastor must urge church members to obey the Great Commission through personal evangelism. Hence, the Great Commission becomes a Christian's life purpose not just a leisurely pursuit. If personal evangelism is not a priority, then the preacher must preach it as an issue of obedience. As seen in Acts 8:25-40, Philip demonstrated how a Christian should obey all promptings from God. He quickly obeyed the angel of the Lord and the Holy Spirit, and the Ethiopian eunuch was saved because of Philip's obedience and eagerness to witness. Later in Acts 9:19-31, Paul modeled how a Christian should immediately witness after conversion. Christians should follow Paul's model because salvation is a gift to be shared. Also, Peter's sensitivity and obedience to the Holy Spirit in Acts 10 displays how personal evangelism is a viable way to obey the Great Commission. After the Lord clearly spoke, Peter eagerly shared Jesus and became a witness. A pastor should prescribe church members to follow the obedience found in Philip, Paul, and Peter to evangelize

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<sup>53</sup>Ed Stetzer, "The Problem with the Harvest Is Not the Harvest," *Facts and Trends* 60, no. 2 (Spring 2014): 50.

personally.

### **Acts 8:25-40**

The gospel reached outside of Jerusalem into Samaria by the end of Acts 8. An Ethiopian eunuch journeyed from Ethiopia to worship the Lord in Jerusalem. Similar to the lame man in Acts 3, the eunuch could approach the temple but was not able to enter (Deut 23:1). He was privileged enough to possess a copy of Isaiah and devoted to read it, even though he did not comprehend everything. No matter how far he traveled, how much he read the Scriptures, or how good he was, the Ethiopian eunuch fell short of God's righteous standard. Only through promptings of the Lord did Philip enter the eunuch's life at just the right time.

Through Philip's obedience to the Spirit's leading, the Ethiopian eunuch was saved. God spoke through the angel of the Lord instructing Philip to "get up and go" (Acts 8:26). Luke records his quick obedience in the next verse: "So he got up and went." Philip did not debate with the angel of the Lord, ask the angel why he must go south, or delay his obedience. Philip would not have been at the right place at the right time if he neglected God's leading. One step of obedience positioned him for the next step of obedience. He was on "the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza" (Acts 8:26) when further instructions came. Now, "the Spirit said to Philip, 'Go up and join this chariot' " (Acts 8:29). Again, Philip quickly "ran up" (Acts 8:30) with no debate. Philip had reason to complain about the Ethiopian eunuch being a foreigner, Gentile, or eunuch, but he refrained. In a simple yet profound gesture, he obeyed. A pastor should uphold Philip's example to modern Christians when preaching this text. In personal evangelism simple obedience to God's promptings honors Him.

Now, Philip was in the perfect position to witness to the Ethiopian eunuch because of his obedience shown in Acts 8:27 and 8:30. Plus he was eager to share the gospel, "Then Philip opened his mouth and beginning from this Scripture he preached

Jesus to him" (Acts 8:35). Polhill expresses the significance of the encounter between Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch:

The main point is the remarkable missionary advance taken in the conversion of the Ethiopian. Even were he a 'God-fearer,' the witness was still to a Gentile and in this instance a Gentile who was not eligible for full proselyte status within Judaism because of his physical status as a eunuch. It was a radical step for a Jew, even for a Hellenist Jew like Philip. Still, Philip was not the radical. The Spirit was the radical. Philip's openness to the Spirit's leading enabled this major progress toward fulfilling Christ's commission for a worldwide gospel.<sup>54</sup>

Only by surrendering to the promptings of God would Philip, a Jew, encounter an Ethiopian eunuch, a Gentile. Philip's obedience was what God used to save the Ethiopian eunuch. The same is true of Christians today, and a pastor should promote church members to be sensitive and obedient to God's promptings especially when fulfilling the Great Commission.

### **Acts 9:19b-31**

Saul is arguably one of the most extreme salvations recorded in Acts. The radical difference is seen in the description from Acts 9:1 where Saul is "still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord" to "the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up" in Acts 9:31. The peace is likely linked to Saul's conversion. "Peace came to the church after the conversion of its prime persecutor."<sup>55</sup> Not only was Saul converted, he became one of the greatest proponents of the gospel.

Quick obedience to the Great Commission is an indication of true salvation. As Polhill notes, Acts 9:19b-22 "illustrates the authenticity of Paul's conversion experience."<sup>56</sup> After the dramatic Damascus road experience, Gempf observes, "Saul had not been called so much to leave Judaism behind as to accept Jesus as the fulfillment of

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<sup>54</sup>Polhill, *Acts*, 227.

<sup>55</sup>Crossway Bibles, *The ESV Study Bible*, 2101-2.

<sup>56</sup>Polhill, *Acts*, 238.

all he believed."<sup>57</sup>

After Saul's conversion, Luke recounts many times Saul's personal evangelism (Acts 9:20, 22, 28, 29). Stott surmises, "Saul recognized that he had a new responsibility to the world, especially as a witness."<sup>58</sup> Jesus effectively fulfilled His promise in Acts 1:8 by using a Gentile-hating, Christian-killing Jew, and appointed him to reach the Gentiles. Only God could transform Saul in such a dramatic fashion. The evidence indicates that Jesus was building His church, and He built His church through an unlikely candidate.

Saul's excitement about Jesus and obedience to the Great Commission evidences true conversion. Luke describes Saul's personal evangelism with "immediately" in Acts 9:20, so Saul did not have a waiting period for maturation in order to witness. Luke further contrasts Saul's prior self who was vehemently against the disciples (Acts 9:1) with his post-conversion experience where he was "speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord" (Acts 9:28).

In Saul's evangelism, he did not focus on his personal experience. Although Luke records his testimony three times in Acts, never did Saul urge anyone to trust his testimony but only to trust Jesus, claiming "He is the Son of God" (Acts 9:20) and "proving that this Jesus is the Christ" (Acts 9:22).

For Saul and all Christians, personal evangelism corroborates conversion wrought by the Holy Spirit. The model established in Saul's conversion implies Christians do not need a maturation period before being a witness because all Christians have the same Holy Spirit who emboldens Saul. A preacher should emphasize that church members redeemed by the gospel should immediately witness to lost people how Jesus can save a sinner just like them.

Objections to personal evangelism may be many. One objection could be that a

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<sup>57</sup>Gempf, "Acts," 1080.

<sup>58</sup>Stott, *The Message of Acts*, 178.

Christian has not been converted long enough to share the gospel with a lost person. In Acts 9, Saul was radically changed and immediately became a witness for Jesus. A pastor would do well to accentuate the immediate obedience of Saul to witness thereby fulfilling Jesus' promise in Acts 1:8.

## **Acts 10**

In the next chapter of Acts, Peter crossed many Jewish barriers because he yielded to the Holy Spirit. When preaching Acts 10, a pastor should uphold the model of Peter's sensitivity to the Holy Spirit. Peter's relationship with God in Acts 10 displayed John 15:5. Peter's connection to Jesus, the vine, and the Holy Spirit showed to be powerful. After Luke introduces Cornelius, the scene shifts to Peter's prayer life (Acts 10:9). Peter relocated to the roof for prayer likely to eliminate distractions. Much like Jesus in Mark 1:35, Peter retreated to be free from interruptions. Barrett observes, "Prayer was a fitting setting for Peter's vision, hunger a psychological framework for the form that the vision took; Luke has no further interests. . . . Probably we should be content with the thought that for Luke apostles were men who prayed more frequently than most."<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, noon was not a prescribed time for Jews to pray which reveals Peter's devotion to prayer.<sup>60</sup> Peter's prayer life set the stage for him to hear clearly from the Lord despite the perplexing direction the Holy Spirit led. After the strange vision, Peter was "greatly perplexed" (Acts 10:17), and his bewilderment led to reflection (Acts 10:19). Now, Peter adhered to the Holy Spirit because Peter placed himself in position to hear the Holy Spirit. God reinforced the controversial vision three times giving Peter assurance to approach Cornelius, a Gentile. With the threefold vision and assurance of the Holy Spirit, Peter testified that he "came without even raising any objection when I was

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<sup>59</sup>Barrett, *On the Acts of the Apostles*, 504.

<sup>60</sup>Polhill, *Acts*, 254n78. Polhill writes in the footnotes, "Noon was not a set hour of prayer for Jews, but prayer was not confined to the prescribed times."

sent for" (Acts 10:29). The Holy Spirit hence led Peter to unfamiliar territory where a Jew would interact with Gentiles, and Peter willingly obeyed. Larkin rightly asserts,

The ground is indeed level at the foot of the cross. What a comfort to all the racially and culturally despised in our day, who thirst for the dignity that comes from spiritual equality in the 'Christ identity.' What a challenge to the church to live out, through acceptance across racial, class, ethnic and gender lines, our profession that we serve an impartial God who has sent us a universal Lord and Savior.<sup>61</sup>

In response, Cornelius and his family heard the gospel, and the Holy Spirit miraculously saved them. The miracle of salvation for Cornelius and his family is the same for any sinner saved by faith in Jesus.

Like Philip in Acts 8:35, Peter became a vocal witness, "Opening his mouth, Peter said" (Acts 10:34). Peter displayed his willingness to be taught by God as evidenced in the use of *προσωπολήπτως*. Marshall deduces,

The word which is used here is found for the first time in the New Testament and is a translation of the Hebrew phrase 'to lift (someone's) face', which meant 'to show favor' and hence 'to show favoritism' . . . Peter does not raise the question how this attitude of God is to be squared with the teaching of the Old Testament which stressed the privileged place of Israel as God's people as a result of his election of them.<sup>62</sup>

Like Peter in Acts 10, Christians should be sensitive to the Holy Spirit and position themselves to hear clearly through prayer. Frizzell captures how someone like Peter hears God: "Unless you spend significant time in regular prayer, God's voice will be difficult to discern. Without much time in regular prayer, you will be spiritually 'hard of hearing' and God will often seem distant."<sup>63</sup> The more intense a Christian's prayer life, the better one hears. An intimate relationship with God means one picks up on the whispers and subtleties of His promptings. Through prayer, the Holy Spirit points to the commands and promises of Jesus to "make disciples" (Matt 28:19) and "you shall be my witnesses" (Acts 1:8) and empowers the Christian to fulfill them. A pastor must regularly highlight

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<sup>61</sup>Larkin, *Acts*, 169-70.

<sup>62</sup>Marshall, *Acts*, 200-201.

<sup>63</sup>Frizzell, *How to Develop a Powerful Prayer Life*, 4.



the need of a healthy prayer life of a Christian in his expository preaching ministry.

Commending Peter's example, a pastor also would wisely entreat church members to evangelize personally. If the Holy Spirit leads to witness, then church members should follow no matter the societal barriers. Also, a pastor should admonish church members to be vocal witnesses because lost people are not saved through a Christian's virtuous life, rather lost people are saved through faith in Jesus. Christians therefore must proclaim the gospel for the lost sinner to be saved.

### **Preach That Christians Are to Meet People Where They Are**

Salvation only comes through Jesus who declared, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me" (John 14:6). Peter reiterated the exclusivity of the gospel in Acts 4:12. While Jesus is the only way to the Father, not everyone experiences the same salvation journey. For example, not everyone is dramatically saved like Saul in Acts 9. Thus, Jerry Vines considers Acts 16:14-34 as a fulfillment of 1 Corinthians 9:22: "I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some."<sup>64</sup> During the three encounters, Paul uniquely tailored the unchanging gospel to three dissimilar people.

#### **Acts 16:14-34**

The powerful guidance of the Holy Spirit is again seen in the initial part of Acts 16. Paul and his companions were "forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia" (Acts 16:6) and not permitted by Jesus to go to Bithynia. They concluded that "God had called us to preach the gospel" in Macedonia (Acts 16:10). Ultimately, God revealed His purpose to them, the evangelization of Lydia at Philippi. As will be noted, she was quite different than the two subsequent encounters. Vines observes, "The heart of

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<sup>64</sup>Vines, "Evangelist Preaching and the Book of Acts," 92.

Lydia was a fertile field for the seed of the gospel,"<sup>65</sup> and Luke conveys the divine act of God in Lydia: "The Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul" (Acts 16:14). Vines asserts, "Paul opened the Word; God opened Lydia's heart; she opened her home."<sup>66</sup> Jesus therefore continued to build His church through Paul. Gempf observes,

Luke's phrase the Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message (see also Lk. 24:45) is a lovely way of giving credit to the Lord for successful preaching. Paul was no 'irresistible orator' any more than Peter was a 'spiritual healer'. That the Lord was responsible for the successes does not detract from Paul's (or our) responsibility to speak, much less the hearers' responsibility to repent and turn to the true God.<sup>67</sup>

Paul considered Lydia's circumstances in his approach. She of course needed the gospel, but Luke does not record Paul utilizing harsh methods. God primed Lydia for the gospel before Paul arrived because Luke describes her as "a worshiper of God" (Acts 16:14). As a result, a pastor could lead church members to identify lost people like Lydia. Church members should recognize lost people who attend church and lost people who are sensitive to things of the Lord but are not regenerate. The pastor should urge church members to seek out and witness to lost people who are responsive to God.

In stark contrast to Lydia, Paul encountered "a slave-girl having a spirit of divination" (Acts 16:16). Paul rebuked the evil spirit possessing her in the name of Jesus Christ, "And it came out at that very moment" (Acts 16:18). Vines determines, "The slave girl and Lydia were exact opposites. The slave girl was on the bottom of the social scale. Furthermore, the slave girl was also possessed with a spirit of divination."<sup>68</sup> In comparison to Lydia, Paul dealt harshly with the slave girl. Paul displayed yet again how he became all things to all people so that some might be saved. Clearly, not all lost people know they are lost. A preacher could point out how some lost people warrant a jarring approach like Paul's rebuke to the spirit. For someone calloused to the gospel, evoking

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<sup>65</sup>Vines, "Evangelist Preaching and the Book of Acts," 90.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 91.

<sup>67</sup>Gempf, "Acts," 1091.

<sup>68</sup>Vines, "Evangelist Preaching and the Book of Acts," 91.

hell may be a valid strategy. A lost person may need to be convinced that hell is the final destination for all who reject Jesus. Proving that a lost person needs a savior may come through a pointed conversation about the horrid consequences of sin, yet always pointing to the sufficiency of Jesus for salvation.

Lastly, the evangelization of the Philippian jailer is altogether different. Paul's exorcism of the slave girl resulted in imprisonment because her owners can no longer profit from her fortune-telling. God led Paul once more to witness and arranged for him to meet another sinner. Almost certainly, Paul and the Philippian jailer would not cross paths if not for God's providence. The Philippian jailer dealt with criminals all day long producing a ruthless attitude. He received orders to "guard them securely," so he "threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks" (Acts 16:23-24). Although Paul and Silas were bound with chains, they worshiped by praying and singing. Gempf comments, "It is unlikely that Paul and Silas were praying for their release, since they didn't make use of it when offered."<sup>69</sup> Then, a great earthquake (no doubt from God) changed what ensued. All the jail cells opened, and the prisoners were free to go. Paul and Silas had their opportunity to escape but deferred to God's purpose. The jailer assumed the prisoners had escaped, lost hope, and poised himself for suicide. Polhill discerns, "Though freed, Paul and Silas did not attempt to escape. The miracle served not to deliver them but rather to deliver the jailer. It served as the basis for Paul and Silas's witness to him and for his conversion."<sup>70</sup> Truly, the advance of the gospel confined Paul and Silas to the jail cell and resulted in the Philippian jailer's salvation. Paul and Silas willingly stayed incarcerated physically, so the Philippian jailer could be freed spiritually. In the same way, a pastor may mention how church members have witnessing opportunities to people like the Philippian jailer in a crisis. Vines perceives, "Some

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<sup>69</sup>Gempf, "Acts," 1091.

<sup>70</sup>Polhill, *Acts*, 351.

people are not responsive to a presentation of the gospel until a crisis comes."<sup>71</sup> Only when Christians are prepared to witness and are obedient to the Lord's promptings will they be witnesses of the gospel.

Considering all three encounters, Stott observes, "It would be hard to imagine a more disparate group than the business woman, the slave girl and gaoler. Racially, socially and psychologically they were worlds apart. Yet all three were changed by the same gospel and were welcomed into the same church."<sup>72</sup> Through his expository preaching ministry, a pastor should uphold the precedent of Paul for all Christians to be all things to all people so that some may be saved.

### **Conclusion**

Acts exhibits Jesus' faithfulness to His promise: "and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt 28:20). Even though He ascended to the right hand of the Father, the effectiveness of Jesus' followers indicated He continually built His church. He kept and is keeping His promises found in the Great Commission and Acts 1:8. Pastors should look to Acts for strategically leading church members to be more faithful in personal evangelism. A pastor must not only preach Acts expositionally but also with the intention to lead church members to evangelize personally. In his expository preaching ministry, he will lead church members effectively by emphasizing the evangelistic elements from Acts in order to fulfill the Great Commission.

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<sup>71</sup>Vines, "Evangelist Preaching and the Book of Acts," 92.

<sup>72</sup>Stott, *The Message of Acts*, 268.

## CHAPTER 4

### EXAMINING THE EXPOSITORY PREACHING MINISTRY OF JERRY VINES TO LEAD CHURCH MEMBERS IN PERSONAL EVANGELISM

#### **Introduction**

In one particular sermon, asserting that evangelism is the main business of the church, Jerry Vines said,

Evangelism is the work of telling the good news that Jesus died on the cross, that He was buried, that He rose again, and that those people who will turn from their sins by repentance, and by faith will turn to the Lord Jesus Christ, receiving Him as their personal Savior, will not go to hell, but they can go to heaven. That is the work of evangelism, and it is the main business of the church.<sup>1</sup>

Since Jesus founded the church and issued the Great Commission, Vines understood He commands evangelism to be the primary focus.<sup>2</sup> Any pastor can claim that evangelism is paramount for a church, but Vines proved evangelism was a priority through his ministry.

The evidence is as follows:

The years Vines spent as pastor of West Rome Baptist Church in Rome, Georgia (1968-1974) saw an average of 111.14 baptisms per year while the church doubled in membership from 1,012 to 2,173. While Vines was pastor at Dauphin Way Baptist Church in Mobile, Alabama (1974-1979), the church averaged 250.7 baptisms and grew its total membership from 6,595 members in 1974 to 7,832 members in 1979. Most recently, with Vines as the co-pastor/pastor of First Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Florida (1982-2006), the church averaged 835.1 baptisms per year. The church's resident membership more than doubled, growing from 10,117 members to 22,239 members. Sunday School attendance grew from 4,747 in 1982 to 5,290 in 2006, fluctuating greatly from year to year, but reaching an all time high in 1988 of 6,720. These baptism statistics speak of significant evangelistic effectiveness, for in the course of his ministry the churches Vines served as pastor

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<sup>1</sup>Jerry Vines, "The Church's Main Business," in *Preaching with Passion: Sermons from the Heart of the Southern Baptist Convention*, ed. James T. Draper, Jr. (Nashville: B&H Publishers, 2004), 484.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 486.

baptized over 23,000 converts.<sup>3</sup>

Jeff Pennington further noted Vines' ministry thrived while many other SBC churches struggled evangelistically.<sup>4</sup> How did Vines come to the conclusion that evangelism is the preeminent task of the church? How did Vines lead churches to be evangelistically faithful?

To answer these questions, one must begin with Vines' theological convictions because they led to practical applications. Vines' views of the Bible, Holy Spirit, and prayer were the theological convictions that inflamed his expository preaching and personal evangelism. Without these theological convictions, he would not have been as effective evangelistically. Expository preaching and evangelism were the main two practical applications that flowed from his theological convictions. The marks of Vines' ministry are worthy of emulation when leading a local church to evangelize personally through expository preaching.

### **Theological Convictions**

Vines' theological convictions were the foundation of his ministry. He would not have come to some of his conclusions (expository preaching and evangelism) if his convictions about the Bible, Holy Spirit, and prayer were not deeply rooted in his life and ministry. These three convictions deserve further exploration.

#### **Bible**

Vines was raised with conservative views and held on to them despite the liberal climate he encountered during college. Later during the SBC controversy, he received a unique opportunity to preach at the 1987 SBC Pastors' Conference. After

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<sup>3</sup>Jeffrey Donovan Pennington, "The Preaching and Pastoral Ministry of Charles Jerry Vines: A Model of Evangelistic Focus" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011), 4.

<sup>4</sup>Jeff Pennington, "Do the Work of an Evangelist," in *Preach the Word! A Collection of Essays on Biblical Preaching in Honor of Jerry Vines*, ed. David L. Allen (Carrollton, GA: Free Church Press, 2013), 153.

months of prayer and preparation, he preached the sermon entitled "A Baptist and His Bible" from 2 Timothy 3:14-4:13. According to Peter Lumpkins, "Vines' sermon *A Baptist and His Bible*, first preached at the 1987 Pastors' Conference in St. Louis, Missouri, has been judged, in part, as one of the solidifying events which recaptured the convention for conservative Southern Baptists."<sup>5</sup> In Vines' opinion, "I attempted to let the Bible speak for itself."<sup>6</sup> Vines eloquently inserted many of his beliefs about the Bible into his sermon to lead the SBC in the Conservative Resurgence. This paper will draw from Vines' sermon "A Baptist and His Bible," as well as his writings to derive what he believed about the Bible.

Vines quickly attacked liberalism in his sermon, "A Baptist and His Bible." Liberalism, "Destructive Criticism" as Vines' described it, is personified as the old thief.<sup>7</sup> If one adheres to Destructive Criticism, then he will disbelieve many parts of the Bible. After Vines dismantled rational opinion which picks and chooses what to accept in the Bible, he concludes, "Before it is over you have a Bible full of holes instead of a whole Bible!"<sup>8</sup> He then scolded the critics of Bible-believing Baptists. "Let the critics pick over the bones of the Bible. Bible-believing Baptists will continue to feast on the meat of the Word."<sup>9</sup> Vines was not timid to address the controversial stance of his opponents and inject his conservative views.

Vines firmly believed the Bible to be inspired by God. "Every line, every

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<sup>5</sup>Peter Lumpkins, "A Reader's Note from the Managing Editor," in *Preach the Word! A Collection of Essays on Biblical Preaching in Honor of Jerry Vines*, ed. David L. Allen (Carrollton, GA: Free Church Press, 2013), 7.

<sup>6</sup>Jerry Vines, *Vines: My Life and Ministry* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2014), 156.

<sup>7</sup>Jerry Vines, *A Baptist and His Bible* (Jacksonville, FL: First Baptist Church, Jacksonville, FL, 1988), 8.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 11.

sentence, every word and every letter was placed in our Bible by the supernatural inspiration of God."<sup>10</sup> In his book, *SpiritWorks*, Vines preferred to let the Bible define its own inspiration from 2 Timothy 3:16. "Every word of Scripture was breathed by God. He authored the Bible. Man could not have written it if he would and would not have written it if he could."<sup>11</sup> Verbal plenary inspiration describes Vines' stance of the infallible Bible.<sup>12</sup> "Inspiration is *verbal* because the words are inseparable from the message. Inspiration is *plenary* because it is entire and without restriction."<sup>13</sup> Vines was clear that not only the thoughts but the words were inspired by God.<sup>14</sup> Also the canon of the Bible consists of sixty-six books,<sup>15</sup> and the inspiration of Scripture is only for the original manuscripts.<sup>16</sup> For Vines, "The Bible is primarily intended to bring people to salvation"<sup>17</sup> because Jesus, the Savior, is the central theme. "The Old Testament predicts Him; the New Testament presents Him. The Old Testament anticipates Him; the New Testament announces Him."<sup>18</sup> Without unyielding convictions about the Bible, Vines' ministry would have looked quite differently. A pastor's conviction of the Bible's inspiration will directly determine the priorities and effectiveness of his ministry.

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<sup>10</sup>Vines, *A Baptist and His Bible*, 6.

<sup>11</sup>Jerry Vines, *SpiritWorks: Contemporary Views on the Gifts of the Spirit and the Bible* (Nashville: B&H Publishers, 1999), 25.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit: How to Prepare and Deliver Expository Sermons* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 50.

<sup>14</sup>Vines, *A Baptist and His Bible*, 6-7

<sup>15</sup>Vines, *SpiritWorks*, 34.

<sup>16</sup>Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 52. Even though *Power in the Pulpit* is co-authored by Vines and Shaddix, all of the material is original to Vines from *A Guide to Effective Sermon Delivery* and *A Practical Guide to Sermon Preparation*, or Vines approved the material before publication.

<sup>17</sup>Vines, *A Baptist and His Bible*, 2.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 3.



Since Vines was fully convinced that the Bible was the Word of God, it influenced his preaching ministry and will be the same for other pastors. A preacher's view of the Bible determines how diligent he will analyze the text. Vines perceived, "What the preacher believes about the Bible is crucial to the task of exposition. A low view of inspiration erodes the very foundation of preaching. Decide the Bible is not totally the Word of God and there will be no responsibility to study its text minutely and to preach its message authoritatively."<sup>19</sup> In agreement with Vines, without firm convictions about the Bible a preacher has no reason to preach from the Bible. According to Vines, "Your convictions about biblical inspiration, authority, benefit, and purpose are crucial in the matters of both sermon preparation and pulpit effectiveness."<sup>20</sup> Vines exhorted pastors, "If you don't believe the Bible, don't take a salary for preaching it. If you don't believe the Bible, do the world a favor and get a milk route. You will do more good."<sup>21</sup> Vines' assertion is legitimate. A pastor must have resolute convictions that the Bible is God's Word. If he does, then he will want his preaching ministry to adhere closely to the mandates in the Bible. His desire will be to faithfully preach the Word. If his convictions are weak, then his preaching ministry will wane. He will be tempted to preach whatever pleases the people because he has a low view of the Word. Despite the liberal climate, Vines determined to stay true to the Bible. "I would take my stand for the Word of God. I would lead my church to be Bible believing and evangelistic."<sup>22</sup>

Vines made evangelism a priority because he believed the Bible was the inspired Word of God. Vines contended, "You can't have doubts about the Bible and be a soul-winner at the same time. The evangelist can't evangelize if he has misgivings about

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<sup>19</sup>Vines, *A Baptist and His Bible*, 12.

<sup>20</sup>Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 49.

<sup>21</sup>Vines, *A Baptist and His Bible*, 13.

<sup>22</sup>Vines, *Vines*, 117.

the evangel. As you go into the homes of the lost, what you believe about the Bible is absolutely crucial."<sup>23</sup> Personal evangelism hinges on one's understanding of the Bible. Also, a trustworthy Bible allows a believer to bring hope to those who are dying. Vines cautioned, "If you have no trustworthy Bible, you have nothing to give hope to those who are facing death."<sup>24</sup> The more one studies the Bible, the more he should evangelize. Vines concluded, "I believe you ought to study the Bible as much as you possibly can. I probably have spent a minimum of six hours a day studying the Bible since I was eighteen. Any deeper-life movement, any Bible-study movement that cools off your zeal for winning the lost is basically flawed."<sup>25</sup> A high view of the Bible fuels a believer's personal evangelism. As noted, the inspiration of the Bible laid the base foundation for Vines' ministry. Since his life was bound by biblical mandates, his view of the Bible shaped the course of his life and ministry.

### **Holy Spirit**

Vines' view of the Holy Spirit substantially influenced his ministry. As the charismatic movement gained popularity, many views were proposed about the Holy Spirit. One can see why Vines was interested in the Holy Spirit because much of his ministry was during the rise of the charismatic movement. As a conservative Baptist, Vines was careful to have a healthy view of the Holy Spirit, and he was not afraid to address unhealthy Baptist' leanings. "We are often terrified of 'excesses' in relation to the ministry of the Holy Spirit. We are so afraid of 'wildfire' that we end up having virtually no fire at all."<sup>26</sup> As an eighteen year old, Vines served at his first church as pastor. In his

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<sup>23</sup>Vines, *A Baptist and His Bible*, 14.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>25</sup>Jerry Vines, *Wanted: Church-Growers* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1990), 88.

<sup>26</sup>Vines, *Wanted: Church-Growers*, 16.

early years of the ministry as a "boy preacher," Irving Phillips taught him the difference between the indwelling Spirit and filling of the Holy Spirit.<sup>27</sup> Throughout the years, he established a balance between the extremes. His concern with the charismatic movement was the overemphasis of the Holy Spirit and de-emphasis of Jesus. "Any movement which claims to be of the Holy Spirit will put Christ in the center place."<sup>28</sup> Vines further wrote, "The role of the Holy Spirit is to exalt Christ."<sup>29</sup> With his established influence within the SBC, he wrote three books focused on the Holy Spirit, *SpiritLife*, *SpiritWorks*, and *SpiritFruit*. In each book, Jesus remains the focal point of the Holy Spirit's ministry.

Vines' interpretation of the Bible led him to certain conclusions about the role of the Holy Spirit in preaching. He admired the powerful preaching ministry of Irving Phillips, a rural church pastor, not due to Phillips' energy but because of "a sense of power and blessing."<sup>30</sup> Phillips explained to him the power of the Holy Spirit in preaching, and from then on Vines' committed to ask for the Holy Spirit to fill him when he preached and witnessed.<sup>31</sup> Vines increasingly realized the Holy Spirit exhibits such a vital role in the preaching event. "He inspired the Word we preach. He illuminates our understanding as to its meaning. He anoints our communication of it. He enlightens the minds of listeners. He convicts their hearts and prompts them to respond. Preaching is the Holy Spirit's event. If He is left out, preaching does not happen."<sup>32</sup> For Vines, preaching comes from the Holy Spirit and "is the Spirit-given ability to proclaim the word of

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<sup>27</sup>Jerry Vines, *SpiritLife: Experience the Power, Excitement, and Intimacy of God's Shaping Hand* (Nashville: B&H Publishers, 1998), 60-62.

<sup>28</sup>Vines, *SpiritWorks*, 38.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 39.

<sup>30</sup>Vines, *SpiritLife*, 61.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 62.

<sup>32</sup>Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 25.

God."<sup>33</sup> Only by the power of the Holy Spirit can a preacher explain the Bible in such a way for the audience to understand.<sup>34</sup> As Vines was convinced that systematic exposition was the best way to preach, detractors accused the method of being void of the Spirit. Vines' vehemently disagreed. Since the Holy Spirit inspired the Bible, a preacher should always have a word from the Lord. Plus the Holy Spirit can lead a pastor more than a week at a time. He can lead through books as well as different passages. Vines contended that a pastor can follow the leadership of the Holy Spirit through systematic exposition.<sup>35</sup>

Not only did the Holy Spirit empower Vines' preaching ministry, the Holy Spirit was accentuated in evangelism. The most effective witness is filled with the Holy Spirit, and Vines based this truth on Ephesians 5:18. "I do not believe a Christian life can be lived successfully apart from the filling of the Holy Spirit. Nor do I think our witness for Jesus is effective apart from the filling of the Holy Spirit."<sup>36</sup> For Vines, the filling of the Holy Spirit is most evidenced in soul-winning power. He pointedly wrote, "Do not claim you are filled with the Holy Spirit unless you are winning people to Christ."<sup>37</sup> He grounded his belief in Acts. "If you will study the Book of Acts carefully, you will discover that the evidence of being filled with the Spirit is soul-winning power, power to be a witness for Jesus Christ."<sup>38</sup> Jesus promised His followers would receive power from the Holy Spirit to be witnesses. Vines tied the first half of Acts 1:8 with the latter half, hence Christians filled with the Holy Spirit will be witnesses for Jesus.<sup>39</sup> "That's what

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<sup>33</sup>Vines, *SpiritLife*, 118.

<sup>34</sup>Vines, *SpiritWorks*, 206.

<sup>35</sup>Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 39.

<sup>36</sup>Vines, *SpiritLife*, 63.

<sup>37</sup>Jerry Vines, *Wanted: Soul-Winners* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1989), 20.

<sup>38</sup>Vines, *Wanted: Church-Growers*, 43.

<sup>39</sup>Vines, *Wanted: Soul-Winners*, 80.

God's Holy Spirit is for-to give you power to witness."<sup>40</sup> In *SpiritLife*, Vines clarified what the filling of the Holy Spirit is and is not. "What, then, is the evidence of being filled with the Spirit? Acts 1:8 makes it very clear. Is it speaking in tongues? No. Falling on the floor? No. Barking like a dog? No . . . The main purpose of the filling of the Holy Spirit is not to call attention to ourselves, but to have Spirit power to witness to others about Jesus."<sup>41</sup> Clearly, the Holy Spirit's primary role is to exalt Jesus, and anyone filled with the Spirit will do the same.

## **Prayer**

Vines' ministry gave prominence to prayer because he perceived from the Bible the power of prayer. He wrote, "the great powerhouse of every church is God's people gathering together for corporate or for private prayer."<sup>42</sup> Prayer is necessary for a great church because it calls on God's power. Education, science, technology, and industry will achieve what man can do. Prayer attains what only God can do.<sup>43</sup> The early church realized the importance of prayer because they were desperate for the Holy Spirit's power. Vines insisted, "We will not have the power they had until we learn to pray like they prayed."<sup>44</sup>

Vines prioritized corporate prayer, as well as personal prayer. While at Mercer University, Vines realized the importance of morning Bible reading and prayer. "I came to see a preacher wins or loses the battle in his quiet time. . . . When a preacher falls in

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<sup>40</sup>Vines, *SpiritLife*, 41.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>42</sup>Vines, *Wanted: Church-Growers*, 34.

<sup>43</sup>Jerry Vines, *The Secrets of a Great Church: A Biblical Exposition of Acts 2:37-47* (Carrollton, GA: Free Church Press, 2013), 19.

<sup>44</sup>Vines, *Wanted: Church-Growers*, 34.

public, it very often is because he has already fallen in private."<sup>45</sup> With no moral scandals in Vines' life, he realized the power of prayer and God's grace.

Vines knew power came through the Holy Spirit but was not automatic. He strived each day to ask for the filling of the Holy Spirit.<sup>46</sup> Vines especially desired the Holy Spirit to anoint his preaching ministry. Johnny Hunt concurred, "It is apparent that Dr. Vines spends much time in morning prayer, speaking to God before he takes the platform to speak to men."<sup>47</sup> Knowing his dependency on the Holy Spirit, Vines ministry depended on prayer to draw on the Holy Spirit's power. He believed he and all Christians need to ask for power from the Holy Spirit in every area of life. "I never try to preach unless I have asked for a new supply of the Holy Spirit's power. I do not go on visitation unless I ask the Holy Spirit to fill me and help me say the right thing. As you lead your family, or teach Sunday school, or witness on your job, ask the Holy Spirit to fill you."<sup>48</sup>

Vines called on the Holy Spirit to empower not only his preaching ministry but also his evangelism ministry. According to Vines, a burden for lost souls begins in prayer. Church members show concern for the lost when they begin to pray for them.<sup>49</sup> "If we are to win many to Christ, we must spend many periods in prayer. A church never wins souls until it prays for the souls to be won. A preacher never wins souls until the Lord gives him a prayer burden that those souls be won."<sup>50</sup> Vines advocated Christians to make a list

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<sup>45</sup>Vines, *Vines*, 41.

<sup>46</sup>Vines, *Wanted: Church-Growers*, 44.

<sup>47</sup>Johnny Hunt, "Preach the Word: A Personal Testimony to the Power of Biblical Preaching," in *Preach the Word! A Collection of Essays on Biblical Preaching in Honor of Jerry Vines*, ed. David L. Allen (Carrollton, GA: Free Church Press, 2013), 32.

<sup>48</sup>Vines, *SpiritLife*, 69.

<sup>49</sup>Vines, *Wanted: Soul-Winners*, 48.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, 168.

of the lost and fervently pray for them to be saved.<sup>51</sup> Pastors should lead the local church by personally praying for the lost and leading the church to do the same.

Vines also urged Christians to pray in a way that God answers. He proposed a believer to find a commandment from the Bible and pray for God to accomplish it in his life. Vines commended believers to pray Acts 1:8. He surmised of the early church, "They were praying, 'Lord, You give us boldness to do what You told us to do.' "<sup>52</sup> God truly desires to hear His children cry out for Him to accomplish what He already promised He would. Vines discerned this truth and applied it to his preaching and evangelism ministries.

Theological convictions lay a foundation for the way one lives. For Vines, his view of the Bible, Holy Spirit, and prayer were firmly rooted and formed his theological convictions. These three convictions build on one another. A high view of the Bible brings an awareness of the Holy Spirit's power, and drawing on the Holy Spirit's power necessitates prayer. The core conviction is the Bible. Vines' high view of the Bible led to the practical applications of expository preaching and personal evangelism.

### **Practical Applications**

Before he became the pastor, Vines submitted a letter to the congregation at Dauphin Way Baptist Church in Mobile, Alabama. The letter reflected the tone of his whole ministry. Vines wrote, "The preaching of the Word of God will be central in the ministry of the pastor. . . . The whole Word of God will be preached without fear or favor. . . . Visitation to win the lost will be given top priority in all the activities of the church. The goal will be to evangelize the city of Mobile for Jesus Christ."<sup>53</sup> Not only did Vines

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<sup>51</sup>Vines, *Wanted: Church-Growers*, 137.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>53</sup>Nancy Smith, "A Faithful Soldier," in *A Faithful Soldier*, ed. Nancy Smith and Stan Bethea (Jacksonville, FL: Raintree Graphics, 2005), 20.

set the direction for his ministry at Dauphin Way Baptist Church, the letter was indicative of his entire ministry. David Allen wrote, "Expository preaching and soul winning were his priorities,"<sup>54</sup> and Jeff Pennington argued that Vines' expository preaching ministry is why he was so effective in evangelism:

Two correlative qualities emerge when one traces Vines' pastoral ministry from start to finish. He matured as both an expositor and an evangelist. It is not coincidental that the evangelistic fruitfulness of his ministry, measured in annual baptisms, increased when he made a full commitment to expository preaching. The relationship is so strong, in fact, that I am persuaded that his commitment to expository preaching is largely responsible for his strikingly persistent commitment to sharing the Gospel.<sup>55</sup>

Vines' expository preaching ministry and faithfulness in evangelism were practical applications of his theological convictions.

### **Expository Preaching**

Vines is known as a capable expositor. As David Allen evaluated, "Jerry Vines is known as a pastor, soul-winner, church builder, denominational leader, author, and many other things. But he is preeminently known for his preaching."<sup>56</sup> Despite all Vines' accomplishments, his preaching ministry was most recognized. Paige Patterson also affirmed Vines' preaching ministry, "His ability to take a text, look at it for a few moments, and find the hand of God at work in it, take that text and lay it out for the people to understand is legendary."<sup>57</sup>

Vines did not discern to preach expositionally on his own. His conclusion came from his high view of the Bible. An infallible Bible promotes diligent study.<sup>58</sup> "If you

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<sup>54</sup>David L. Allen, foreword to *Preach the Word! A Collection of Essays on Biblical Preaching in Honor of Jerry Vines*, ed. David L. Allen (Carrollton, GA: Free Church Press, 2013), 12.

<sup>55</sup>Pennington, "Do the Work of an Evangelist," 142.

<sup>56</sup>Allen, foreword to *Preach the Word!*, 12.

<sup>57</sup>Paige Patterson, foreword to *Vines: My Life and Ministry*, by Jerry Vines (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2014), x.

<sup>58</sup>Vines, *A Baptist and His Bible*, 12.



have doubts in your heart about the absolute accuracy and integrity of the Word, you most likely will have a difficult time doing exegesis-ferently seeking to know what the text actually says-and yielding your personal life to its commands."<sup>59</sup> His conviction about the Bible and diligent study led conclusively to expository preaching. "A high view of biblical inspiration and inerrancy demands that the primary approach to preaching be the exposition of Bible books."<sup>60</sup>

Expository preaching was a dominant mark of Vines' overall ministry. Adam Dooley declared, "In the latter part of the 20th century, no local pastor was more decidedly expositional in his preaching than Jerry Vines."<sup>61</sup> Even though Vines was predominantly known for his expository preaching, the first ten years of his ministry he preached topically.<sup>62</sup> While listening to Warren Wiersbe, he was convinced that expository preaching was how he wanted to preach. During his second pastorate at Second Baptist Church of Cedartown, Georgia, Vines announced his change from topical preaching to expository preaching. He wrote, "I was going to take a book of the Bible and preach consecutively through it. The people took a while to adjust to that kind of preaching. My sermons weren't as bombastic and emotional as before. But pretty soon they realized they were learning God's Word. And they were happy with the new method."<sup>63</sup> The fruitfulness of expository preaching radically changed his ministry. "My life and ministry were changed when I decided to devote myself to expository

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<sup>59</sup>Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 53.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid.

<sup>61</sup>Adam B. Dooley, "The Importance of Biblical Preaching in Building a Great Church," in *Preach the Word! A Collection of Essays on Biblical Preaching in Honor of Jerry Vines*, ed. David L. Allen (Carrollton, GA: Free Church Press, 2013), 119.

<sup>62</sup>Jerry Vines, *A Guide to Effective Sermon Delivery* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), xii.

<sup>63</sup>Vines, *Vines*, 79.

preaching."<sup>64</sup> With only Wiersbe's example, Vines pressed forward with the expository preaching model:

I just had the conviction in my heart that that was the kind of preaching the Lord wanted me to do. . . . As I went along, however, I began to notice a change in my ministry. The people started bringing their Bibles; they showed more interest. I saw growth in the spiritual lives of my people. That convinced me of the value of expository preaching. The value to my own life is beyond my ability to place on the printed page.<sup>65</sup>

When he went to First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Florida, Vines joined as co-pastor with Homer Lindsay Jr. who also shared the same conviction of systematic exposition.<sup>66</sup>

Each expositor has his own method of study and delivery, and Vines was no exception. Paige Patterson encouraged Vines to write two books on his method of expository preaching, "one on sermon preparation and the other on sermon delivery."<sup>67</sup> The first was entitled *A Practical Guide to Sermon Preparation*, and the second was entitled *A Guide to Effective Sermon Delivery*. Jim Shaddix later combined the two works into *Power in the Pulpit*. Highlights of Vines' method to expository preaching are to follow.

Expository preaching requires diligent study, and Vines acknowledged, "The call to preach is also a call to prepare."<sup>68</sup> In an expository sermon the preacher does not come with a preconceived notion of what the text means. He must work rigorously to discern the author's original intent, and Vines' proposed an orderly method.

Exegesis is the beginning step. According to Vines, exegesis is "the procedure one follows for discovering the Holy Spirit's intent in a Bible passage."<sup>69</sup> Vines further

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<sup>64</sup>Jerry Vines, *A Practical Guide to Sermon Preparation* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), xii.

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

<sup>66</sup>Vines, *Vines*, 126.

<sup>67</sup>*Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>68</sup>Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 13.

<sup>69</sup>*Ibid.*, 27.

wrote, "The expositor's first and highest responsibility in dealing with the biblical text is to discover-insofar as possible-what the Holy Spirit was saying when He inspired a particular passage of Scripture."<sup>70</sup> Thus, exposition has the Holy Spirit's intent as the goal, and the journey from the text to the Holy Spirit's intent starts with careful exegesis.

Next, an expositor practices hermeneutics which is "the science of interpreting what a passage of Scripture means."<sup>71</sup> Homiletics follows hermeneutics "which is the art and science of saying the same thing that the text of Scripture says. Technically, it is the study of sermon preparation."<sup>72</sup> The final step is delivery. Once a pastor preaches a sermon the result is exposition. "Exposition, then may be defined as the process of laying open a biblical text in such a way that its original meaning is brought to bear on the lives of contemporary listeners."<sup>73</sup>

Vines clearly believed a sermon did not have the power it could have if not developed in an orderly fashion.<sup>74</sup> In order to bring cohesiveness to the sermon preparation, Vines advocated the central idea of the text (CIT). The CIT is "A 15-18-word past-tense statement interpreting what the text meant then."<sup>75</sup> While some preachers neglect the process of development, Vines found it to be valuable. "A clearly stated central idea will be the mooring that keeps contemporary application anchored to the truth of God's Word."<sup>76</sup> Power in the pulpit comes when the preaching and application of God's Word are faithful to the original intent. Maintaining the development, Vines

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<sup>70</sup>Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 91.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., 28.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., 143.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., 130.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., 133.

prescribed another short sentence called the proposition which is "A 15-18-word present- or future-tense application of the CIT to the contemporary context."<sup>77</sup> The proposition statement removes the historical content which was in the CIT and provides a timeless principle that can be followed by Christians of all time. Finally to keep an orderly sermon, the preacher should write a purpose statement which identifies what the preacher hopes to accomplish through the sermon in the audience.<sup>78</sup> The CIT, proposition, and purpose statements provide focus for the sermon. In summary, "The CIT capsulizes the mind of the Holy Spirit in the text. The proposition applies that truth to the contemporary situation. The purpose asserts the desired response to that truth from a particular group of listeners. The title pulls it all together in a memorable, attention-getting way."<sup>79</sup>

Vines believed exposition of a text needed to be presented in an orderly manner. "When a sermon's structure can be expressed in an easy-to-follow, memorable way, the truth of God's Word has a better chance of being firmly planted in the heart."<sup>80</sup> Hence, properly executed order in a sermon can make an eternal impact. After presenting instructions on how to develop a sermon, Vines commented on style. "Style, like delivery, actually is not something we cultivate to make our preaching more effective but to prevent its being ineffective. The supernaturally powerful Word of God does not need our polished style to become more potent. We have a responsibility, however, not to dull the Word's sharpness with our poor style."<sup>81</sup> Vines main concern with style was diminishing the application of God's Word. He wanted to make sure all of his audience understood his preaching style. "If you put the cookies on the bottom shelf, the rabbits can eat them as

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<sup>77</sup>Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 134.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., 138.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., 140.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., 164.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., 231.

well as the giraffes."<sup>82</sup>

Development of a text has a different meaning to different preachers. Vines illustrated the view some preachers have concerning sermon development:

Development can be likened to the activity in a backyard swimming pool. For some preachers, the text is merely a diving board and the pool is the sermon. These preachers jump off into the sermon and never return to the text. Other preachers use the text like pool furniture. They swim around in the sermon but make only casual and periodic visits to the Scripture text. The expositor, however, uses the text as the pool itself. He jumps off into it and takes his listeners for a swim. The text is the sermon.<sup>83</sup>

A key to expository sermons is that the text drives the sermon. Likewise, the text drives the application. The best application clearly derives from the text. The preacher does not force an application because he tries to preach the text, not his opinion. The preacher's purpose is to expose the meaning of the Bible and pose pertinent application to the audience.<sup>84</sup> He must first ascertain what the text meant to the original audience and establish what the text means to people of all times. Then he can best apply the text's meaning to the contemporary audience.<sup>85</sup> Vines clarified application, "The sermon is not concluded until it is lived out in the lives of the people who hear it."<sup>86</sup> The aim of preaching is not to deliver an expository sermon. The aim is life transformation. Therefore, the goal of preaching is to persuade the audience to act in obedience to God's Word.<sup>87</sup>

Vines exalted diligent preparation and a polished delivery. David Allen assessed,

Unlike many modern preachers, Jerry Vines never endured the disgrace of having a

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<sup>82</sup>Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 233.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., 204.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., 30.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., 120.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., 207.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., 249.

sermon received with blank stares and feelings of boredom. Whereas some listeners wait for the end of the sermon as if it were bad weather to be endured until the sun shone once more, or relief after a root canal, people listen to a Jerry Vines sermon sitting on the edge of their seats and are disappointed when he decides to say no more.<sup>88</sup>

One who reads Vines' sermon "A Baptist and His Bible" can sense the detail he spent on formulating and enhancing the sermon for delivery. Further he devoted much space to sermon delivery in his books. In both *A Guide to Effective Sermon Delivery* and *Power in the Pulpit*, Vines posited his views on sermon delivery.

Clearly Vines believed a preacher received power in both the preparation and delivery of preaching. "When a man of God will get filled with the Spirit of God, bury his heart and mind in the Word of God, stand up in the house of God, and preach faithfully to the people of God, the glory of God will come down."<sup>89</sup> For Vines, power in the pulpit comes when the heart of God in the passage links to the pastor's preaching. Vines wrote, "The most powerful preaching will take place when there is a correlation between the emotive intention of the biblical author and the contemporary preacher."<sup>90</sup> Vines called this "heart preaching." "Only heart preaching will stir other to action. A sermon is not a sermon if there is no heartbeat. . . . Only heart preaching will move the hearts of people. Congregations must not only be mentally stimulated by the sermon; they must be emotionally stabbed by it as well."<sup>91</sup> He further wrote, "Our purpose is to change behavior for the better, to bring men to obedience to God, and to lead them to accept the challenge of a Christ-centered life. Heart preaching works to this end."<sup>92</sup>

Vines distinctively devoted special attention to the voice for preaching. A

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<sup>88</sup>Allen, foreword to *Preach the Word!*, 13.

<sup>89</sup>Vines, *Wanted: Church-Growers*, 78.

<sup>90</sup>Adam B. Dooley and Jerry Vines, "Delivering a Text-Driven Sermon," in *Text-Driven Preaching: God's Word at the Heart of Every Sermon*, ed. Daniel L. Akin, David L. Allen, and Ned L. Mathews (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 267.

<sup>91</sup>Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 347.

<sup>92</sup>*Ibid.*, 352.

preacher may take his voice for granted until it is taken away. During his preaching ministry Vines experienced a vocal nodule due to poor speaking habits. Because of his traumatic experience, he intently studied the voice.<sup>93</sup> He asserted that a preacher needs to master his voice<sup>94</sup> and dress in a way not to constrain the throat.<sup>95</sup> He stressed that "every man called to the ministry should avail himself of every opportunity for special training in the areas of voice and speech. Ideally, all ministerial students should be required to take several courses in voice as part of their preparation for the ministry."<sup>96</sup> Despite his great emphasis on the voice, he ended his discussion with a balanced approach:

The preacher can become so interested in his voice that he fails adequately to convey his message. Your voice is a tool, not an altar. You only have one voice. God has given it to you. Use that one voice to the fullest extent of its capabilities. Do not be satisfied to allow your voice to be less that it can be by proper training and practice. Make your vocal instrument a help in communicating the Word of God, not a hinderance.<sup>97</sup>

Vines obviously did not want the voice to get in the way of the Word.

Vines also did not want notes to detract from the Word. Relying on notes can distract the audience from the sermon, so Vines declared,

The best way to deliver expository sermons is to use no notes at all. This approach is called free delivery. . . . Free delivery is characterized by the preparation of a full or partial manuscript, complete familiarity with the written material by identity instead of memory, and delivery of the sermon without the use of the notes.<sup>98</sup>

Some may correlate the lack of notes with diminished preparation. Vines disagreed,

"Simply prepare as if it all depends upon you, then stand to preach as if it all depends upon the Lord."<sup>99</sup> To preach expositionally with free delivery, a preacher must prepare

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<sup>93</sup>Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 264-65.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., 268.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., 271.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., 281.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid., 285.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid., 340-41.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid., 344.

more than he would if he were to use notes. Vines cautioned, "Done poorly, free delivery can bring discredit to the expository method of sermon preparation."<sup>100</sup>

Not only did Vines' preach expositionally, systematic exposition was his normal practice. Early in his preaching ministry he preached through Romans, but found it to be a miserable experience. In an interview with Duduit, Vines said, "Those were the sixteen most miserable weeks of my life! I preached a sermon a week on a chapter in the book of Romans, and at the end of that I definitely knew it was not for me."<sup>101</sup> His view towards systematic exposition dramatically changed, and he later expressed, "The best preaching a man can do is to go through the books of the Bible, book by book, paragraph by paragraph, in a systematic fashion."<sup>102</sup> In God's providence, Vines testified how texts applied to the people's needs.<sup>103</sup> During his twenty-four years at First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Florida, he preached through every book of the Bible and advised young pastors to do the same.<sup>104</sup>

Frequently, Vines systematically expounded or wrote about Acts. Early in his ministry, the Lord led him to deliberately study Acts, and he discovered how to grow a church God's way.<sup>105</sup> He inferred Acts to be a book about witnessing. "The word *witness*, right in the heart of the verse [Acts 1:8], is the pivotal word of the book. You could call the whole Book of Acts 'The Witness Book,' because throughout Acts, people are being

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<sup>100</sup>Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 342.

<sup>101</sup>Michael Duduit, *Preaching with Power: Dynamic Insights from Twenty Top Pastors*, ed. Michael Duduit (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 198. Duduit interviewed Vines.

<sup>102</sup>Vines, *A Practical Guide to Sermon Preparation*, 7.

<sup>103</sup>Vines, *Vines*, 81-82.

<sup>104</sup>*Ibid.*, 206.

<sup>105</sup>Vines, *Wanted: Church-Growers*, 67.



witnesses, telling others about the Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>106</sup> Vines also noted that Acts ended abruptly because "You and I are intended by the Lord to write succeeding chapters in the history of the faith."<sup>107</sup> Vines used Acts many times to lead the local church to be faithful in personal evangelism. In an interview with Jeff Pennington, Vines said, "When I went to a church, I would start a series in the book of Acts and a lot of people bought into it."<sup>108</sup> He preached Acts as his first book at First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Florida. His purpose was to establish "the Bible pattern for how to build a church, develop an evangelism program, strengthen believers, and send out missionaries."<sup>109</sup> Jeff Pennington remarked, "Vines' regular teaching and preaching through the book of Acts encoded the book into the very DNA of the churches he pastored."<sup>110</sup> The commitment Vines made to expository preaching, especially the book of Acts, directly influenced his evangelistic ministry.

## **Evangelism**

For Vines, evangelism was a primary focus. Pennington observed that while most SBC churches declined in baptisms, Vines' "evangelistic focus yielded notable, trend-breaking results."<sup>111</sup> The lack of baptisms within the SBC may have been why Vines preached admonishing words for Christians who were not winning the lost. "I'm here to tell you a church that does not win souls does not deserve the land on which the building stands. I'm here to tell you that a Bible class that does not win souls is not worth the

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<sup>106</sup>Vines, *Wanted: Soul-Winners*, 71.

<sup>107</sup>*Ibid.*, 147.

<sup>108</sup>Pennington, "The Preaching and Pastoral Ministry of Charles Jerry Vines," 7.

<sup>109</sup>Vines, *Vines*, 126.

<sup>110</sup>Pennington, "Do the Work of an Evangelist," 151.

<sup>111</sup>*Ibid.*, 153.

electricity, the heat, the lights, the carpet, and the paint that goes into that room."<sup>112</sup> Vines tied the lack of evangelism to the lack of concern for lost souls. "A basic reason we are winning so few people is: [*sic*] there are so few Christians who have broken hearts for souls."<sup>113</sup> He went further to cast doubt on a person's salvation if they did not care for the lost. "If you lack a burden for souls, it raises questions about your conversion experience. I am ready to challenge the reality of any person's conversion experience who extends no concern, compassion, or desire whatever that lost people be saved."<sup>114</sup> With such forceful language, how did Vines lead churches to be evangelistic?

Vines' high view of the Bible directly correlated to his priority for evangelism. He clearly saw evangelism commanded in the NT. He said in an interview with Pennington that the NT clearly mandates evangelism, and he would not accept any church position that discouraged evangelism.<sup>115</sup> Not only did Vines decide to witness and be part of a church that believed in evangelism, he also concluded evangelism was the purpose of Bible study. Vines vividly wrote,

God never intended you just to feed on the Word and get fat and sassy- then come wobbling in on Sunday morning and say, 'Well, just coming in feeding on the Word.' Oh no. You have missed the whole point of the teachings of the Scriptures, if what you are learning about the Lord makes you self-satisfied and does not produce a burning desire for you to go out and tell people about Jesus. What difference does it make whether you know the color of the beast of the Book of Revelation if souls in your community are dying minus Jesus? What's the point in being able to name from memory all of the dispensations of the Bible and not be able to name the address of lost people in your city.<sup>116</sup>

According to Vines, a main purpose of the Bible is to give confidence to Christians as

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<sup>112</sup>Vines, "The Church's Main Business," 484.

<sup>113</sup>Vines, *Wanted: Soul-Winners*, 14.

<sup>114</sup>Ibid., 164.

<sup>115</sup>Pennington, "The Preaching and Pastoral Ministry of Charles Jerry Vines," 29.

<sup>116</sup>Vines, *Wanted: Church-Growers*, 143.

they witness. If one doubts the Bible, he cannot be a soul-winner.<sup>117</sup> So the Bible gives the evangelist confidence in witnessing.

Vines' expository preaching ministry was an avenue for him to do the work of an evangelist. He resolved, "Preach the Word, exalt Christ, invite people to receive Him as their Savior. Then leave the results up to the Lord."<sup>118</sup> During his evangelistic focus in preaching, Vines evangelistically applied some of his Biblical interpretations. A few examples will be helpful for pastors to replicate. First, Vines applied the Gospels evangelistically. For Matthew 28:20, he linked Jesus' promise of His presence in verse twenty to evangelism. "This particular promise of God's presence is attached to the matter of being a soul-winner."<sup>119</sup> He expressed how Jesus' promise came true on Tuesdays when he did not feel like participating in the weekly church visitation. He also viewed this protection as a promise that God will help overcome a believer's fears to witness. He pressed Jesus' promise even further, "Nothing can happen to the child of God unless God lets it bypass the surrounding protection of His will and His plan for that individual. You are immortal until God is through with you here."<sup>120</sup> If a Christian is immortal to the world's schemes, he can witness with confidence that God will protect him until his purpose is completed.

Vines' application of Luke 15:1-7 promoted evangelism as well. For him, the church should spend the most energy pursuing the one lost. "When a church is only interested in the ninety-nine in the fold, that church becomes a tomb."<sup>121</sup> Life in the church comes through evangelism.

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<sup>117</sup>Vines, *A Baptist and His Bible*, 14.

<sup>118</sup>Vines, *Vines*, 57.

<sup>119</sup>Vines, *Wanted: Soul-Winners*, 27.

<sup>120</sup>*Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>121</sup>*Ibid.*, 49.

He also applied John 3:16 evangelistically. Vines' interest in John 3:16 showed by his year-long study of the singular verse. In his book, he joined the love of God to the lost and understood "For God so loved the world" as a driving force for believers to share the love of God wherever and to whomever they come in contact.<sup>122</sup> Vines gathered that Jesus cared for the lost and related many of His teachings accordingly.

Second, Vines interpreted Acts evangelistically. Much of Vines' work focused on evangelism and Acts, so a brief examination will suffice. He looked to Acts 1:8 as the theme verse for Acts. Jesus' promise determined how he viewed the whole book and his mission. He alleged that Jesus promised in Acts 1:8 how to evangelize. The program started in one's place of residence. "There is someone in your town you can win to Jesus."<sup>123</sup> As seen here, Vines often promoted personal evangelism. He did the same in applying Acts 3:1-10. He resolved that spiritual cripples surround all Christians, and Christians have a responsibility to evangelize them:

The lost in our midst, the lost all around us, are our persistent responsibility. You cannot sidestep your personal responsibility for the lost. You are not in this world to see how much food you can consume, how many suits you can wear, or even how many shoes you can wear out. You remark, 'I know I'm saved, preacher. I'm going to heaven when I die.' When you were saved, why didn't the Lord transport you immediately to heaven? The reason He didn't is because He has a responsibility for you until you do go to heaven. I believe a major portion of that responsibility revolves around those crippled people out there who need to know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. It is absolutely criminal for a person to say, 'I know Jesus,' have the cure for the sinsickness of this world, go in and out of the doors of a church, and never notice a poor, crippled sinner who need Jesus as his Lord and Savior. You cannot escape it; you cannot evade it. You can try to forget it, but the Lord will remind you through the pulpit or the ministry of song or through other means. The responsibility of the church is to the cripples at the gate. They may alarm us, but we are still responsible to give them the saving message of Jesus.<sup>124</sup>

Consequently, personal evangelism is an obligation for all Christians, and Vines is right. He also identified personal evangelism as a Christian's main duty deriving from Acts 18.

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<sup>122</sup>Jerry Vines, *Whosoever: Revealing the Riches of John 3:16* (Carrollton, GA: Free Church Press, 2013), 28.

<sup>123</sup>Vines, *Wanted: Soul-Winners*, 44.

<sup>124</sup>*Ibid.*, 108-9.

Vines determined that no matter a believer's occupation, his main objective is to win people to Jesus. The secular job just pays the bills while he works for Jesus.<sup>125</sup> Acts was essential in Vines leading believers to evangelize personally.

Vines also connected the fruit of the Spirit to evangelism. He wrote *SpiritFruit* to explore the fruit of the Spirit. He associated a Christian's display of the fruit of the Spirit with winning people to the faith.<sup>126</sup> Personal evangelism takes a personal witness but the gospel can be credited or discredited by the way a Christian lives.<sup>127</sup> He also considered fruit as "people won to Christ" and the natural outflow of a growing believer.<sup>128</sup> As the book unfolded, Vines connected many of the fruit of the Spirit with evangelism. He applied love, joy, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and gentleness to evangelism. The following excerpts from Vines' book show how he applied the fruit of the Spirit to evangelism:

1. Love--"We can't love the lost or anybody else unless we allow the Holy Spirit to produce his love in and through us."<sup>129</sup>
2. Joy--"To be most effective in witnessing, the Lord Jesus and his gospel should be displayed in all their joyfulness."<sup>130</sup>
3. Kindness--"Kindness wins a hearing for the gospel message."<sup>131</sup>
4. Goodness--"Our good works provide a powerful witness to the reality of the Christian faith."<sup>132</sup>
5. Faithfulness--"If we think about it, we realize we need to be faithful to those around us

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<sup>125</sup>Vines, *Wanted: Church-Growers*, 157.

<sup>126</sup>Jerry Vines, *SpiritFruit: The Graces of the Spirit-Filled Life* (Nashville: B&H Publishers, 2001), viii.

<sup>127</sup>*Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>128</sup>*Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>129</sup>*Ibid.*, 36. "Love for the Lost" is a section title on p. 35.

<sup>130</sup>*Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>131</sup>*Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>132</sup>*Ibid.*, 101.

who need the Lord. . . . We have been given the gospel as a great gift. It's meant to be shared. We should pass the gospel on to others."<sup>133</sup>

6. Gentleness--"In our witness to lost people, the grace of gentleness is vital. A genuine and meek Christian witness has a greater chance for a favorable reception than a rude, arrogant one. . . . We are here to win souls to Jesus."<sup>134</sup>

As demonstrated, Vines' application of his interpretation often focused on evangelism.

Another approach Vines utilized for evangelism was a technique he called the "evangelistic twist":

Every sermon I preach has what I call an 'evangelistic twist.' By this I mean that I turn the message, in conclusion, toward an appeal to the unsaved in the audience to receive Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Savior. Any expository sermon lends itself to this method. *Bible preaching always points to evangelism* [emphasis added]. Bible preaching that does not ultimately call for the unsaved to receive Jesus Christ as personal Savior borders on heresy. Regardless of the Bible content of your message, the subject can be turned toward an evangelistic appeal.<sup>135</sup>

Vines carefully articulated his preaching ministry to promote evangelism.

Vines also involved church ministries and programs to lead churches in evangelism. Regarding the ministry at First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Florida, "Every area of the work had a strategy and process to accomplish our goal of winning the lost and growing believers in the faith."<sup>136</sup> He knew a great church was a church winning lost people to Christ,<sup>137</sup> and he endeavored to leverage the largest ministry of the church, Sunday school. His desire was to train church members in personal evangelism.

Pennington observed, "Preaching, teaching, and practice marked the three-pronged strategy for evangelism training at First Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Florida."<sup>138</sup> To better serve the church, he wrote a thirteen-week series entitled *Acts Alive: A Witnessing*

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<sup>133</sup>Vines, *SpiritFruit*, 110.

<sup>134</sup>*Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>135</sup>Vines, *A Practical Guide to Sermon Preparation*, 146-47.

<sup>136</sup>Vines, *Vines*, 187.

<sup>137</sup>Vines, *The Secrets of a Great Church*, 5.

<sup>138</sup>Pennington, "The Preaching and Pastoral Ministry of Charles Jerry Vines," 147.

*Church in the Twenty-First Century* to be used in Sunday school. According to Vines, "Several hundred thousand of those lessons were sold to other churches."<sup>139</sup> Vines described the purpose of *Act Alive* to the class leader, "The objective of this series of lessons is to communicate to the members of your classes the motivations and methods essential to being a witnessing church in the 21st century."<sup>140</sup> He emphasized that the leader plays a pivotal role, "You must lead them to see that you can write a modern version of 'ACTS.'"<sup>141</sup> In the series, Vines expounded the given text from Acts and then applied it to the Sunday school class. His main purpose was for the church members to embrace "life style witnessing."<sup>142</sup>

The study of *Acts Alive* was an effective way for Vines to lead the church in personal evangelism, so the distinctive elements of *Acts Alive* will be highlighted with special attention to practical application. He reasoned from Acts 1:12-26 that a Christian prepares for evangelism through prayer and Bible study. He conveyed, "A Christian doesn't automatically become an effective witness. He must pay the price of preparation."<sup>143</sup> He also advised to "Prepare a prayer list of friends you would like to see come to Christ."<sup>144</sup> According to Vines, Christians must pray before witnessing. From Acts 2, he concluded a new Christian ought to start witnessing immediately. "The new Christian needs to be exposed to the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20. One of the best ways to grow is to begin to tell others immediately. Encourage the new convert to immediately tell someone else about their salvation experience. They might want to call,

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<sup>139</sup>Vines, *Vines*, 123.

<sup>140</sup>Jerry Vines, *Acts Alive: A Witnessing Church in the Twenty-First Century, Class Leader ed.*, (Jacksonville, FL: First Baptist Church, Jacksonville, FL, 2007), 5.

<sup>141</sup>*Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>142</sup>*Ibid.*, 21. Vines used "life style witnessing" many times throughout the book.

<sup>143</sup>*Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>144</sup>*Ibid.*, 11.

visit or write someone about it."<sup>145</sup>

Vines' emphasis for Acts 3:7 was "life style witnessing. Too many Christians want to pay someone else to do their witnessing for them. They want to see others saved, but they do not want to get involved in the work themselves."<sup>146</sup> At the end of the lesson for Acts 3:1-10, Vines recommended six practical methods for church members to participate in personal evangelism:

1. If your church service is telecast, a simple invitation to 'tune in my church this Sunday, be sure to tell them the channel and time.'
2. Have a Bible study or prayer fellowship in your home and invite your neighbors to get to know your Sunday School class leader.
3. Invite some lost friend to your next class meeting, fellowship or luncheon.
4. Offer one of your pastors' books, tapes, leaflets telling of your church activities and telecast schedule.
5. Invite them to come with you to church and to Sunday School this Sunday.
6. Use your imagination. Devise some other method of giving a simple invitation or witness this week!<sup>147</sup>

Vines suggested simple opportunities for church members to begin in personal evangelism.

In the lesson on Acts 4:1-31, Vines introduced a concept he called "positionizing." He grounded "positionizing" in Peter and John's bold declaration to the Jewish leadership, "for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). According to Vines, "Positionizing means to take your stand definitely and decisively for Jesus."<sup>148</sup> He suggested church members apply "positionizing" by placing a lapel pin or Bible in plain view. He also recommended the use of witnessing booklets and naturally including the Lord into daily conversation. All of these "positionizing" suggestions were in order to initiate gospel conversations.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>145</sup>Vines, *Acts Alive*, 16.

<sup>146</sup>Ibid., 21.

<sup>147</sup>Ibid., 23.

<sup>148</sup>Ibid., 24.

<sup>149</sup>Ibid., 29.



In the sixth lesson over Philip's witnessing encounter with the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-40), Vines applied the biblical witnessing encounter in three ways. First, he advised church members to have gospel tracts because witnessing opportunities such as grocery stores, service stations, and doctors' offices may be too brief for a personal witness. Another tool for church members to evangelize was with a guided discussion booklet. Vines endorsed three different booklets to help church members use Scripture and direct the encounter. Lastly, Vines directed the class leader to have his students mark their Bibles with either the Romans Road or John's Gospel. Vines alleged, "The marked NT is an indispensable tool for the beginning witness."<sup>150</sup>

Considering Saul's conversion and his following testimonies (Acts 9:1-20, 22:2-21, 26:1-32), Vines wanted the class leaders to help students develop their personal testimony with three components: life before conversion, conversion experience, and difference since conversion. He recommended 25 percent be given to the first two components and 50 percent to the last. According to Vines, "The sinner needs to know what Christ can do for them right now."<sup>151</sup> Not only did he desire the church members to develop their personal testimonies, he invited them to share it in the coming week.

From Acts 19:10, Vines emphasized to the Holy Spirit in the witnessing encounter. He applied the lesson to the church members through prayer:

Suggest to them that they begin each day with the prayer that the Holy Spirit will use them to be an effective witness that day. Suggest that they pray with their witnessing partner as they begin their visitation activity. Praying that the Spirit of God will lead them to the right person. Praying that He will prepare their hearts to point out to them that they must moment by moment depend upon the Spirit's leading as they move into their presentation. They must be sensitive to the total situation.<sup>152</sup>

In this survey of *Acts Alive*, Vines' most unique practical applications were

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<sup>150</sup>Vines, *Acts Alive*, 41.

<sup>151</sup>*Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>152</sup>*Ibid.*, 71.

highlighted. He did not exposit the Biblical text without instructing church members how to apply it. Leading church members to evangelize personally should be done during the preaching ministry and further applied in a small group setting such as the Sunday school ministry to be most effective.

Vines also endorsed a weekly visitation program as a way for his congregation to apply his evangelistic preaching practically. He promoted an organized visitation program in his sermon "The Church's Main Business" as an application of 'going' from Matthew 28:19.<sup>153</sup> He also anchored the visitation program in Acts 11:19-30. "We are to team up two by two and to go out into 'the highways and hedges' and tell people one on one about Jesus. There is no better method than that."<sup>154</sup> As of 1989, First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Florida, implemented their visitation program with partners, one speaking and one silent. The speaking partner would take the lead and evangelize while the silent partner mainly prayed. This method allowed inexperienced or timid church members to join with an experienced church member.<sup>155</sup> The statistics suggest how effective Vines' leadership was. "Following Vines and Homer Lindsay Jr.'s leadership, over 2,000 First Baptist members constituted the church's evangelistically-driven Sunday School leadership. The weekly visitation program regularly averaged over 1,000 participants."<sup>156</sup>

Vines also wrote about another outreach of the church to win people to Christ, Thursday business luncheon. First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Florida, provided an inexpensive lunch, and Vines presented an evangelistic Bible study. Through the outreach, the attendance grew to around seven hundred each week and many people were

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<sup>153</sup>Vines, "The Church's Main Business," 490.

<sup>154</sup>Vines, *Wanted: Church-Growers*, 136.

<sup>155</sup>Vines, *Wanted: Soul-Winners*, 33.

<sup>156</sup>Pennington, "Do the Work of an Evangelist," 144.

saved.<sup>157</sup>

During Vines' presidency, he led the SBC in evangelism. In 1988 for his first year as president, Vines announced his theme would be personal soul winning. Once reelected, he focused on "building great soul-winning churches."<sup>158</sup> Vines actively participated in personal visitation while maintaining a schedule as SBC president. Personally, he won fifty-two people to Christ during his first year as president.<sup>159</sup> Vines' evangelistic leadership would not have been as effective if he was not personally evangelizing. "I always went out with the people. I realized you couldn't lead the people to do anything you weren't doing yourself."<sup>160</sup>

Throughout life, Vines' determined evangelism was out of obedience. "I don't go soul-winning because I feel like going soul-winning. I want you to know if you're going to be a soul-winner on the basis of your emotions, the devil will send you enough indigestion to keep you from being one. I'm a soul-winner because God in His Word instructed me to be one."<sup>161</sup> Under Vines' personal witness and leadership, approximately twenty-three thousand people came to know Christ and were baptized. With these staggering statistics, Vines' humility is astonishing, "I missed too many opportunities. I did not witness as faithfully as I should have."<sup>162</sup>

### Critique

As a whole, Vines' ministry deserves consideration and will sharpen a pastor's ministry, hence only a few critiques will suffice. Vines focused on local evangelism and

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<sup>157</sup>Vines, *Vines*, 127.

<sup>158</sup>Ibid., 165.

<sup>159</sup>Ibid., 175.

<sup>160</sup>Ibid., 90.

<sup>161</sup>Vines, *Wanted: Church-Growers*, 136.

<sup>162</sup>Vines, *Vines*, 216.

rarely mentioned global evangelism. While he looked to Acts 1:8 as a model, his focus did not move outside of one's local area, typically family and community.<sup>163</sup> He did not emphasize global missions or promote mission trips. If one is to take Acts 1:8 as a model and "make disciples of all the nations" (Matt 28:19), evangelism must be local and global.

Also, Vines vigorously espoused evangelism, yet seemingly he did not champion discipleship with the same intensity. For Vines, ensuring one goes to heaven took priority. He promoted evangelism as a lifestyle, and discipleship appeared as a program of the church. Here is Vines' approach to discipleship of a new convert:

When a person comes to know the Lord, one of the first things we must do is begin teaching the new disciple the Scriptures. That's why they need to get in a Sunday School class, and that's why they need to come to all of the services of the church. I preach through a book of the Bible on Sunday morning; and I preach through another one on Sunday night. Additionally, our Sunday School teachers go through the Word of God and teach the Scriptures. We take them to youth camp, and we teach them the Bible. Why do we do all of this? Because the only way a Christian can really grow in the Lord is to get in the Word of God!<sup>164</sup>

Attending church services is important, but discipleship must be more than coming to church. If Vines believed that the Sunday school was the main discipleship division of the church, then he did not experience success. Pennington noted that the statistics indicated that many of the baptized converts at First Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Florida, were not assimilated into Sunday school.<sup>165</sup> If the new converts did not attend Sunday school, then discipleship mainly consisted of church services. Jesus commanded His followers to "make disciples" by "teaching them to observe all that I commanded you" (Matt 29:20), so evangelism must flow into discipleship. If obedience to the Great Commission is the aim, then success rests on evangelism plus discipleship because both are necessary to

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<sup>163</sup>Pennington, "The Preaching and Pastoral Ministry of Charles Jerry Vines," 151, 193-94.

<sup>164</sup>Vines, *The Secrets to a Great Church*, 14.

<sup>165</sup>Pennington, "The Preaching and Pastoral Ministry of Charles Jerry Vines," 4-5.

"make disciples." Teaching the Bible must accompany guiding the convert to obey, thus discipleship cannot be accomplished only through the preaching ministry. The next chapter will include an expansion on the relationship between evangelism and discipleship.

### **Conclusion**

As evidenced through Vines' preaching and evangelism ministry and outside testimonies, Jerry Vines' ministry is worthy to be followed. A pastor will not be as effective in preaching or evangelism without similar theological convictions, especially concerning the Bible which all truth about God derives. Vines believed Jesus' teachings establish an irresistible logic leading to evangelism. Pennington summarized the ministry of Vines well:

From his ordination until his retirement as a pastor, the irresistible logic of the Bible kept him committed to doing the work of personal evangelism, training his church members to do the same, and preaching the Gospel from any Biblical text in a way that demanded a verdict. He is an example of a pastor who preached the Word, and did the work of an evangelist.<sup>166</sup>

Vines is a commendable example for any pastor to emulate when trying to lead church members to evangelize personally.

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<sup>166</sup>Pennington, "Do the Work of an Evangelist," 153.

CHAPTER 5  
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE LOCAL CHURCH

**Introduction**

For believers to evangelize they must be led, so God has given His Word and faithful pastors to accomplish the Great Commission. In order to mobilize the believers in a local church the pastor will most effectively lead the members to evangelize personally through his expository preaching ministry.

This concluding chapter will explore the practical implications how an effective, evangelistic pastor may lead, specifically how he leads best through expository preaching. In order to propel believers in personal evangelism the pastor must be intentional in how he leads, preaches, and lives. This chapter also includes recommendations as to how a pastor may be most effective.

**Leading Believers through Preaching**

God calls pastors both to lead and preach. A wise pastor will not view both callings as separate responsibilities but will combine leading and preaching. Following is an explanation that the most effective pastors are those who lead through preaching.

**Pastors Are Leaders**

When God calls a pastor he also gifts him to lead because preaching and leading are inextricably linked. Consequently pastors are leaders. Quicke agrees, "Preachers are inevitably leaders because of their unique calling that inseparably combines preaching with leading."<sup>1</sup> When God calls a man to preach, He also calls him to

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<sup>1</sup>Michael J. Quicke, *360-Degree Leadership: Preaching to Transform*

lead. In the eyes of the church members, the man behind the pulpit is a leader. Malphurs writes, "The pulpit represents for people in many cultures a vital platform for leadership. The congregation looks at the person behind the pulpit as the leader of the church, whether or not this is true."<sup>2</sup>

As a leader, the pastor sets the pace for the local church. He is vitally important for the direction of the church. A church will not move without the leader. Robinson concurs, "A church never moves beyond the level of its leadership. Everything rises and falls on leadership. The speed of the leader, the speed of the team."<sup>3</sup> If the pastor is not leading the church, then the church is open to detriment. Without a leader, the church fails to fulfill the Great Commission and is open to Satan's attacks. Lawless writes, "If there is no leader, or if the assumed leader has no strategy, the church is seriously exposed to the arrows of the Enemy. On the other hand, an effective leader who wears the armor of God and equips members will lead the church to victory."<sup>4</sup> God uses pastors in the local church to lead His children. A pastor who does not embrace his leadership role will be striving against God's will for His church. On the contrary, a pastor who embraces his leadership role God can use to accomplish much.

### **The Most Effective Way to Lead Is through Preaching**

The primary task of a pastor is preaching. How does a pastor's preaching make him more effective in leading? Three ideas are to follow.

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*Congregations* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006), 17.

<sup>2</sup>Aubrey Malphurs, *Values-Driven Leadership: Discovering and Developing Your Core Values for Ministry*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), 120.

<sup>3</sup>Darrell W. Robinson, *Total Church Life: How to Be a First Century Church in a 21st Century World* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1997), 5.

<sup>4</sup>Chuck Lawless, *Disciplined Warriors: Growing Healthy Churches That Are Equipped for Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2002), 189.

**Lead from biblical convictions.** Convictions are a driving force in leadership. They propel pastors to action and "their passion for these convictions is transferred to followers who join in concerted action to do what they know to be right. And they know what is right because they know what is true."<sup>5</sup> Pastors hence lead out of their convictions based on the truth. But how does a pastor know what is true? Truth must come from God's Word, thus a pastor is certain that the Bible is true and worth building his life and ministry upon. Consequently his convictions should be biblical. A pastor's biblical convictions stir him to lead with passion which leads to change. Mohler writes, "The passionate leader is driven by the knowledge that the right beliefs, aimed at the right opportunity, can lead to earth-shaking changes."<sup>6</sup> Biblical convictions help the pastor resolve what is important when leading.

**Prioritize preaching.** In Paul's last letter, he charges Timothy to "preach the Word" (2 Tim 4:2). The other commands Paul listed in verses 2 and 5 fall under "preach the Word." Hence preaching must be the number one priority for a pastor. It must be his top conviction. Killinger's assessment is as true today as it was in 1969:

As a preacher in an age when preaching is widely regarded as the bogus currency of a bankrupt ministry, the best thing you can do, for yourself and your ministry, is to set the business of preaching at the very center of your life and work, and give it first claim on your time and energy.<sup>7</sup>

Many commendable tasks command a pastor's attention, but he cannot neglect the preaching of God's Word. His life must center on preaching. Killinger further notes, "Nothing else will substitute for it [proclamation]. Its priority is absolute."<sup>8</sup>

Only by the preaching of God's Word will people be changed. Preaching is not

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<sup>5</sup>Albert Mohler, *The Conviction to Lead: 25 Principles for Leadership That Matters* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 2012), 26.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 53.

<sup>7</sup>John Killinger, *The Centrality of Preaching in the Total Task of the Ministry* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1969), 28.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.



man's creative way to form a people; it is God's idea. Quicke acknowledges, "Preacher/leaders should be convicted that God employs the 'foolishness of preaching' to change individuals and communities. Unless they have this confidence they had better not begin."<sup>9</sup> A pastor must be convinced that God's Word does the work of forming God's people. God's Word accomplishes His purposes. Killinger encourages,

If we only remembered this, how much more eagerly we would set about the composition of our sermons! The drudgery would be gone. We would rejoice at paying whatever price is necessary to the accomplishment of our one great aim, to set a life-saving, soul-ordering word loose in the midst of a congregation of human beings, and then to see it work!<sup>10</sup>

In his faithful preaching ministry a pastor unleashes the Word of God to do the leading, therefore if a pastor is to be an effective leader, he must faithfully "preach the Word."

**Preaching is leading.** When a pastor preaches, he inevitably leads. Quicke contends, "You can lead without preaching (Rom. 12:8) but you cannot preach biblically without leading."<sup>11</sup> If preaching is leading, then a pastor should not view preaching and leading as separate tasks. He ought to combine the two as God intends. Quicke further asserts, "Through his preached Word God speaks contemporaneously to lead his people. Nowhere else can he be more clearly heard and by no other means can leadership have such authority."<sup>12</sup> God therefore desires pastors to lead through preaching. Quicke also writes, "By Holy Spirit power, their [preacher/leaders] preaching of God's Word should exercise leadership by envisioning, confronting, encouraging, stretching, releasing, and uniting the people of God to live out his will."<sup>13</sup> God's purpose in preaching is to create a people obedient to His will. When examining Luke 4:42-5:11, Quicke observes,

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<sup>9</sup>Quicke, *360-Degree Leadership*, 79.

<sup>10</sup>Killinger, *The Centrality of Preaching*, 26.

<sup>11</sup>Quicke, *360-Degree Leadership*, 60.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 17.

"Preaching is Jesus's preferred leadership method" based on His missional statement, "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose" (Luke 4:43). Quicke continues,

He continues proclaiming (Luke 4:44; 5:1, 4); by preaching he initiates and sustains his mission, prepares his disciples, sends them out (Luke 9-10), and moves single-mindedly towards Jerusalem (Luke 9:51). He believes in finishing towers (Luke 14:28-30) and lives out the preacher's life to the fullest, beyond the cross, on the Emmaus road (Luke 24:27), and in the upper room (Luke 24:35). What a significant confirmation of the role that preaching plays in leading.<sup>14</sup>

Since preaching is the method through which God leads His people and Jesus' preferred leadership method, it must therefore be transformational. Jesus led through preaching quite differently than a pastor can. His words were sufficient since He is the Son of God while a pastor's words have to be based on the Word of God. The faithful preaching of the Bible is what God uses to transform lives and churches. Pastors who understand this truth lead accordingly. Quicke weighs in, "Every time preachers open Scripture and preach out God's challenge, they should motivate, mobilize, resource, and direct people, because God's Word in the source and God's power is the energy for fulfilling any divine vision."<sup>15</sup> Pastors should therefore cast the vision for the church through preaching. The pulpit is the best place to lead the church towards fulfilling God's purposes. Malphurs attests, "The sermon is a primary vehicle that the leadership uses to cast its beliefs and dreams."<sup>16</sup> The pastor has no better place to cast God's vision for the church than in his preaching ministry. He communicates the vision clearly because he realizes, as Mohler writes, "Ideas do drive the world, and beliefs determine actions."<sup>17</sup> So a pastor inspires church members through the power of ideas and beliefs anchored in God's Word. The pastor cannot abdicate his job of vision casting or teaching the vision.

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<sup>14</sup>Quicke, *360-Degree Leadership*, 100. As noted earlier, Quicke is one of the few authors who connects preaching and leading.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 53.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 102.

<sup>17</sup>Mohler, *The Conviction to Lead*, 68.

Mohler declares, "Real leaders leave behind any idea of teaching as someone else's job, and instead make themselves into leaders who teach and teachers who lead. When the leader is most effective, teaching and leading become one force of energy. When that happens, expect nothing less than transformation."<sup>18</sup> The pastor strives to see the church of God transformed as he leads through preaching.

Since a pastor is in the business of words he does well to grow in his communication skills because words are powerful. Mohler writes, "Words are the priceless currency of communication. The most effective leaders are collectors and connoisseurs of words. They polish and perfect the deployment of specific words for greatest effect. They know that words are powerful when memorable and delivered with conviction."<sup>19</sup> Words are powerful in leading especially when one considers the words in the Word of God. Quicke argues,

God leads by word. . . . The conviction that God's power works through his words forges a transformational role for preaching/leading. For when God calls people to speak his words, they inevitably share in his power to change others. Speaking God's words inexorably means transformational leadership. . . . This power of God's Word in Scripture therefore sanctions preaching to be the primary means by which God shapes his people to his will. . . . Whoever God calls to be a servant of the Word, speaking Scripture truth on his behalf, is also called to be a leader. . . . Key leaders are those called to proclaim God's Word; those called to proclaim God's Word are key leaders. Bluntly, you cannot proclaim God's Word without leading his people. . . . *Secular leaders speak their own words to make an impact by skillful use. Preachers speak God's words to make an impact by God's power and grace.*<sup>20</sup>

God ordains His words to be powerful, so a pastor who preaches God's Word faithfully leads the people because God chooses preaching as the method in which He leads His people. In striving to preach the pure Word of God, the best preaching method is expository preaching.

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<sup>18</sup>Mohler, *The Conviction to Lead*, 73.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>20</sup>Quicke, *360-Degree Leadership*, 47-48.

## Leading Believers through Expository Preaching

A pastor must lead according to the Word in order for God to lead His people because God will not lead His people contrary to His Word. Consequently God will not lead His people through the pastor's ideas or opinions, therefore a pastor must commit to lead God's people in accord to His Word. Marshall and Payne note, "The pastor is a prayerful preacher who shapes and drives the entire ministry through his biblical, expositional preaching."<sup>21</sup> If a pastor leads by the Word, then expository preaching is the best method. Leading through preaching does not have to be coerced as Quicke notes, "Preachers do not have to import leadership notions into the text but rather to respond to God's leadership power already within the text."<sup>22</sup> Leading is accomplished through the biblical text. In *On Being a Pastor* Prime testifies about his ministry that "the regular and systematic teaching of the Scriptures has been the best and most effective means of leadership."<sup>23</sup> The pastor's work is to preach the Word of God while God's work is to bring about transformation and leadership. Paul's admonition to Timothy is an appropriate application, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth" (2 Tim 2:15). As long as the pastor accurately exegetes and applies the Bible through his expository preaching ministry, then God does the leading in the power of His Spirit.

Evangelism is one way God clearly leads through His Word. If a pastor has a high view of the Bible, then he will clearly see evangelism as a mandate for the church. A pastor who understands the Bible to speak of a literal hell for those who reject Jesus and heaven for those who accept him will have a great urgency to share the gospel of Jesus

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<sup>21</sup>Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine: The Ministry Mind-Shift That Changes Everything* (Kingsford, NSW: Matthias Media, 2009), 99.

<sup>22</sup>Quicke, *360-Degree Leadership*, 55.

<sup>23</sup>Derek Prime and Alistair Begg, *On Being a Pastor: Understanding Our Calling and Work* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2004), 225. The testimony is attributed wholly to Prime as indicated in the book by "DP."

Christ.<sup>24</sup> He will also know his responsibility to lead the church in obedience to the Great Commission and will find expository preaching to be truly effective. In *Built to Last* Jim Collins and Jerry Porras wrote that every organization needs a "big hairy audacious goal,"<sup>25</sup> and Quicke notes that for the church it is the Great Commission.<sup>26</sup> A pastor therefore should lead the church towards fulfilling the Great Commission, and expository preaching is the best approach because it comes with the authority of God when delivered in the same way the Holy Spirit inspired. Rainer's research proves that most evangelistic churches are committed to expository preaching. Rainer observes, "The believers who are firmly grounded in the Word, we discovered, were more likely to be evangelistic and outreach-oriented."<sup>27</sup> Through his expository preaching ministry, a pastor should lead believers in personal evangelism.

### **Leading Believers through Expository Preaching to Evangelize Personally**

Not only should a pastor lead through his expository preaching ministry, he must lead the church in fulfilling the Great Commission. He will discover that his expository preaching ministry is the most effective way to lead the members in personal evangelism, but he will also find that he must lead in other ways for the church to fulfill the duty of making disciples.

### **Believers Rarely Evangelize without Being Led**

If a local church is going to be faithful to the Great Commission, then a pastor

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<sup>24</sup>Thom Rainer, *Effective Evangelistic Churches: Successful Churches Reveal What Works and What Doesn't* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 199.

<sup>25</sup>James C. Collins and Jerry I. Porras, *Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies* (New York: HarperCollins, 2002), 91-114. Chapter 5 is entitled "Big Hairy Audacious Goals."

<sup>26</sup>Quicke, *360-Degree Leadership*, 27.

<sup>27</sup>Rainer, *Effective Evangelistic Churches*, 196.

must lead them to be an evangelizing church through expository preaching. Most churches will not be an evangelistic force without their pastor leading them to do so. Rainer bemoans the current state of local churches. He observes they have less and less emphasis on evangelism. He concludes, "I believe the lack of evangelism with the local church is reaching a crisis stage."<sup>28</sup> A possible reason is that evangelism is hard and takes commitment, therefore a pastor must always lead the church to be evangelistic. Rainer observes this to be true of leaders in evangelistic churches, "They viewed evangelism as the most urgent task of the church so they kept pressing on. Make no mistake about it. Evangelism is hard work."<sup>29</sup> No matter how hard the work of evangelism is, Jesus clearly commanded it, so a pastor must remain committed to the Great Commission. Evangelism is hard because it is spiritual war. Lawless discerns, "The task of evangelism is not easy—that shouldn't surprise us. Evangelism is about reaching out to people who are caught in the Devil's snare. *Evangelism is itself a spiritual battle, as we take the gospel of light into the kingdom of darkness.*"<sup>30</sup> Clearly evangelism is hard work but worth the effort for lost souls to be saved.

Evangelism is also a matter of obedience because disobedience only results in failure. Robinson assesses, "Perpetual disobedience to the basic command of our Lord Jesus Christ results in spiritual deadness. It is little wonder that we see such powerlessness within churches when 95 percent of the members live in continuous disobedience to the primary command of Christ."<sup>31</sup> Unfortunately, disobedient Christians fill many churches and therefore comprise powerless churches. Without an emphasis on

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<sup>28</sup>Thom Rainer, "Lead Your Church to Be Evangelistic," *Facts and Trends* 60, no. 2 (Spring 2014): 7.

<sup>29</sup>Rainer, *Effective Evangelistic Churches*, 194.

<sup>30</sup>Lawless, *Discipled Warriors*, 83.

<sup>31</sup>Robinson, *Total Church Life*, 183.

evangelism, Farrell attests, "The church is always one generation from extinction."<sup>32</sup> Before long, evangelism ceases to be a priority. Rainer writes that evangelism can easily be forgotten in the church. If evangelism is not prioritized, then the church is on a path towards death, and the enemy loves for churches to neglect evangelism.<sup>33</sup> The enemy attacks in many clever ways, and one way is to deceive believers by misappropriating the evangelism problem to the lost. Stetzer observes,

It's a fascinating thing. When Christians discuss evangelism, we almost always focus on non-Christians. We talk about how hard it is to share Christ with them. They don't want to listen. Their hearts are hardened. They're too secular. . . . We make it sound like the harvest is the problem. . . . He [Jesus] saw the problem lying with the workers – they were few.<sup>34</sup>

A local church will be in crisis if the pastor does not lead believers towards Great Commission faithfulness.

The Great Commission issued by Jesus should embolden pastors to lead churches regardless the cost. Robinson captures the mission well, "They [the last words of Jesus] are words of inescapable responsibility and privilege that were emblazoned into the minds and hearts of those who heard Him on the Mount of Ascension and have been burned into our hearts today by the Holy Spirit whom He promised to give to Christians."<sup>35</sup> A pastor compelled by the command of Jesus leads believers to evangelize because it is one of the church's primary tasks. Anderson rightly believes God's glory is at stake, "the single, overall purpose of the church is to glorify God and that one of the primary ways of glorifying God, according to the Bible, is through evangelism."<sup>36</sup> If a

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<sup>32</sup>Tom Farrell, *Preaching That Pleases God: The Keys to Life-Changing Bible Exposition* (Lancaster, CA: Striving Together Publications, 2010), 201.

<sup>33</sup>Rainer, "Lead Your Church to Be Evangelistic," 7.

<sup>34</sup>Ed Stetzer, "The Problem with the Harvest Is Not the Harvest," *Facts and Trends* 60, no. 2 (Spring 2014): 50.

<sup>35</sup>Robinson, *Total Church Life*, 145.

<sup>36</sup>Robert C. Anderson, *The Effective Pastor: A Practical Guide to the Ministry* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), 228.

church does not evangelize, then it ceases to function as God intends. Easum agrees, "every church is expected to share Jesus Christ with the world. That is what the church exists to do. No exceptions exist. Churches don't have the luxury of putting themselves at the center of their ministry. Everyone is expected to support the effort by their church to reach out and share Jesus Christ. Sharing our faith is the essence of the church."<sup>37</sup>

Churches do not prioritize evangelism unless led to do so, and a pastor is the primary, evangelistic leader. Robinson strongly maintains,

The critical determining factor in the church's effectiveness in evangelistic outreach is the pastor's leadership. The pastor is the gatekeeper whose decisions about evangelism and whose modeling of evangelism determines whether laypeople will be equipped and involved in reaching people who need Christ and whether the church conducts evangelistic activities and projects. The pastor does more than any other person to encourage evangelism and to help develop the climate of concern for lost people in the church. He will either help evangelism to flow like a powerful river of living water in the church, or he will become a barrier and a bottleneck through his rejection of evangelistic leadership or his passivity about evangelism. . . . No one in the church can go around the pastor and cause evangelism to be effective.<sup>38</sup>

Rainer agrees with Robinson's assessment, "Effective evangelism, humanly speaking, is the result of leadership."<sup>39</sup> A pastor therefore cannot delegate evangelism away. "If the people are going to bleed for souls, the pastor must hemorrhage,"<sup>40</sup> Robinson vividly writes. The responsibility lies with the pastor to lead the church to be outwardly focused on lost souls. Easum expresses, "God wants the church to reach out to the unchurched. You can't speak about this theme enough because, left to its own, the church will always return focusing on itself. That's simply part of our basic sin and one reason spiritual leaders are needed."<sup>41</sup> Evangelism must regularly be on the mind of the pastor or the

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<sup>37</sup>Bill Easum, *Preaching for Church Transformation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010), 74.

<sup>38</sup>Robinson, *Total Church Life*, 149.

<sup>39</sup>Rainer, *Effective Evangelistic Churches*, 195.

<sup>40</sup>Robinson, *Total Church Life*, 210.

<sup>41</sup>Easum, *Preaching for Church Transformation*, 55.



church will become inwardly focused.

As the pastor continually focuses outwardly, the church should grow. A church faithful to the Great Commission should see souls saved. Robinson contends, "A healthy church will reach people for Christ. Church growth is a result, not a goal!"<sup>42</sup> Since church growth is a result of evangelism, churches should not overly focus on numerical growth. Pastors that lead churches to be faithful to the Great Commission leave the numerical growth to God. Yet a church that desires to stay small does not understand Jesus' mandate because church growth happens when it makes disciples.<sup>43</sup>

Because evangelism is a priority for the church, many approaches exist, but personal evangelism is the best approach to fulfill the Great Commission. Through his experience, Robinson proposes, "Personal witness is primary. There is no other way many individuals will be won to Christ. . . . There is no other way many will ever be confronted with the gospel except through the personal witness of a believer."<sup>44</sup> He also provides an excellent definition for personal evangelism, "Personal presentation is the spiritually sensitive confrontation of an individual with the claims of Christ on his or her life. It involves a caring believer guiding a lost person through the conversion experience under the leadership of the Holy Spirit," and he emphasizes the pastor's ambition, "It should be the goal of every pastor to inspire and equip every member to lead people to Christ and to guide them tenderly through the conversion experience and into the life of the church."<sup>45</sup> In God's power a pastor must fan the flames for personal evangelism and ignite passions for workers to reap the harvest, and he will most effectively do this

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<sup>42</sup>Robinson, *Total Church Life*, 1.

<sup>43</sup>Easum, *Preaching for Church Transformation*, 100. Easum captures the idea that churches should not desire to get big, but growth is inevitable when fulfilling the Great Commission.

<sup>44</sup>Robinson, *Total Church Life*, 181.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, 172.

through expository preaching ministry.

### **Leading from the Pulpit**

A pastor's expository preaching ministry is the foundation through which he leads church members to evangelize. If a pastor tries to lead church members in personal evangelism apart from the preaching ministry, then he lacks the power and authority of God's inspired Word. He must intentionally prepare his preaching schedule, diligently pray over it, and implement it to lead the local church under the direction of the Holy Spirit, specifically evangelizing the lost.

**Preach evangelistically.** Evangelism should steadily be on the pastor's mind and evidenced in his preaching. His sermons may not all have the gospel as the main subject, but they should have evangelistic impact for both the lost and saved.<sup>46</sup> He should regularly preach expository messages where the gospel is central because evangelistic preaching results in lost souls being saved and saved souls seeking the lost. Rainer finds this to be true in his research, "Over 90 percent of the respondents indicated preaching was a major factor in their churches' evangelistic effectiveness."<sup>47</sup> God uses preaching for His evangelistic purposes, yet the goal of preaching has to be more than presenting the gospel for the lost in the audience to be saved. Even when evangelistic sermons are done well, it is not enough to fulfill the evangelistic mandate. Most lost people will not come to a church, so they will not hear the gospel through sermons. Evangelistic preaching should also call church members to evangelize personally.

In order to lead church members in personal evangelism, a pastor must demonstrate the evangelism mandate is for all believers, not just the clergy. Undoubtedly, some believers do not believe evangelism is their responsibility. Robinson agrees, "Many

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<sup>46</sup>Rainer, *Effective Evangelistic Churches*, 64. Rainer makes a proposal entitled, "Evangelistic Intentionality in Sermons Is as Important as Evangelistic Preaching."

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 50.

Christians do not share Jesus because they do not realize that they are supposed to witness. . . . The laity must realize that witnessing is not an option."<sup>48</sup> A pastor needs to lead church members to understand, as Dever writes, "If you are a believer, you have been commanded to share the good news of Jesus Christ with others."<sup>49</sup> Thus evangelism is not a matter of giftedness but obedience. Dever also reasons, "You may conclude that evangelism is not your gift, but it is still your duty."<sup>50</sup> At its essence, evangelism comes down to obedience. As Robinson holds, "Every Christian is to witness for Jesus. The only choice is to obey or disobey."<sup>51</sup> Unfortunately the statistics indicate most believers are disobedient, so pastors need to lead them in obedience. Robinson writes, "A few years ago it was estimated to require one thousand laypersons and six ministers one year to lead one person to Christ. It was also estimated that 95 percent of the Christians today never lead a soul to Christ. This is the reversal of Jesus' strategy of New Testament evangelism."<sup>52</sup> One major way a pastor can lead the church to be more faithful in personal evangelism is by casting an evangelistic vision.

**Cast an evangelistic vision.** A pastor has an excellent opportunity to cast an evangelistic vision through his preaching ministry. Easum notes, "You never have as much influence over the congregation as when you are standing in the pulpit; use that time to reshape your church for mission and growth."<sup>53</sup> The pastor prioritizes evangelism in the church and does it best in his preaching. Hemphill concurs, "Pastors have the

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<sup>48</sup>Robinson, *Total Church Life*, 175.

<sup>49</sup>Mark E. Dever, *The Gospel & Personal Evangelism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), 98.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>51</sup>Robinson, *Total Church Life*, 174.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup>Easum, *Preaching for Church Transformation*, back cover.

greatest responsibility and opportunity to create and maintain an evangelistic climate in the church through their preaching. . . . For the church to have a shared vision for fulfilling the Great Commission, the pastor must communicate that vision from the pulpit."<sup>54</sup>

Similarly Rainer notices a common thread amongst pastors who are leading evangelistic churches. He observes, "These pastors see the pulpit as the focus for evangelism in both the messages they preach and the emphasis they make in this speaking forum. They not only see the sermon itself as a vehicle for evangelism, but everything that is said from the pulpit provides the church leadership and direction."<sup>55</sup> The pastor should always be promoting and leading the church towards evangelism. He encourages evangelism in many ways realizing the sermon is the most powerful avenue. Easum advises, "As you prepare to preach any message, keep in mind that the most outwardly facing church is just one decision away from turning inward!"<sup>56</sup> A way to keep sermons focused on evangelism is to evaluate the current reality and present a hopeful future anchored in God's promises.<sup>57</sup> Even though the current reality of evangelism may be discouraging, a pastor can cast an encouraging vision referring to Jesus' promises in Matthew 28:20 and Acts 1:8 when He promises His presence and success. In the end, Killinger sums up the importance of preaching and evangelism, "It is preaching that both initiates and sustains the mission enterprise of the church."<sup>58</sup> To be effective in evangelism, a pastor will lead through the preaching ministry and beyond.

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<sup>54</sup>Ken Hemphill, "Preaching and Evangelism," in *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching*, ed. Michael Duduit (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 521-22.

<sup>55</sup>Rainer, *Effective Evangelistic Churches*, 15.

<sup>56</sup>Easum, *Preaching for Church Transformation*, 53.

<sup>57</sup>Quicke, *360-Degree Leadership*, 111. While Quicke promotes the concept, he does not apply it specifically to evangelism.

<sup>58</sup>Killinger, *The Centrality of Preaching*, 102.

## Leading beyond the Pulpit

Leading through preaching can move a church toward faithful evangelism. Easum correctly writes, "It's not exegesis that's going to move your church forward; it's the passionate and consistent way you point your congregation toward its mission with Jesus."<sup>59</sup> Sermons are the primary way a pastor will lead the church in evangelism. A pastor should urge personal evangelism through his expository preaching ministry while utilizing other avenues of leadership to advocate personal evangelism. Marshall and Payne support this idea,

Sermons are needed, yes, but they are not all that is needed. Let's be absolutely clear: the preaching of powerful, faithful, compelling biblical expositions is absolutely vital and necessary to the life and growth of our congregations. . . . Clear, strong, powerful public preaching is the bedrock and foundation upon which all other ministry in the congregation is built. The sermon is a rallying call. It is where the whole congregation can together feed on God's word and be challenged, comforted and edified. The public preaching ministry is like a framework that sets the standard and agenda for all the other word ministries that take place. . . . To say that sermons (in the sense of Bible expositions in our Sunday gatherings) are necessary but not sufficient is simply to stand on the theological truth that it is the word of the gospel that is sufficient, rather than any one particular form of its delivery.<sup>60</sup>

In order to lead believers in the Great Commission, a pastor leads from the pulpit and beyond the pulpit.

**Leading to evangelize is more than preaching.** Bill Easum began pastoring a small church of thirty-seven and by God's grace grew it to be one of the largest United Methodist churches in the United States during his twenty-four year ministry. He recorded his preaching Scriptures and ideas from the first eight months in *Preaching for Church Transformation*.<sup>61</sup> He provides insights how to preach through Acts in order to lead a church in evangelism. His model emphasizes preaching but also instructs a pastor how to utilize the preaching ministry in leading a church to fulfill the Great Commission.

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<sup>59</sup>Easum, *Preaching for Church Transformation*, xii.

<sup>60</sup>Marshall and Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine*, 102-3.

<sup>61</sup>Easum, *Preaching for Church Transformation*, xi.

He suggests three essentials for transformation: "The Holy Spirit," "Transformational Preaching," and "Committed People."<sup>62</sup> Preaching hence is the main element for leading in transformation but is not the only element. Of course a pastor leads in other ways, too. Quicke warns, "Communication and implementation of genuine vision can be left entirely to organizational announcements outside the pulpit as thin-blooded preaching steers clear of applying Scripture to a process of congregational transformation."<sup>63</sup>

A pastor should strive to create a culture for evangelism. He should primarily do this during the preaching ministry, and accentuate evangelism in other ways. For example he may preach about evangelism publicly but enlist believers for evangelism privately,<sup>64</sup> or he may choose to preach on evangelism and incorporate evangelism in his writing opportunities. On the writing aspect, Mohler asserts convincingly,

In order to be understood, leaders must learn to write and to set time aside for writing. One important reason for this investment is the fact that the written word can do what the spoken word simply cannot do—sit flat on a page and demand attention. Most of the words we deploy in any given day can be forgotten almost instantly. But the words we want to last, to influence tomorrow and not just today, are words best committed to writing.<sup>65</sup>

Through writing and other ways, a pastor will want to create a culture for evangelism. He will also want to make sure evangelism is in all the ministries of the church.<sup>66</sup> He will desire for all members to be engaged in evangelism. By God's grace a pastor will over time cultivate an evangelistic atmosphere. Stiles demonstrates how a pastor should yearn, "I yearn for a culture of evangelism with brothers and sisters whose backs are up to mine

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<sup>62</sup>Easum, *Preaching for Church Transformation*, 14.

<sup>63</sup>Quicke, *360-Degree Leadership*, 38.

<sup>64</sup>D. James Kennedy, *Evangelism Explosion: Equipping Churches for Friendship, Evangelism, Discipleship, and Healthy Growth*, 4th ed. (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1996), 8. Kennedy recommends personal recruiting by the pastor first and also by trained laymen.

<sup>65</sup>Mohler, *The Conviction to Lead*, 168.

<sup>66</sup>Rainer, "Lead Your Church to be Evangelistic," 7. Rainer gives ten recommendations on how a pastor can lead in evangelism, and "Get the gospel in all the ministries" is one.

in battle; where I'm taught and I teach about what it means to share our faith; and where I see leaders in the church leading people to Jesus."<sup>67</sup>

**A pastor must lead in prayer.** Private prayer is important in a pastor's life. It shows his dependence on the Holy Spirit to live out his responsibilities. Unfortunately, some pastors pray less than ten minutes per day. Lawless comments, "If these findings are anywhere close to reality, we can assume that the prayer life of most pastors isn't alarming the Enemy."<sup>68</sup> A pastor must be engaged in spiritual warfare through prayer, especially for his own personal evangelism. He should pray for opportunities, as Dever writes, "Simply put, we don't pray for opportunities to share the gospel, so how surprised should we be when they don't come? If you're not evangelizing because you think you lack opportunities, pray and be amazed as God answers your prayers."<sup>69</sup> A pastor's private prayer life will fuel his public leading. Lawless has the right perspective, "Lead from your knees if you want to grow a church with disciplined warriors."<sup>70</sup>

For a church to be effective evangelistically, a pastor must lead the church to pray for evangelism. Based on his research, Rainer concludes his chapter entitled "Churches that Pray," with a summary section, "Evangelistic Churches Are Praying Churches."<sup>71</sup> Prayer must be a priority for evangelism to be fruitful, and the leadership of the pastor is crucial. He should pray for lost souls regularly, as Stiles writes,

Pray in church services, in small groups, in gatherings in homes, at special events, and as a part of your devotional time. I have a friend who says he tries to pray prayers like those the Puritans prayed, prayers 'God would blush not to answer.' Let the people around you know that the salvation of the lost is on your heart before

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<sup>67</sup>J. Mack Stiles, *Evangelism: How the Whole Church Speaks of Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 61.

<sup>68</sup>Lawless, *Disciplined Warriors*, 190.

<sup>69</sup>Dever, *The Gospel & Personal Evangelism*, 24.

<sup>70</sup>Lawless, *Disciplined Warriors*, 191.

<sup>71</sup>Rainer, *Effective Evangelistic Churches*, 79.

God.<sup>72</sup>

Prayer should be on a pastor's heart, and the members should know by the way he prays that he cares for lost souls to be saved. Not only should the pastor pray for the conversion of souls publicly, he may consider thanking God for his own salvation periodically and demonstrating his gratefulness.<sup>73</sup> A pastor may also pray for boldness in witnessing and ask members to pray for him considering the example of Paul who did not run from the spiritual battle but pleaded for prayer support (Eph 6:19-20; Col 4:2-4).

A pastor should also lead the church by developing a prayer strategy. A pastor may recommend church members keep a personal prayer list. Robinson writes, "Keep the names of lost people before the members of the church for prayer and to help them to be alert for witnessing opportunities. The goal is to help individual members to develop their personal prospect list, keep it current, and daily pray for lost people."<sup>74</sup> By consistently praying for lost people, members will have evangelism on their hearts and minds. A pastor could enlist members to pray for him as he leads evangelistically as another part of the strategy.<sup>75</sup> He could also recruit an evangelistic prayer team that prays for personal evangelism, specifically for the witness to be bold and the lost to be receptive. He may encourage the prayer warriors with the example of both Jesus and Paul who prayed for those they evangelized. In John 17, Jesus prayed for those who would believe through the disciples, and Paul prayed for the Israelites to be saved in Romans 10:1.<sup>76</sup> In the end he should not be discouraged if only a few participate. Lawless encourages, "Get the prayer warriors praying for persistence, and challenge the people to march on to fulfill the Great

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<sup>72</sup>Stiles, *Evangelism*, 96.

<sup>73</sup>Dever, *The Gospel & Personal Evangelism*, 116. Dever suggests pastors pray for lost souls and to thank God for their own salvation in order to "keep your gratitude fresh."

<sup>74</sup>Robinson, *Total Church Life*, 158.

<sup>75</sup>Lawless, *Discipled Warriors*, 115.

<sup>76</sup>Dever, *The Gospel & Personal Evangelism*, 60.



Commission. God can change a congregation with a few people committed to overcoming the Enemy."<sup>77</sup>

**A pastor must develop a plan.** Without a plan, churches will not evangelize, so a pastor needs to develop a plan. A plan indicates evangelism is important and displays it is intentional. An evangelistic plan should influence the church schedule and finances. Robinson asserts, "If people are to be reached, intentional evangelism must be scheduled into the calendar. . . . If people are to be reached for Christ, money must be budgeted annually to implement the strategy of total evangelism."<sup>78</sup>

A pastor must create corporate opportunities for church members to participate in evangelism. He must help believers understand they must go to the lost because the lost will not likely come to church. He will need to cast a vision for members to seek the lost. Robinson agrees, "the people of our world will never be reached from the pulpits of our churches. These people are not coming to church. The church must go to them."<sup>79</sup> Easum asserts that churches should not attract the lost to the church building, rather the church members must go to them and share the gospel.<sup>80</sup> Part of a pastor's strategy may include door-to-door visitation because, as Robinson states, "We find lost people behind *doors*."<sup>81</sup> The more opportunities the church provides for members to witness, the more likely they will witness as a lifestyle. Robinson deduces, "Far more lifestyle witnessing goes on in a live church than through organized witnessing; yet the lifestyle witnessing would decline and become minimal if the organized process were to be stopped or de-

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<sup>77</sup>Lawless, *Disciplined Warriors*, 198.

<sup>78</sup>Robinson, *Total Church Life*, 209.

<sup>79</sup>*Ibid.*, 175.

<sup>80</sup>Easum, *Preaching for Church Transformation*, 105.

<sup>81</sup>Robinson, *Total Church Life*, 159.

emphasized."<sup>82</sup> A pastor should encourage both personal and corporate evangelism because both are needed to fulfill the Great Commission.

Part of a strategic plan for evangelism will likely include programs.

Evangelistic programming is beneficial but does not lead church members to evangelize.

While evangelistic programs are appropriate, they do not have the thrust needed to sustain an evangelistic ministry. Stiles warns,

A strict diet of evangelistic programs produces malnourished evangelism. Just as eating sugar can make us feel as if we've eaten when we haven't, programs can often make us feel as if we've done evangelism when we haven't. So we should have a healthy unease with programs. We should use them strategically but in moderation, remembering that God did not send an event, he sent his Son.<sup>83</sup>

Evangelistic programs are a beneficial tool if used properly to fit into the overarching culture of evangelism. Robinson concludes, "The church uses programs and activities, but evangelism is its lifestyle. A climate of evangelism must permeate the total church life."<sup>84</sup> Ultimately, evangelism cannot be viewed as "a special activity to be undertaken at a prescribed time, such as a once-a-year crusade or a once-a-week visitation effort."<sup>85</sup>

Evangelism must be the lifestyle of the church, and programs should only be part of the climate for evangelism.

**A pastor must join evangelism and discipleship.** If the goal of evangelism is to fulfill the Great Commission, then evangelism and discipleship are both required to "make disciples." Evangelism and discipleship cannot be compartmentalized.<sup>86</sup> If they are separated, then evangelism only produces converts to Christianity, while the Great Commission encompasses both evangelism and discipleship. Rainer writes, "Effective

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<sup>82</sup>Robinson, *Total Church Life*, 182.

<sup>83</sup>Stiles, *Evangelism*, 46.

<sup>84</sup>Robinson, *Total Church Life*, 25.

<sup>85</sup>Kennedy, *Evangelism Explosion*, 4.

<sup>86</sup>Rainer, *Effective Evangelistic Churches*, 169-70.

evangelism is the Great Commission evangelism of Matthew 28:19, evangelism that makes disciples."<sup>87</sup> Therefore evangelism must have spiritual multiplication as the goal.

Kennedy stresses,

Spiritual multiplication will not take place unless converts are turned into evangelists, disciples into disciplers. Since about 95 percent of converts never win anyone to Christ because they are not equipped to do so, it is obvious that training a person to evangelize effectively will be more fruitful than merely winning someone to Christ.<sup>88</sup>

So an excellent way to begin the discipleship process is to include new Christians in witnessing. Robinson notes many benefits, "A commitment to witness consistently will drive one to prayer, create a desire for Bible study, and force one to give attention to personal daily conduct."<sup>89</sup> Through their decades of experience, Kennedy discovered that evangelism training takes place best in a discipleship relationship with a mature believer.<sup>90</sup> Training for evangelism is a process, not a program, thus a new disciple will grow more from a relationship with a mature disciple than in a classroom. No matter how a pastor plans to lead, he must ensure the growing disciple is trained for personal evangelism. Lawless accedes, "Believers who haven't been disciplined become discouraged when the Enemy attacks. Discouraged warriors don't last long in the war."<sup>91</sup> In other words, a pastor must ensure members are equipped for evangelism.

**A pastor must equip church members in evangelism.** Paul declares pastors, among others, bear the responsibility of equipping believers in Ephesians 4:11-12, a pastor diligently has to equip members for evangelism.<sup>92</sup> Lawless makes an excellent

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<sup>87</sup>Rainer, *Effective Evangelistic Churches*, 169.

<sup>88</sup>Kennedy, *Evangelism Explosion*, 6.

<sup>89</sup>Robinson, *Total Church Life*, 180.

<sup>90</sup>Kennedy, *Evangelism Explosion*, xii.

<sup>91</sup>Lawless, *Disciplined Warriors*, 93.

<sup>92</sup>Dever, *The Gospel & Personal Evangelism*, 116. Dever writes, "Realize, too, that you are called to equip the saints to evangelize."

point:

No one would think of putting an untrained civilian at the controls of a state-of-the-art warplane, but we think nothing of sending troops into spiritual warfare without proper understanding of God's arsenal to live victoriously. We are more of a threat to the church than to the Enemy. Healthy churches that win spiritual battles take the time to equip believers through teaching and mentoring. Discipled warriors know how to walk obediently and how to stand firmly against the Enemy.<sup>93</sup>

Robinson echoes the pastor's responsibility, "It should be the goal of every pastor to inspire and equip every member to lead people to Christ and to guide them tenderly through the conversion experience and into the life of the church."<sup>94</sup> Believers are not accidentally discipled or equipped for evangelism, therefore a pastor must develop a plan.

To present everyone mature in Christ (Col 1:28), the preaching ministry "is given prime responsibility for making it happen by God's grace."<sup>95</sup> A pastor cannot fully equip through preaching, but he should start with the preaching ministry. Dever captures the whole picture well:

We can equip not only through our preaching, but by our conversations, the books we give out, the way we admit new members (we always ask them to recount the gospel and their testimony with us). We can provide the congregation with training in specific evangelistic tools. We can model a concern for evangelism and conversions in our prayers. We can sponsor special evangelistic events. We can encourage the members by having times for sharing and praying in which we specifically pray for evangelistic initiatives and for particular conversions.<sup>96</sup>

Equipping is more than preaching, yet preaching is the primary way. Through the preaching ministry, a pastor can continually cast the vision for evangelism and ensure training opportunities are available.

Evangelism has to be a "front-burner issue in our churches, it needs constant encouragement, ongoing training, and longterm, focused leadership of the kind these

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<sup>93</sup>Lawless, *Discipled Warriors*, 105.

<sup>94</sup>Robinson, *Total Church Life*, 172.

<sup>95</sup>Quicke, *360-Degree Leadership*, 18.

<sup>96</sup>Dever, *The Gospel & Personal Evangelism*, 117-18.

pastors are providing in their congregations."<sup>97</sup> A pastor continually inserts evangelism in his preaching and teaching. He may desire to preach on personal evangelism and offer formal training to coincide. Any personal evangelism training will be more effective if it launches out of the expository preaching ministry because the foundation for evangelism will be rooted in God's Word.

Another way to equip members in evangelism is to establish the need. A pastor may evaluate the current effectiveness of all evangelism approaches to determine how to equip. Rainer gives some helpful questions to consider:

As a church leader, you have a responsibility to honestly assess your current effectiveness in evangelism. Does your church have intentional ministries focused on spreading the good news of Jesus Christ? What training programs are in place to ensure your members are equipped to confidently share their faith? And, perhaps most importantly, what are you doing to be more evangelistic and to demonstrate your commitment to personal evangelism?<sup>98</sup>

Likely a pastor will want to utilize mentoring as a way to equip members for evangelism. Lawless agrees, "One of the best strategies for equipping believers is mentoring, *a God-given relationship in which one growing Christian encourages and equips another believer to reach his or her potential as a disciple of Christ.*"<sup>99</sup> By utilizing mentoring, natural training will occur. Robinson discovered, "On-the-job training is an effective method of equipping for witness. . . . *Evangelism is caught as well as taught.*"<sup>100</sup>

To ensure the goal of evangelism is not shortsighted, a pastor should regularly describe what successful evangelism is. For a pastor, Kennedy describes, "A basic criterion for determining the successfulness of a pastorate would then become: 'How many saints have I equipped to do the work of ministry?' As ministers, then, we need to see ourselves not as the star performers or virtuosos but rather as the coaches of well-

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<sup>97</sup>Stiles, *Evangelism*, 98.

<sup>98</sup>Rainer, "Lead Your Church to be Evangelistic," 7.

<sup>99</sup>Lawless, *Discipled Warriors*, 122.

<sup>100</sup>Robinson, *Total Church Life*, 179.

trained and well-coordinated teams of personal evangelists!"<sup>101</sup> Success for a pastor is determined in his equipping ministry that will be greatly enhanced through his expository preaching ministry. A pastor also should describe success for all believers. Again, Kennedy describes,

Do not judge the effectiveness of your evangelism and discipleship by what you see in the person you have evangelized. Measure your effectiveness by your spiritual grandchildren. If those you evangelize and disciple produce good disciples who can disciple others, then you have done your job well. A disciple is a functional, maturing, reproducing follower of Jesus Christ. . . . Until you have done everything possible to develop your disciple into a vital, reproducing member of the local church, your responsibilities are not fulfilled.<sup>102</sup>

By keeping the goal of evangelism always before himself and the church members, a pastor will help maintain the whole Great Commission is fulfilled and not just the niche of evangelism.

**A pastor must lead in celebrating personal evangelism.** Since personal evangelism is hard work and so few believers are regularly sharing their faith, a pastor would be wise to celebrate personal evangelism often. Easum testifies, "Every study shows that sharing one's faith is one of the hardest aspects of being a Christian. . . . When people actually share their faith, let some of them give their testimony during worship. It will encourage others to do the same."<sup>103</sup> Stiles also encourages the celebration of personal evangelism, "It's hugely important in developing a culture of evangelism. There is nothing so discouraging as feeling that a church is more interested in manning the nursery than sharing the faith."<sup>104</sup>

Finally Kennedy believes celebrating personal evangelism is so important they promote "report-back sessions" after a time of evangelistic visitation to prevent

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<sup>101</sup>Kennedy, *Evangelism Explosion*, 5.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid., 103.

<sup>103</sup>Easum, *Preaching for Church Transformation*, 72.

<sup>104</sup>Stiles, *Evangelism*, 57.

discouragement. The celebration time can also be used by a pastor as another opportunity to equip for evangelism. For example, he may advise how to overcome obstacles a team encountered.<sup>105</sup> If neglected, a pastor may lose an excellent opportunity of encouragement for those willing to evangelize personally.

**A pastor must lead by example.** A servant leader cannot ask the people to do something he is not currently practicing (1 Pet 5:3), and personal evangelism is no exception for a pastor. Robinson asserts,

A pastor cannot know the victory of spiritual power apart from a consistent lifestyle of witnessing for Jesus. If he does not share Christ personally with people, he will certainly not be effective when he comes to the pulpit on Sunday morning. . . . the pastor is an example to the flock of God. Members seldom become significantly involved in witness apart from the leadership of the pastor. If the pastor doesn't the people won't. The pastor's witness is a model for the membership of the church. He not only instructs them for witness, but demonstrates witness to them through his personal lifestyle. They observe and emulate his attitude, spirit, and techniques.<sup>106</sup>

Expository preaching is the most effective way to lead believers in personal evangelism, but a pastor has no authority to preach what he is not practicing. Robinson again purports, "No pastor has the right to stand in the pulpit and declare the gospel of Christ who is not actively involved in sharing Christ personally."<sup>107</sup>

No matter how much a pastor preaches the mandates to make disciples, they are meaningless if he is not setting an example. A preacher cannot expect to preach evangelism on Sundays unless he is modeling it on Mondays.<sup>108</sup> Rainer observes, "The number one commonality I see in evangelistic churches is a pastor who leads by example."<sup>109</sup> Can a preacher lead believers to evangelize personally if he has never led a

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<sup>105</sup>Kennedy, *Evangelism Explosion*, 10.

<sup>106</sup>Robinson, *Total Church Life*, 92-93.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid., 149.

<sup>108</sup>Kelly Brady, "Practicing What I Preach," *Leadership Journal* (Fall 2012): 51-52.

<sup>109</sup>Rainer, "Lead Your Church to be Evangelistic," 7.

lost soul to the Lord? Spurgeon weighs in, "When Jesus Christ says, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men, He means that you shall really catch men, that you really shall save some; for he that never did get any fish is not a fisherman."<sup>110</sup> A pastor who does not regularly lead lost people to Christ will be ineffective in leading church members to evangelize.

On the other hand, a pastor who faithfully evangelizes gains credibility in his preaching ministry. Malphurs expresses,

When leaders have chosen core set values for their organizations as well as for themselves, it is equally important that they model a lifestyle consistent with these values. This is key to leadership credibility. Leaders shape people's values, and they instill these values more through what they do than through what they say. If their behavior is consistent with their values, they infuse their leadership with large doses of credibility. If, however, their walk does not match their talk, if they articulate one set of values for the organization but operate with a different set, followers will view them as hypocrites, and they will lose all credibility.<sup>111</sup>

A pastor cannot preach evangelism and fail to practice personal evangelism because the dichotomy will show he truly does not value evangelism. A pastor's behavior communicates what is valuable and either give credibility to his words or denounce them.<sup>112</sup> When a pastor regularly evangelizes personally, members get to see how he does it. Malphurs writes, "When leaders (staff, board, and others) consistently model the primary beliefs, people catch a glimpse of what the values look like when fleshed out in real-life ministry situations."<sup>113</sup> What is true of ministry leaders is true for a pastor leading believers to evangelize.

In order to lead by example, a pastor may need to engage more in personal evangelism. He should begin by assessing his current faithfulness in sharing the gospel. He may be as honest as Dever who wrote, "If there is a time in the future when God

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<sup>110</sup>Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Soul Winner*, ed. by David Otis Fuller (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1948), 141.

<sup>111</sup>Malphurs, *Values-Driven Leadership*, 23.

<sup>112</sup>*Ibid.*, 100.

<sup>113</sup>*Ibid.*, 101.



reviews all of our missed evangelistic opportunities, I fear that I could cause more than a minor delay in eternity."<sup>114</sup> A pastor should not dwell on his past but plan for his future. Dever rightly asserts, "we can plan to make time to build relationships or to put ourselves in positions where we know we'll be able to talk with non-Christians. We plan for so many less important things; why not plan for our evangelism?"<sup>115</sup> A pastor must plan to engage in his personal mission field. If he is not around lost people often, then he may find fresh ways to interact with unbelievers. As he evangelizes, a pastor also has an excellent opportunity to mentor a growing disciple. If he knows evangelism opportunities may arise, he should bring along a fellow believer in order to better equip him.

### **Conclusion**

A pastor leads most effectively through an expository preaching ministry. In order to mobilize believers for personal evangelism, he has to lead believers through the Word of God. Personal evangelism ought to be a regular subject in his preaching schedule because he best fans the flames of and casts the vision for evangelism from the pulpit, and Acts is an excellent book to preach expositively using recommendations from chapter three and four of this thesis.

To be most effective a pastor's preaching must also be supported by the rest of his ministry. He should equip church members in making disciples which inevitable includes reaching the lost. A biblical strategy strategy for making disciples would provide the leadership a church needs to fulfill the Great Commission. Even the best strategy will fail if the pastor does not personally "do the work of an evangelist" (2 Tim 4:5) because he will lack credibility with the congregation. Therefore, a pastor best leads believers to evangelize personally through an expository preaching ministry supported through his leadership and example outside the pulpit.

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<sup>114</sup>Dever, *The Gospel & Personal Evangelism*, 15.

<sup>115</sup>Ibid., 24.

This thesis asserts that a pastor best leads church members to evangelize personally through his expository preaching ministry. He must take his command to "preach the Word" ( 2 Tim 4:2) seriously which will include the evangelism mandate found in the NT. He could preach through Acts strategically emphasizing how the early church was empowered by the Holy Spirit to be witnesses and apply the pertinent aspects of personal evangelism to church members. Jerry Vines' ministry could be examined and emulated as an effective model for leading in personal evangelism through an expository preaching ministry. A pastor will also need to reinforce his expository preaching ministry with the leadership applications addressed in this chapter.

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## ABSTRACT

### LEADING BELIEVERS TO EVANGELIZE PERSONALLY THROUGH EXPOSITORY PREACHING

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This thesis argues that expository preaching represents the best way for pastors to lead church members in personal evangelism.

Chapter 1 argues that leading through expository preaching to evangelize personally is not found in most writings.

Chapter 2 asserts that a pastor must "preach the Word" (2 Tim 4:2), thus he must expound the NT biblical mandate for all believers to evangelize personally (Matt 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:49; John 20:21; and Acts 1:8).

Chapter 3 establishes an expository preaching strategy from the book of Acts to demonstrate how believers can be led to evangelize personally.

Chapter 4 examines the expository preaching ministry of Jerry Vines by focusing on his theological convictions about the Bible, Holy Spirit, and prayer, followed by his practical applications of expository preaching and personal evangelism.

Chapter 5 explores the practical implications how an effective, evangelistic pastor may lead, specifically how he leads best through an expository preaching ministry from the pulpit and beyond.

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