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BUILDING A MISSIOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK IN THE
HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS AT FIRST BAPTIST,
CLARKSVILLE, TENNESSEE

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BUILDING A MISSIOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK IN THE
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For from him and through him and to him are all things.

To him be glory forever. Amen.

By grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, for the glory of God alone!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
PREFACE	vi
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Purpose	2
Goals	2
Ministry Context	3
Rationale for the Project	5
Definitions, Limitations, and Delimitations	9
Research Methodology	10
2. THE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL SUPPORT FOR BUILDING A MISSIOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK IN THE LIVES OF HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS	13
Exodus 3: God Sends Moses	14
Isaiah 49:6: God Sends the Servant	17
Matthew 28:18-20: God Sends the Disciples	19
Acts 1:8: God Sends the Holy Spirit	28
Romans 10:13-15: God Sends the Church	31
Concluding Exegesis	32
3. STATISTICS AND LITERATURE ON CHURCH PARTICIPATION RATES OF GRADUATING HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS	34
Recognizing the Need: Statistics and Data on Current Trends in the Church and Student Ministry	35
Responding to the Need: Discipleship in Student Ministry	41

Chapter	Page
Reinforcing the Mandate	49
Conclusion	53
4. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT	55
Session Synopses	56
Results of the Project	69
5. PROJECT EVALUATION	71
Evaluation of the Project’s Purpose	72
Evaluation of the Project’s Goals	73
Strengths of the Project	74
Weaknesses of the Project	76
What I Would Do Differently	77
Theological Reflections	78
Personal Reflections	80
Conclusion	82
 Appendix	
1. PRE- AND POST-COURSE SURVEY	83
2. COURSE EVALUATION RUBRIC	87
3. THE MISSION STRATEGY OF WILLIAM CAREY	88
BIBLIOGRAPHY	103

PREFACE

This research project has only been accomplished through the unyielding commitment of my wife, Amber, and our four children, Brayden, Ryleigh Grace, Brody, and Brooks. My love for each of you increases every day, and I am thankful that you sacrificed so many of those long nights to allow me to be in my office while you slept!

A special word of gratitude is due to my supervisor Dr. Danny Bowen for his encouragement and motivation to me in this entire process. Thank you for all of the (very) early morning meetings and thank you for being so quick to respond to my emails and inquiries. It is increasingly evident to me that God has placed you in your current role to teach students to become both doctors of the church and of the academy. Thank you!

Chad Scarbro

Clarksville, Tennessee

December 2017

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The high school seniors at First Baptist Clarksville, Tennessee, are inundated with an excess of outside influences upon graduation. These soon-to-be alumni are being tossed about from new experience to new ideology as soon as they graduate, if not beforehand. The need for a solid biblical foundation is becoming evident.¹ One way to begin to establish this footing is to give students the resources they need to have a grounded theology of God and his mission.

The Great Commission in Scripture, which is found in all four of the Gospels and in the book of Acts, is of monumental importance in teaching high school seniors sound theology and missiology.² The actual mission that Jesus Christ left for his followers is laid bare in the Great Commission narratives and the outworking of this task is specified to all who read or study its content. In order to impart this truth to students, it must be a priority to study these precepts and consider their implications for graduates as they enter a new sphere of life.

¹Steve R. Parr and Tom Crites write, “The teens in your congregation will be challenged when they attend college and as other influences infiltrate their lives. Much like the house in Matthew chapter seven that experienced storms, winds, floods, the foundation on which they stand will make a difference. Give them the tools they need to depend on the Word of God. Do not be afraid to teach apologetics and theology to your younger members. If they do not receive the instruction from you then they will find it from other sources. Will the other sources support a higher view of Scripture?” Steve R. Parr and Tom Crites, *Why They Stay* (Bloomington, IN: West Bow, 2015), 145.

²Christopher Wright explains, “Missiology is the study of mission. It includes biblical, theological, historical, contemporary and practical reflection and research.” Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 25. Note: the Great Commission narrative in Mark 16:15 is added in the long ending of Mark. Some ancient manuscripts include this ending while others do not include it.

In addition to placing a high priority on teaching the Great Commission to high school seniors, it important to note that some of the students have never actually been disciplined. Just because they have heard the precepts of the Bible does not necessarily mean they are disciples of Jesus Christ. Thus, in the midst of this group lies a great mission field, which brings to the fore an even greater need to impart the Great Commission to these students so that they might become disciples themselves.³

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to teach the high school seniors at First Baptist Clarksville the importance of having a missiological framework in their lives before they enter into college or career.

Goals

Four goals determined the effectiveness of this project. The first goal was to assess the missiological understanding of the high school seniors at First Baptist Clarksville (FBCT). A survey was given to the students in order to gauge their knowledge of missions in Scripture. This goal was considered successfully met when the surveys were completed, scored, and the knowledge of the students was determined.

The second goal of the project was to develop a four-part course that introduced the students to the importance of having a missiological framework before they enter into college or career. This course entails both instructional and practical elements. The intention of this course was to convey the weightiness of the Great Commission in Scripture to the students, while enhancing their understanding of the necessity of missions for the believer in Christ. A panel, consisting of pastors in Southern Baptist churches,

³David Sills writes on the importance of discipleship by adding, “Given the clear instructions in the Great Commission, we should not consider undisciplined people to be reached, as if disciplining them is a subsequent step in Christian ministry. Those who have been disciplined and taught to observe all that Christ has commanded are truly reached. The tragedy of the world is not that it is unreached but that it is undisciplined.” M. David Sills, *Changing World, Unchanging Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2015), 15.

measured this goal. The panel used a rubric to evaluate the scope, sequence, and theological fidelity of the course's instructional components as well as the viability of the course's practical components. This goal was considered successfully met when 90 percent of the evaluation indicators were marked as sufficient or above.

The third goal of this project was to build the missiological framework into the lives of the high school seniors at FBCT by implementing the four-part course. The course guided the participants through the material over the span of a weekend conference setting. During each of the gatherings, the students were taught biblical and theological precepts that detailed the outworking of the Great Commission in Scripture along with other biblical examples that supported the topic of missions. At the conclusion of the course, the participants had the option of participating in a short-term mission trip in the summer of 2018.⁴ The third goal was measured by the percentage of students who completed the course. This goal was considered successful when 90 percent of the participants completed the sessions.

The fourth goal of the project was to measure the level of improvement in understanding of the Great Commission and missiological knowledge of the students. This goal was considered successful if a one-tail, paired *t*-test revealed statistically significant improvement.

Ministry Context

First Baptist Clarksville has a rich history. It celebrated its 185th birthday in July 2016. Eleanor Williams, a Montgomery County church historian, expounds on the historical day when the church was planted in what is modern-day downtown Clarksville:

⁴Michael Pocock, Gailyn Van Rheen, and Douglas McConnell define short-term missions as “trips with a mission focus that range from one week to one or two years. They may be organized by churches, agencies, or even individuals for a variety of reasons.” Michael Pocock, Gailyn Van Rheen, and Douglas McConnell, *The Changing Face of World Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 16. The short-term mission trip in the Summer of 2018, is to work with a church plant in Salt Lake City, Utah, alongside Pastor Derek Duvall. This church plant is part of the North American Mission Board's Send City Initiative.

“In July 1831, this small congregation of 17 members decided to organize their own church, with Spring Creek sponsoring the new church.”⁵ One hundred eighty five years later, there are over 5,000 members of FBCT, and there are thirty-one Southern Baptist churches in Montgomery County.⁶

The population of Clarksville has boomed over the past 20 years. The number of new residents is on the rise each year, and according to the most recent *Factbook*,

Clarksville was the fifth-fastest growing large city nationwide from July 2014 to July 2015, showing a 1.7% increase in a year’s time. In 2015, Clarksville’s city population was 149,176, which increased from 142,357 in 2013. For the county as a whole, the head count was 179,881 in 2015. Growth rates projected in the 2010 Census showed Clarksville will have a population of 170,000 by 2020.⁷

With such an influx of population and with the added transiency of Fort Campbell, Clarksville has become a very diverse city. The population is filled with people who are not originally from Clarksville. This diversity can be seen in the hallways of FBCT every Sunday.⁸ With the added arrival of so many new families to the area and with the unique diversity therein, the student ministry must be ready to serve a variety of people from different ethnic and religious backgrounds every week.

To add another layer of diversity to the student ministry, FBCT has a growing/dynamic Hispanic ministry and Korean ministry. These groups have their own worship services that meet on Sunday morning and their gatherings are bi-lingual. They speak and sing in both English and their heart language. The students in these ministries fall under the leadership of the overall student ministry at FBCT. The Hispanic and Korean

⁵Elanor S. Williams, *Worship along the Warioto* (Clarksville, TN: Leaf Chronicle, 1995), 310.

⁶*The Leaf Chronicle Factbook 2016-2017*, 83rd ed., accessed October, 20, 2016, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/218560070/>, 62

⁷*The Leaf Chronicle Factbook 2016-2017*, 10th ed., accessed October, 20, 2016, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/218559860/>, 63.

⁸*The Leaf Chronicle* writes, “Active duty military- 29,486. Total military family member population- 53,116, Military Retirees- 65,757, Total retiree family population- 91,436. Fort Campbell houses more than 25,000 persons. Sixty-nine percent of assigned soldiers and their families reside off post.” *Ibid.*, 63.

students gather with the English-speaking students on Sunday mornings and they attend Sunday school together.

With all of the diversity at FBCT, the church has been able to sustain consistency in the student ministry. The one primary theme in the student ministry's history has been its focus on, and commitment to, biblical teaching. The three outworkings of this focus are found in Sunday school, Wednesday night worship, and Sunday morning worship. This approach is a time-honored tradition in the church, dating back to the mid-1980s. With a commitment to the primacy of teaching the Bible, numerous young men and women have come out of this ministry to go on and live Christ-centered, God-glorifying lives. However, most recently an ever-growing portion of the graduates are leaving this truth behind and not returning to the church after their student ministry years are over.

Rationale for the Project

Though FBCT has a rich history and has rightly focused on biblical teaching for students throughout their middle and high school years, the most effective way to develop students who are committed to the Great Commission after they graduate high school is to emphasize mission encounters with them through both biblical teaching and actual mission efforts.⁹ It is imperative that these two components are imbedded in the fabric of the students before they enter into the next phase of life.¹⁰ Sending students on

⁹Steve Wright states, "In order to prepare them for life after graduation, we have to spend more time developing students and those who greatly influence them and less time on the machine that demands more and more." Steve Wright, *Re-Think* (Wake Forest, NC: InQuest, 2008), 54. Transformission adds to this topic by showing the need for an emphasis on transforming the whole student, both through information and practical activities. Michael S. Wilder and Shane W. Parker explain, "A model of ministry intent on teenage development should, at least, include two key components. First, we need a holistic philosophy that recognizes the interconnectedness of the whole of the student; second, there must be a healthy emphasis on guiding students through a process of critical thinking and reflection . . . we need an approach to the tension-resolution process and learning that seeks transformation of the whole student; his thinking, attitudes, and behavior." Michael S. Wilder and Shane W. Parker, *Transformission* (Nashville: B & H, 2010), 127.

¹⁰Alvin Reid writes that students need to grasp these two components (biblical teaching and the biblical mission) to prevent them from becoming bored or out of touch with Christianity: "The reason many students seem bored with Christianity stems less from our inability to compete with the cool church down

mission efforts in middle and high school is a noble endeavor, just as summer camps and Disciple Now weekends are both good and right activities for student ministries.¹¹

However, in order for the church to place its Great Commission anchor in the fiber of the souls of the next generation, a process must be in place to challenge them with the truth of God's Word, while simultaneously building mission into their lives. Alvin Reid writes, "Students today, weary of watered-down Bible studies and being treated like grade-school kids, want more. They want truth; they want their lives to matter. They want to be part of something bigger than themselves. Something as big as the mission of God."¹²

Indeed, students want more. Today's culture challenges their hearts and minds at an increasingly earlier stage in life. A major increase in technology, along with the ease of access to a seemingly endless world of information, has continued to send students into a theological tailspin. The influence of the church in America has been displaced by secularism, says R. Albert Mohler, Jr., thus the church no longer represents the central core of the culture.¹³ Because of this shift toward secularism and theological faithlessness, students who are not being confronted with the gospel of Jesus Christ and the mission of disciple making at a young age are in grave danger of missing Jesus altogether as they get older and are more in-step with the methods of the world.

the road (or the world) and more from capturing the imagination of students with the message and mission of God." Alvin Reid, *As You Go* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2013), 75.

¹¹A Disciple Now weekend is an intensive three-day event where students learn Scripture in small groups in homes. The church provides the resources for the event and the students are broken down into groups based on grade and gender. The event culminates on Sunday morning with a special commissioning service that encourages the students to put into practice what they have learned over the course of the Disciple Now weekend.

¹²Reid, *As You Go*, 67.

¹³Albert Mohler writes, "The Christian church now finds itself facing a new reality. The church no longer represents the central core of Western culture. Though outposts of Christian influence remain, these are exceptions rather than the rule. For the most part, the church has been displaced by the reign of secularism." R. Albert Mohler, Jr., "Keeping the Faith in a Faithless Age: The Church as a Moral Minority," April 7, 2016, accessed October, 20, 2016, <http://www.albertmohler.com/2016/04/07/keeping-the-faith-in-a-faithless-age-the-church-as-a-moral-minority/>.

The church must work to create opportunities for the next generation to hear the message of the gospel so that the students would not only gain knowledge of the truth, but have a life-changing moment with the living Savior. Churches in America are filled with students who “know” who Jesus is, but perhaps their knowledge has never led them to a real encounter, or a saving faith, in Jesus Christ. Russell Moore warns of this lack of genuine encounter by painting a picture of a youth group that he led in Biloxi, Mississippi:

There were two groups that divided the youth group there in Biloxi. The first group was made up of “churched” kids, those who did what was expected in the Bible belt, and made professions of faith, followed by baptism, as young children. These kids knew the gospel, from start to last, and could rattle off the right answers at will. The gospel neither surprised nor alarmed them. They know how to embrace just enough of an almost-gospel to stay within the tribe, without embracing so much gospel as to encounter the lordship of Christ.¹⁴

Students need to encounter the Jesus of the Bible and the church must work diligently to provide these types of encounters at a young age. The hearts of these students and their eternal state of existence is at stake. The church must shepherd their hearts and guide them in the Great Commission of Scripture.¹⁵

Not only does the church need to be reminded of its commission in this task of disciple making, it also needs to identify changes in the culture around it. According to research from the past several years, the numbers indicate that the church is seeing a rapid decline in the next generation of children, students, and young adults.¹⁶ Some of the most recent statistics would indicate that only 15 percent of the Millennial generation are

¹⁴Russell Moore, *Onward* (Nashville: B & H, 2015), 70.

¹⁵Prov 4:20-23 reads, “My son, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Let them not escape from your sight; keep them within your heart. For they are life to those who find them, and healing to all their flesh. Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.”

¹⁶David Kinnaman writes, “Millions of young adults (Mosaics age 18-29) leave active involvement in church as they exit their teen years. Some never return, while others live indefinitely at the margins of the faith community, attempting to define their own spirituality.” David Kinnaman, *You Lost Me* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 19.

genuine Christians.¹⁷ Because of the indicators that the next generation is not primarily Christian (or even 50 percent Christian), there is a desperate need to disciple this next generation with the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ while simultaneously teaching the non-negotiable commission of Jesus' mission of making disciples.¹⁸

The church has seen this task of discipling the next generation take various forms over the past decade. Many different models of student ministry are devoted to, in one way or another, training the next generation in the doctrines of scripture. Duffy Robbins writes, "Our mission is to build in students a faith that will last, a commitment that endures in the highest treetop moments and in the heart of the darkest jungle."¹⁹

While the work of training and discipling the next generation has taken on new forms and models, at the same time, there has been a drastic push in the direction of sending students on short-term mission efforts. Churches in America have significantly increased the number of these short-term mission trips for students in middle and high school in an effort to mobilize them to take the message of the gospel across national and linguistic barriers. These mission efforts for students have undoubtedly produced much fruit in the lives of the participants.²⁰ However, with the aforementioned statistics of the

¹⁷Thom Rainer and Jess Rainer explain, "Based on the 20 percent who could affirm the basic 'born again' tenets, and based on the 6 percent who strongly agreed with the Evangelical statements, we would surmise that 10 to 15 percent of Millennials are true Christians. For consistency, we will stick with the 15 percent estimate." Thom Rainer and Jess Rainer, *Millennials* (Nashville: B & H, 2011), 233.

¹⁸Ibid. Thom Rainer inserts that the Millennial Generation is the "group of young people whose birth years range from 1980 to 2000. This generation edged out the Boomers (aka the Baby Boomers born 1946 to 1964) to become the largest generation in America's history." Ibid., 2.

¹⁹Duffy Robbins, *Building a Youth Ministry That Builds Disciples* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 16.

²⁰Sills writes, "The number of international short-term missions (STM) teams has exploded over the last few decades, and slowly missionaries have begun to see their value. Missionaries have moved from asking whether to work with STM teams to how they can incorporate them into their ministry plan. In addition to the good that increasing numbers of STM teams are able to accomplish on the field, the STM volunteers return home better able to pray and serve as advocates for the missionary and missions." Sills, *Changing World, Unchanging Mission*, 69.

next generation's non-participation in the church in view, the church must work to show the value of these mission efforts and how they are actually taking root in the spiritual fiber of the students.²¹

Therefore, the rationale behind this project was to take the existing literature on student ministry discipleship, short-term mission work, and the trends in students leaving their Christian faith behind upon entering college, and build an eight-week course that both informed and challenged the high school seniors to look deeply into the importance of the mission of Jesus Christ. This course enabled the students to see the need for missions while also challenging them to participate in missions. The students heard the command to go and make disciples from the Great Commission in Scripture and then had the opportunity to participate in this work.

Definitions, Limitations and Delimitations

The following terms are defined in this project as follows:

Mission. The committed participation as God's people, at God's invitation and command, in God's own mission within the history of God's world for the redemption of God's creation.²²

Missional. An adjective denoting something related to or characterized by mission, or has the qualities, attributes, or dynamics of mission.²³

Missionary. A person who engages in mission.²⁴

²¹Wilder and Parker state, "Of the estimated millions of annual short-term mission (STM) participants from North America alone, hundreds of thousands are middle- and high-school students. These students spend collective millions each year to take part in these trips. With massive numbers of students being mobilized, and churches and individuals forking out this kind of money to make it happen, we would assume that there is fundamental agreement on the inherent benefits of such trips." Wilder and Parker, *Transformission*, 35.

²²Wright, *The Mission of God*, 22.

²³*Ibid.*, 24.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 23.

Missiological. The theological or reflective aspect of missiology.²⁵

Missiological framework. A biblical understanding of the mission of Jesus Christ from the Great Commission narratives in Scripture that informs the students of how mission should shape their lives.

Missiology. The study of mission²⁶

The first limitation of this project was in the duration of the course. The eight-week time frame was specifically designed to maximize the amount of time in the classroom in order to give the students a comprehensive understanding of the material, while also keeping the time in the classroom short enough to gain the highest participation rate possible. This limitation did not affect the content of the course, but did affect the duration. The second limitation of this project was that it was limited to high school seniors from FBCT. Because of the specificity of the group, the statistical data, input, and feedback is only generalize to the FBCT and could not be used to gauge other high school seniors in other churches.

The primary delimitation of this project was in the course participants. Choosing only high school seniors in the student ministry at FBCT greatly narrowed the available participants that could be included in the study. The concept behind this delimitation was to focus on this age group so that the subject matter would be streamlined specifically toward their demographic. Though adults were in attendance, the high school seniors were the only ones evaluated.

Research Methodology

Four goals were established to accomplish the purpose of this project, which was to teach the high school seniors at FBCT the importance of having a missiological framework in their lives before they enter into college or career. In order to determine the

²⁵Wright, *The Mission of God*, 25.

²⁶Ibid.

effectiveness of these goals, the research methodology for this project included a pre- and post-survey of the participating high school seniors and an evaluation rubric to determine the accuracy of the content. The first goal was to assess the missiological understanding of the FBCT high school seniors using a one-tail, paired *t*-test. A survey was administered in order to gauge the students' basic knowledge of Scripture and missions, specifically in the Great Commission.²⁷ The results were tabulated and informed the content of the course.

The second goal of the project was to develop a four-part course that introduced the students to the importance of having a missiological framework before entering into college or career. This course entailed both instructional and practical elements. An expert panel of pastors and mission's ministry staff evaluated the course validity and accuracy of the course content. The expert panel used a rubric to evaluate the scope, sequence, and theological fidelity of the course's instructional components, as well as the viability of the course's practical components.²⁸ This goal was considered successful when 90 percent of the evaluation indicators were marked as sufficient or above.

The third goal of the project was to build the missiological framework into the lives of the high school seniors at FBCT by implementing the eight-week course. During each of the gatherings, the students were taught biblical and theological precepts that detailed the outworking of the Great Commission in Scripture along with other biblical examples that support the topic of missions. Upon concluding the course, the course participants had an opportunity to participate in a short-term mission trip to Alaska in the summer of 2017. The third goal was measured by the percentage of students who completed the course in the eight weeks of teaching. This goal was considered successful when 80 percent of the participants completed the course.

²⁷See appendix 1.

²⁸See appendix 2.

The fourth goal of the project was to measure the level of improvement in understanding of the Great Commission and missiological knowledge of the students. This goal was measured by re-administering the survey after the course and comparing the results to the pre-course survey. This goal was considered successfully met if a one-tail, paired *t*-test showed a statistically significant improvement in understanding.

The remainder of this project provided research of the biblical support for building a missiological framework in the lives of the students at FBCT. It also included theoretical and practical literature that is pertinent to this argument. The project concluded with an overview of the eight-week course and the findings from it. The final chapter wraps up the totality of the project by evaluating the work accomplished and the results of the course.

CHAPTER 2
THE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL SUPPORT FOR
BUILDING A MISSIOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK
IN THE LIVES OF HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS

The Bible is God’s Word in written form.¹ It is a book written by God, through His people, as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet 1:20-21) so that people might use it for teaching, reproof, and for training in righteousness (2 Tim 3:16). The Bible is the foundational book that informs the theological support for building a missiological framework in the lives of students at First Baptist Clarksville, Tennessee.

The Holy Scriptures is God’s story to his people and this story provides one grand narrative or broad sweeping plot line. It is in this grand narrative where one finds the mission of God revealed to his children. Bruce Riley Ashford illuminates,

In order to build a biblical-theological framework for understanding God’s mission, the church’s mission, and the church’s mission to the nations, one must first understand the unified biblical narrative, including its four major plot movements—creation, fall, redemption, and restoration.²

The writings that comprise the Bible are indeed God’s Word to his children that reveal the ultimate mission of God. In *The Mission of God*, Christopher J. H. Wright succinctly describes the Bible as the book that reveals the mission of God:

The Bible renders to us the story of God’s mission through God’s people in their engagement with God’s world for the sake of the whole of God’s creation. The Bible is the drama of this God of purpose engaged in the mission of achieving that purpose universally, embracing the past, present and future, Israel and the nations,

¹James White argues that the Bible is the very word of God: “The Bible is God’s Word in written form. There can be little question that this is the constant testimony of Scripture itself. From the ‘Thus saith the Lord’ of the prophets to the ‘It is written’ of the apostles, the biblical writers recognize that God has spoken and that the Scriptures record for us His Word.” James White, *Scripture Alone* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2004), 20.

²Bruce Riley Ashford, *Theology and Practice of Mission* (Nashville: B & H, 2011), 6.

“life, the universe, and everything,” and with its center, focus, climax, and completion in Jesus Christ. Mission is not just one of a list of things that the Bible happens to talk about, only a bit more urgently than some. Mission is, in that much-abused phrase, “what it’s all about.”³

The Bible then, is the book that guides the believer into the ultimate mission of God. David Sills writes, “To say there is a biblical basis for missions is to understate the entire message of the Bible. Rather than arguing for a biblical basis of missions, we should view it the other way around—the work of missions is the reason for the Bible.”⁴ Indeed, Scripture teaches that Christians (believers in Christ) have been sent by God throughout history, and are still being sent today, to carry out His work. The first visible example of this is seen in Genesis 12-15 with the story of God calling Abraham.⁵ This chapter offers an exegetical look into five other texts that lend the reader to a further understanding of how God sends his people to do his mission in Scripture. These five texts are Exodus 3:13-15, Isaiah 49:6, Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 1:8, and Romans 10:14-17.

Exodus 3: God Sends Moses

The Old and New Testaments are replete with examples of God’s mission for His people.⁶ One of the first places this paradigm of God sending people on mission occurs is in Exodus 3, in the story of Moses. This story begins with Moses keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, on the mountain of God in Horeb:

³Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 22.

⁴David Sills, *The Missionary Call: Finding Your Place in God’s Plan for the World* (Chicago: Moody, 2008), 47.

⁵Gen 12:1-3 says, “Now, the Lord said to Abram, ‘Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’”

⁶Marvin Newell writes, “Scriptures abound with stories of God sending people on mission. Whenever he had an important task to accomplish, he sent someone to get it done. He sent Noah and his family into the ark to save mankind from the flood. He sent Abraham from Ur to the land of Palestine. He sent Jacob to Haran and back to preserve the Jewish bloodline. He sent Joseph into Egypt; Moses from the desert of Midian to the court of Pharaoh; the Israelites out of Egypt; Daniel to Babylon; and Jonah to Nineveh, to name a few.” Marvin J. Newell, *Commissioned* (Bloomington, MN: ChurchSmart Resources, 2010), 29.

And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. And Moses said, "I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned." When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." Then he said, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." And he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. (vv. 3-6)

The Lord gains the attention of Moses in verse 3 through the burning bush so that He might divinely confront him with the commission He is preparing to deliver in verse 10.⁷ The Lord says in verse 10, "Come, I will send you to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel, out of Egypt."⁸

This commission that the Lord gives Moses in Exodus 3 is the declarative mission of God to "send out" Moses to deliver His people from bondage in Egypt by not only physical means, but most importantly, the spiritual act of redemption.⁹ This narrative gives a definitive example of God commissioning or sending a person (Moses) to do His bidding and to fulfill His mission (redemption).¹⁰ Mark Dever describes this event:

⁷William Dumbrell summarizes this passage: "His (Moses') calling in Exodus 3 is clearly prophetic, consisting of divine confrontation (vv. 1-4a), introductory of divine word (vv. 4b-9), commission (v. 10), typical objections (v. 11), divine reassurance (v. 12a), and the promise of a sign (v. 12b). William J. Dumbrell, *The Faith of Israel* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 34.

⁸James Strong, *The Strongest Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 1574. *Salah* means "to send out" or to be "sent away."

⁹Wright gives a big-picture summary of what is transpiring with Moses and the nation Israel in Exodus: "Moses and the Israelites are celebrating the great deliverance from the army of Pharaoh at the crossing of the Red Sea. Among the rich poetic imagery used to describe the event and its historic and cosmic significance is this metaphor of *redemption*. In bringing Israel out of Egypt, YHWH has redeemed them. A little later in the same song, the same thought is expressed with a different word: "the people you bought" (Ex 15:16). The people thus celebrate in this song the fulfillment of what God had promised to do for them (to their great initial skepticism) while they were still in Egypt. God's great declaration of intent, given to Moses when he needed some serious encouragement, majors on the same theme: redemption." Wright, *The Mission of God*, 266.

¹⁰Walter Kaiser explains, "Repeatedly Moses is described as sent by the Lord (Exodus 3:10-15; Deut 34:11; 1 Sam. 12:8; Ps. 105:26). Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Mission in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 12.

God appears to the aging Moses in the burning bush. God reveals His name to Moses—Moses was not out there looking for it. God commissions Moses to speak to Pharaoh and bring God’s people out of Egypt. . . . Even the amazing signs that God tells Moses to perform in front of Pharaoh and his court are conceived, scripted, choreographed, and powered by God!¹¹

The mission is clear. The outworking of this mission is only attainable through the sovereign power and divine hand of the Lord in the life of Moses.

It is evidenced in Exodus 3 that Moses was commissioned by the Lord to deliver the captives of Egypt from their bondage under Pharaoh, but this was not the totality of the motivation behind God sending Moses to Israel. The entire exodus narrative includes a bigger story than just delivering the captives. God also intentionally sent Moses to Israel to open the eyes of the people to who the Lord is and to show the redemption that can only be found in Him.¹²

The story continues in Exodus 3:15, which says, “God also said to Moses, Say this to the people of Israel, ‘The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.” The Lord makes it known to Moses that He is not just delivering Israel from their bondage in Egypt, but rather, He is their only way of redemption from the evil in the world. Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., expounds on this evangelistic emphasis:

The events of the exodus from Egypt are remarkable in that they repeatedly focus on the fact that everything that is happening to the Egyptians and to Pharaoh in particular has an evangelistic thrust to it! Almost a dozen and a half times in Scripture the reason that is given for the plagues and the crossing of the Red Sea is that they are not simply to eradicate the Egyptians or their king, but so that ‘the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord’ (Ex 7:5, 17; 8:22, 14:4, 18).¹³

¹¹Mark Dever, *The Message of the Old Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway), 89-90.

¹²Wright adds, “God’s momentous act of redemption did not merely rescue Israel from political, economic and social oppression and then leave them to their own devices to worship whom they pleased. Nor did God merely offer them spiritual comfort of hope for some brighter future in a home beyond the sky while leaving their historical condition unchanged. No, the exodus effected real change in the people’s real historical situation and at the same time called them into a real new relationship with the living God. This was God’s total response to Israel’s total need.” Wright, *The Mission of God*, 271.

¹³Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament*, 21.

This first example of mission in the Old Testament is very clear. The Lord calls and commissions Moses to do his work on the earth and Moses obeys. God gave the mission to Moses (and to the Israelites collectively) and there were clear guidelines to follow.

Isaiah 49:6: God Sends the Servant

Another example from the Old Testament of God sending people to accomplish his mission is in Isaiah chapter 49. In verse 5-6, Isaiah writes,

And now the Lord says, he who formed me from the womb to be his servant, and to bring Jacob back to him; and that Israel might be gathered to him—for I am honored in the eyes of the Lord, and my God has become my strength—he says: “It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”

The phrase “I will make you as a light for the nations” has a sending or giving connotation. The term *make*, is also translated in the King James Version as *give*.¹⁴ The underlying theme in verse 6 is that God is sending His people or giving his people over to the task of fulfilling His mission. However, in this text in Isaiah, the commissioning of the Lord to the Servant takes a slightly different turn from the commissioning of Moses in Exodus 3. Here, the Lord says to the Servant that he will not only be a light to Israel, but also a light to the nations.

Before the definition of “the nations” in this text is unpacked, it is important identify who “The Servant” is in this passage and what his role is. Recent scholarship has been devoted to identifying who “The Servant” is referring to in Isaiah 49:5-6.¹⁵ Kaiser

¹⁴Strong, *Exhaustive Concordance*, 1540. Strong adds, “To give, to put, to be given, dedicated.”

¹⁵Dumbrell writes, “It is now generally conceded that the four Servant passages (Isa 42:1-4, 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12) fit their contexts and contribute to the message of Isaiah 40-55. It is clear that the Servant is Israel in some form, since the Servant is juxtaposed with Israel in 41:1-42:17 and is placed opposite Jerusalem in 49:1-26. The issue to be discussed before the identity of the Servant is taken further, however, is the role of the Servant. The Servant figure in Isaiah 40-55 is instrumentally and integrally

argues that the Servant of the Lord is both corporate (Israel) and individual (The One to come):

It is noteworthy that the term “servant” is found twenty times exclusively in the singular form in Isaiah 40-53, and eleven times exclusively in the plural form in Isaiah 54-66. In order to show how the singular and plural could both work here, our conclusion is that the “Servant of the Lord” is a corporate term that embodies at one and the same time a reference to the One, who is the representative of the whole, and the whole group that belongs to that single whole.¹⁶

Thus, it is accurate to see “The Servant” both as representative of Israel as a nation and the Messiah that was to come (see Isa 53 for reference to the Messiah).

The emphasis in Isaiah 49:5-6 is that the nation Israel is called to be a light to the rest of the world.¹⁷ Following the theme of God sending his people, Isaiah 49 is indicating that Israel is sent to illuminate the redeeming message of the Lord to those who do not know Him or those who have never heard. Israel is being commissioned and sent by God in Isaiah 49 to not only take care of their nation, but to go to *the nations* with the redeeming Word of the Lord. The nations are the mission field and God makes it clear to Israel that they must go and share the message of salvation with them.

The term *nations* in this text is very important to the understanding of God sending people to His mission in the Old Testament. The word *nations* can be translated several different ways. Specifically, in this passage, it refers to the unreached, the ones in whom have not been redeemed of God.¹⁸ This same word is used in various other places in the Old Testament and it is consistent with this text in Isaiah 49.

bound with the redemption of Jerusalem. Indeed, the Servant’s ministry is to effect Israel’s return to Jerusalem.” Dumbrell, *The Faith of Israel*, 118.

¹⁶Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament*, 56.

¹⁷Strong, *Exhaustive Concordance*, 1469. The transliteration of the word light is *or*, which means “to illuminate.” Israel then is called to illuminate the message of the Lord to the nations.

¹⁸Ibid., 1486. The Hebrew word in Isa 49:6 for *nations* is transliterated as *gowy*. This term can mean nation, people (usually non-Hebrew people), and it is translated as Gentiles in the AV.

The Lord is clearly commissioning and sending the Servant (Israel) to fulfill his mission, which is a consistent theme in the Old and New Testament. Kaiser explains,

It is God who commissions and God who sends. And it is this word of “sending” that lexically links the Old Testament with the New Testament. The Hebrew word “to send” *salah*, is found over eight hundred times. Over two hundred times God is the subject of this verb in the Old Testament.¹⁹

God’s mission is indeed an unfolding theme throughout both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible.

Matthew 28:18-20: God Sends the Disciples

While the Old Testament has a consistent theme of God sending people to fulfill his mission, this same idea is realized throughout the entire Bible. The pages of the New Testament expound upon on the importance of this work by giving more examples of people being sent by God to fulfill his mission.²⁰ The New Testament is where God specifically reveals and unfolds the Great Commission of Jesus.

Jesus gives his Great Commission in all four of the Gospels (Matt 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:44-49, John 20:21). It is also recorded in Acts 1:8. This effort will expound upon the most robust of these commissions in Matthew’s gospel. Before delving into the exegetical examination in Matthew’s account, it is important to note the context and setting of each of these Great Commission narratives so that the reader understands the importance of each of the commissions.

Jesus’ words in these Great Commission texts were not synoptic; rather, they were sequential. Marvin J. Newell gives a thorough treatment of this in his work *Commissioned*. He writes,

¹⁹Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament*, 11.

²⁰Newell gives New Testament examples of God sending people: “He sent his son, Jesus, from heaven to earth; the wise men to Bethlehem; and Joseph and Mary to Egypt and back. Some years later he sent John the Baptist to prepare the way for Jesus’ public ministry. After Jesus’ ministry was complete, God sent the Holy Spirit to the church, and then the church into all the world.” Newell, *Commissioned*, 29.

One of the most common mistakes when reading through the Gospels is to treat these passages as though they were synoptic. “Synoptic” means to view as the same, or to put it differently, to see these passages as given at one time, conveying the same thought but from different angles. Many harmonies of the Gospels misleadingly construct them as such. However, a closer look at the context surrounding these passages reveals otherwise. Upon examination of the contexts and settings where Jesus conveyed them, it becomes apparent that Jesus gave these mission statements to his disciples on five different occasions, in five different addresses, at five different geographical settings, with five different emphases. That being the case, it becomes evident that these statements are sequential rather than synoptic.²¹

The order in which Jesus gave these five statements is different from the biblical order found in the New Testament beginning in Matthew. The importance of understanding the timing of the Great Commission statements that Jesus gave in the gospels is that it aids the reader in acquiring the emphasis that each statement intended. Likewise, it is equally important to notice the repetition in Jesus’ message in his commissions. By speaking these commissions on five different occasions, Jesus was reaffirming the thrust behind the message. The sheer number of times Jesus emphasizes His commission is evidence that this message was of utmost importance to Him and to the ones to whom he was speaking.²² The sequential order that Jesus gave these commission directives is as follows,

On the evening of the resurrection day, Jesus met with ten distraught disciples in a room in Jerusalem (Jn. 20:26). For reasons we do not know, Thomas was absent from this first meeting and Judas was dead, leaving only ten disciples present. At that meeting Jesus gave the briefest of the commissions, as found in John 20:21. Eight days later (Jn. 20:26), when Thomas was present, Jesus gave to the eleven disciples the added information of Mark 16:15. About a week or so following that, he met with the disciples a third time, after they had walked all the way to Galilee to meet with him there. It was there that Jesus gave the most detailed of the commissions, recorded in Matthew 28:18-20. Approximately two weeks after that, on the eve of his ascension after the disciples had walked back to Jerusalem, Jesus gave the Luke 24:44-49 commission. Finally, possibly after an interval of only a

²¹Newell, *Commissioned*, 23.

²²Newell writes, “By teaching through repetition, Jesus was emphasizing its importance. He was showing them how crucial their new task really was to the plan of redemption. Just as a parent warns or instructs a child several times about an important matter so that the seriousness of it is captured, so too Jesus employed this pedagogical method to impress upon the disciples the importance of their next task.” Ibid., 25.

few short hours, Jesus gave his farewell mission statement recorded by Luke in Acts 1:8.²³

Jesus' Great Commission is the final statement, the final stamp on his earthly ministry. The atonement that God the Father sent Jesus to the earth to accomplish has been paid in full (Luke 23:46). The Father sent the Son to accomplish full atonement for sin and death and now the Son is sending the disciples to transmit this message of redemption to the world.²⁴

The responsibility of the disciples (and the modern church) is now clear.²⁵ Matthew's account of Jesus' Great Commission gives clarity to this task. Jesus says in Matthew 28:18-20,

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

²³Newell, *Commissioned*, 23-24.

²⁴Millard J. Erickson summarizes this union between the Father and the Son and the work that Jesus was sent to accomplish: "Jesus had a profound sense that the Father had sent him to do the Father's work. He declares in John 10:36 that the Father had sent him into the world. In John 6:38 he says, 'For I have come down from Heaven not to do my own will but to do the will of him who sent me.' The apostle John expressly relates the sending by the Father to the Son's redemptive atoning work: 'For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him' (John 3:17). The purpose of the coming was atonement, and the Father was involved in that work. The point in stressing that the Son was sent by the Father is to make it clear that the Son's work is not independent of, or in contrast to, what the Father does. Nor was the death of Christ a punishment administered by an impassive judge on an innocent third party. The Father was personally involved, for the penalty fell on his own Son, whom he had voluntarily sent and who had voluntarily gone." Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 823-24.

²⁵John Piper explains, "This passage [Matthew 28:18-20] is often called the Great Commission. The first thing to make clear about it is that it is still binding on the modern church. It was given not only to the apostles for their ministry but also to the church for its ministry as long as this age lasts. The basis for saying this comes from the text itself. The undergirding promise of verse 20 says, 'and behold, I am with you always, to then end of the age.' The people referred to in the word 'you' cannot be limited to the apostles, because they died within one generation. The promise extends to the 'end of the age,' that is, to the day of judgment at Christ's second coming." John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad!* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 160.

The first claim Jesus makes in Matthew 28:18 demonstrates his authority. He says, “All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth.”²⁶ This statement of authority is the fulfillment of the prophesy that Daniel spoke of centuries earlier when he speaks of the “son of man” in Daniel 7:14, saying, “And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.” David Platt expounds on Matthew 28:18 in his work *Christ Centered Exposition* by writing, “Jesus’ authority is the basis for everything else that follows in this text.”²⁷ This authority that Jesus is declaring is what gives him the ability to commission the disciples in the following verses. The authority and rule of Jesus sets the Great Commission in motion.

After Jesus reinforces His authority, He begins to communicate the main thrust of the Great Commission. The primary imperative is found in verse 19 when He says, “Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations.” This is *the mission*: go and tell others of the good news of the redemption of Jesus Christ.²⁸ Jesus is effectively sending the disciples (and the modern church of today) like God the Father sent Moses and Isaiah in the Old Testament. Now, Jesus is focusing the mission on making disciples.²⁹ This is the

²⁶Strong, *Exhaustive Concordance*, 1609. The term is transliterated as *exousia*, meaning “authority, power, the right to control or govern; dominion.”

²⁷David Platt, *Christ Centered Exposition* (Nashville: B & H, 2013), 371.

²⁸Erickson writes, “The one topic emphasized in both accounts of Jesus’ last words to his disciples is evangelism. In Matthew 28:19 he instructs them, ‘Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations.’ In Acts 1:8 he says, ‘But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.’ This was the final point that Jesus made to his disciples. It appears that he regarded evangelism as the very reason for their being.” Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1061.

²⁹The term *disciple* in the Greek is transliterated *mathetes*, which means “a learner.” A disciple is “not only a pupil, but an adherent; hence they are spoken of as imitators of their teacher.” W. E. Vine, *Vine’s Expository Dictionary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997), 308.

foundational tenet of mission. Jesus is sending the believers to go and make disciples, or in simpler terms, to go and imitate Jesus and cause others to follow suit.

Jesus indeed emphasizes disciple making as the first order of the Great Commission. Christians are called to actively participate in the Great Commission of Jesus Christ (Matt 28:18-20).³⁰ This task of making disciples is the part that Christians play in the redeeming work of God, namely His mission. Wright emphasizes, “Mission clearly has to do with the redemptive work of God and our participation in making it known and leading people into the experience of it.”³¹

The book *Introducing World Missions* gives a helpful and practical definition of what a disciple is. Morneau, Corwin, and McBee write,

In terms that make the best sense of Jesus’ Commission, *disciples* are people who have a deep, abiding commitment to a person (Christ), not simply a philosophy. They hold to Jesus’ teaching (John 8:31-32); they love one another (John 13:35) and help each other (Luke 5:1-11).³²

The term *disciple* in the Bible is from the Greek word *mathetes*, which means to be a pupil or a learner, or one who practices what the teacher is teaching.³³ Thus, in order to fulfill Jesus’ teaching on mission (to make disciples), one must understand what Jesus wants his disciples to know.

Using the established definition of a *disciple* from Morneau, Corwin, and McBee, a disciple is minimally four things. First, a disciple is one who abides in Jesus’ Word. John 8:31-32 says, “So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, ‘If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.’” Second, a disciple is one who has love for one another. John 13:35

³⁰See also Mark 16:15, John 20:21, and Acts 1:8.

³¹Wright, *The Mission of God*, 265.

³²Scott A. Morneau, Gary R. Corwin, and Gary B. McBee, *Introducing World Missions: A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Survey* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 44.

³³Luke 6:40 says, “A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher.”

Jesus says, “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” Third, a disciple is someone who bears fruit for Christ. In John 15:8, Jesus says, “By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.” Fourth, a disciple is a fisher of men. Jesus gives the definitive example of this in Luke 5:1-11.³⁴

Jesus’ desire is for his followers to abide in his Word, have love for one another, bear much fruit, and then go and cause others to follow their example. This fundamental precept of making disciples is the very core of the Great Commission, as well as the foremost aspect of Jesus’ teaching on mission. David Platt writes, “Disciple making involves far more than just leading people to trust in Christ; disciple making involves teaching people to follow Christ. This necessitates that we show people (particularly new Christians) what the life of Christ looks like in action.”³⁵ Jesus calls all of his children to proclaim to the world (or nations) repentance and faith in him, and then to mirror his life to them, thus beginning the fulfillment of the call to make disciples.³⁶

With the main emphasis of disciple making in view, Jesus proceeds to give two other additional directives for all believers in Matthew 28:19-20: baptize and teach.

³⁴Luke 5:1-11 says, “On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret, and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.” And Simon answered, “Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets.” And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.” And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.”

³⁵David Platt, *Follow Me* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2013), 191.

³⁶Luke’s Great Commission account adds the emphasis of repentance from sin. Luke 24:47 says, “and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem.”

These two commands of baptizing and teaching are encompassing aspects of the Great Commission that aid the mission goer in the disciple making process.

Matthew 28:19: Baptize

In verse 19, Jesus says, “Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”³⁷ The Greek word for baptism is *baptizo*, which is translated, “to immerse, to overwhelm, to cleanse by dipping, to submerge.”³⁸ Jesus gives this example of baptism to his disciples as a next step in the disciple making process. Baptism is for those who have repented of sin and (by grace through faith [Eph 2:8-9]) believe in Jesus for salvation. This act of obedience is not salvific in nature; it does not procure salvation. Rather, it is an outward display to all of a saving belief in Jesus Christ.³⁹ Baptism is an important element of obedience in Christ, which displays to the world that one has been made a disciple of Jesus. Morneau, Corwin, and McBee add,

Matthew’s intention through Jesus’ words is not to set a rigid rule for the means of baptism (such rules too easily move toward legalism), but to ground the need for baptism as the appropriate Christian ritual that embodies repentance from sin and entrance into allegiance to Christ.⁴⁰

³⁷Morneau, Corwin, and McBee write, “Having gone (in the specific use of Matthew’s Great Commission), those who are sent use, as the means of making disciples, baptizing and teaching to obey. But do not think that these two are the only elements of discipleship, for the grammar will not sustain this.” Morneau, Corwin, and McBee, *Introducing World Missions*, 45.

³⁸Strong, *Exhaustive Concordance*, 1597.

³⁹Ashford gives a brief history of baptism in Scripture by adding, “Baptism, which means ‘immersion,’ is made a priority of the kingdom mission of the church by the king (Matthew 28:18-20). Following the New Testament teaching and pattern, all believers, and only believers, are to pass through the waters of God’s judgment into God’s kingdom, Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist before he began proclaiming the good news of the kingdom (Matt. 3:-15-16). At the church’s creation in Pentecost, the 3,000 believers who were added all passed through the waters of baptism (Acts 2:41). The apostle Paul tells the early church that there is one baptism (Eph. 4:5). In the Old Testament, God’s people passed through the waters on their way to new life. Noah and his family came through the flood waters, leaving behind the old world and stepping onto a new creation (Gen. 8:2 Pet. 3:6). Moses led the people of God through the Red Sea. The apostle Paul writes that Israel was ‘baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea’ (1 Cor. 10:2). Baptism has consistently been a means by which the people of God enter the place of God.” Ashford, *Theology and Practice of Mission*, 68.

⁴⁰Morneau, Corwin, and McBee, *Introducing World Missions*, 45.

Baptism, simply stated, is what people do when they respond to the gospel with saving faith in Jesus Christ. David Platt writes,

When people turn from their sin to Christ, we baptize them. This is another part of making disciples—we show the Word. Baptism is a part of what it means to make disciples because baptism symbolizes identification with the person of Christ and inclusion in the body of Christ.⁴¹

Jesus makes a clear command in Matthew’s Great Commission that every disciple of His is to be baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 28:20: Teach

Jesus’ final statement in Matthew’s Great Commission is “teaching them to observe all that I have commanded” (Matt 28:20). Again, to use the original language of Greek, the term *teach* is from the Greek word *didasko*, which means “to provide information in a manner intended to produce understanding.”⁴² Imparting the erudition of whom Jesus is (John 14:6) and what he came to do (Luke 19:10) is a vital part of the Great Commission. David Platt explains, “As we make disciples, we teach the Word. We don’t just receive the Word; we reproduce the Word.”⁴³

Teaching others to observe all that Jesus has commanded is a crucial aspect of making disciples. Apart from teaching the Word of God, making disciples would not be complete, according to the Great Commission in Matthew 28. Correspondingly, David Sills adds to the missional aspect of training and teaching believers to reciprocate the message to others:

Rather than viewing theological education, pastoral preparation, leadership training, and in-depth discipleship as lesser forms of missionary activity, we must return to the biblical understanding of missions that incorporates them as primary and necessary ways of fulfilling the Great Commission.⁴⁴

⁴¹Platt, *Christ Centered Exposition*, 376.

⁴²Strong, *Exhaustive Concordance*, 1602.

⁴³Platt, *Christ Centered Exposition*, 376.

⁴⁴David M. Sills, *Reaching and Teaching* (Chicago: Moody, 2010), 13.

Indeed, as Sills explains, teaching is one of the fundamental aspects of making disciples according to Jesus' locution in the Great Commission.

The mandate to go and make disciples of all nations is distinct and clearly defined in Matthew's gospel. This endeavor of making disciples is a process that involves baptism and teaching. Craig L. Blomberg writes of this method of disciple making:

Making disciples is defined as "baptizing them" and "teaching them to obey everything" Christ had commanded. This makes it clear that Jesus' commission is not primarily about initial evangelism but about the lifelong process of bringing people to faith and nurturing them in the will of God.⁴⁵

Teaching people all that Jesus has commanded is not a momentary, one-time event. It is a journey and an arduous task, but it is a task that Jesus has given to his followers as primary and important.

Concluding this section on the Great Commission in Matthew 28, it is evident, according to Scripture, that all of Jesus' followers (regardless of one's status as a missionary, pastor, Sunday school teacher, or new believer in Christ) are to go and make disciples. The Great Commission task of making disciples of all nations, simply stated, is a significant undertaking. Sills gives clarity to this task by writing, "In Matthew 28:19, Jesus actually said, 'Go therefore and make disciples of *panta ta ethne*,' not every geopolitical country. The word *ethnae* means 'ethnic group' or 'people group.'"⁴⁶ The Great Commission mandates that the believers in Christ are to make disciples of every people group on the earth.⁴⁷ Newell states,

⁴⁵Craig L. Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels* (Nashville: B & H, 2009), 415.

⁴⁶Sills, *Reaching and Teaching*, 17.

⁴⁷Piper gives great insight into the meaning of "people groups": "What can we conclude so far concerning the meaning of *panta ta ethne* in Matthew 28:19 and its wider missionary significance? The singular use of *ethnos* in the New Testament always refers to a people group. The plural of *ethnos* sometimes must be a people group and sometimes must refer to Gentile individuals but usually can go either way. The phrase *panta ta ethne* must refer to the Gentile individuals only once but must refer to people groups nine times. The remaining eight uses may refer to people groups. The combination of these results suggests that the meaning of *panta ta ethne* leans heavily in the direction of 'all the nations' (people groups)." Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad!*, 166-67.

This is accomplished as missionaries go, baptize, and teach (Mt. 28:19). Mission leaders understand that the validity of all auxiliary mission enterprises—whether social concern, support ministries, humanitarian work, or relief and development—supplement the core of making disciples, which normally culminates in the establishment of maturing churches. To that end, no matter what a missionary’s specific assignment, it should entail witness (Acts 1:8) and proclamation (Mk. 16:15).⁴⁸

Teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ is paramount in making disciples. It is the gospel that is the power of God unto salvation (Rom 1:16) and thus it must be proclaimed so that people might hear it and believe (Rom 10:17).

Acts 1:8: God Sends the Holy Spirit

Acts 1:8 is the final Great Commission statement of Jesus. This text adds the sending of the Holy Spirit as the Helper to the disciples.⁴⁹ In Acts 1:8, Jesus says, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” The Holy Spirit that Jesus promises in this verse is the same Helper that Jesus already spoke of in John’s gospel. In John 14:16-18 Jesus says,

⁴⁸Newell, *Commissioned*, 140.

⁴⁹It should be noted that immediately following the Great Commission in John 20:21, John records in v. 22, “And when He had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’ Was this a precursor to the giving of the Holy Spirit that is recorded in Acts 2? Edward Klink writes, “In light of the previous verse, the transition from the mission of God to the Spirit of God is both logical and warranted. Even more, it is in light of this larger context that the giving of the Spirit is to be understood.” Edward W. Klink III, *John*, Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 861. Klink continues, “Just as there are four Gospels and yet only one gospel, so also there are two givings of the Spirit (John 20 and Acts 2) and yet only one giving. Do not misunderstand: words were spoken and air was blown. But even if we had been standing there, we would have understood more by faith than by sight. And it would have only been after the event and in light of its continuing manifestation (in Acts 2) that the disciples would have understood more clearly not only what God had done (‘the hour’) but what he had done to them (cf. 2:22). To assume we can explain the imminent Trinity in economic terms is to confuse categories. The full reality of this event cannot be historically reconstructed in a manner that adequately explains or shows what truly happened. If God is comfortable to leave the modern reader less than satisfied with the account of original creation (Gen 1-2), certainly he can do the same with the account of new creation.” Ibid., 865. William F. Cook expounds on this event in John 20:22: “It is highly unlikely that John has taken the Pentecost event and transposed it back into his narrative. Some understand the relationship between Pentecost and John 20:22 to be the first of a two-stage process, with this being ‘empowerment for ministry’ and Acts 2 to be the indwelling of the Spirit. I think it more likely that we are to understand Jesus’ actions along the lines of an enacted parable that foreshadows the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost.” William F. Cook, *John: Jesus Christ Is God* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2016), 286-87.

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him or knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

This is not the only precursor to the Holy Spirit in John's gospel. Again, in John 14:25-26 Jesus speaks of the coming Helper: "These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you."

Jesus has given multiple intimations to the disciples that the Holy Spirit is coming. The added emphasis of the Holy Spirit in the Great Commission in Acts is Jesus reminding the disciples of what He told them earlier in John 20:21-22. Jesus is reiterating that he will not leave them as orphans without help; but rather, the Helper will guide them in this task of making disciples of all nations.⁵⁰

Not only does Jesus promise the disciples that He will soon send the Holy Spirit as their Helper in Acts 1:8, He also emphasizes to them that they "shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon them." Eckhard Schnabel writes,

The power of the Holy Spirit that Jesus' followers receive helps them in their task as witnesses of God's mighty acts in and through Jesus Christ (vv. 8, 22). A witness is a person who testifies in legal matters (cf. 7:58; Matt 18:16), more generally one who affirms or attests to something. The apostles are confirmed in their task to attest to the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus. Their witness is based on their being eyewitnesses of these events. As they proclaim the truth about Jesus to people who may not have seen Jesus themselves, they are witnesses in the sense that they help to establish facts on which others can rely.⁵¹

On this occasion in Acts 1:8, Jesus gives the disciples a double promise in that they will not only receive the Helper (Holy Spirit) but they will also receive power.⁵²

⁵⁰Jesus also speaks of the work of the Holy Spirit in John 16:8-11, saying, "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged."

⁵¹Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts*, Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 78.

⁵²Strong, *Exhaustive Concordance*, 1604. The word *power* is transliterated *dynamis*, meaning

Darrell Bock explains this power of the Holy Spirit that Jesus is promising: “The Spirit is tied to power (*dynamis*) which refers here to being empowered to speak boldly by testifying to the message of God’s work through Jesus.”⁵³ The disciples are encouraged in the task of witnessing with the soon-to-come Holy Spirit and the power that will arise therein.

Jesus is now sending the disciples as his first-hand eyewitnesses to the ends of the earth with the promise of the Holy Spirit, and with the empowerment that the Holy Spirit will enable. Jesus says, “And you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the age” (Acts 1:8). The disciples are literal witnesses of what transpired on the cross at Calvary and they are eyewitnesses of the resurrection of Jesus. Schnabel writes,

Specifically they were witnesses of the resurrection (cf. v. 22) and thus of Jesus’ vindication of the messianic Son of Man and Savior. As they saw the risen Jesus, they had proof that Jesus was what he claimed to be—and this is what they will proclaim, that Jesus is Lord and Messiah (2:36).⁵⁴

The fulfillment of the promise of God to send the Holy Spirit comes to fruition in Acts 2:1-4:

When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

God sent the Holy Spirit to the followers of Jesus and now they are empowered by Him.

Schnabel states,

In addition to the outward manifestations of sound and light, the Holy Spirit came upon the followers of Jesus as an inward, invisible reality. Peter will explain in vv. 33-36 that this new and powerful presence of the Holy Spirit is the manifestation

“strength, mighty power, ability, inherent power.”

⁵³Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 63.

⁵⁴Schnabel, *Acts*, 78.

and the result of the executive power of Jesus, the risen and exalted Messiah, who reigns at God's right hand to restore Israel.⁵⁵

Jesus' final commission in Acts 1:8 exemplifies again that God as a sending God.

Romans 10:13-15: God Sends the Church

In Paul's letter to the Romans, the text gives another definitive example of God sending his people. As has already been revealed in the texts in this chapter, God is indeed a sending God. Morneau, Corwin, and McBee summarize succinctly from Scripture this notion of God as sender:

Jesus, of course, was himself sent by God (Luke 4:18), and likewise he sends his followers (John 20:21). Similarly, he implores the disciples to pray that God sends laborers into the harvest field (Matt. 9:35-38). Mark comments that the apostles were appointed so that they could be with Jesus and be sent to preach (Mark 3:14), and Paul notes that people will not hear the gospel unless preachers are sent (Rom. 10:14-15).⁵⁶

In Romans 10, Paul continues the theme of sending.

Beginning in verse 9 and culminating in verse 13, Paul builds a case that reveals the way in which a person is saved through faith in Jesus Christ. Romans 10:13 says, "For 'everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'"⁵⁷ Thomas Schreiner gives an exegetical review of the context in Romans 10:

Paul has just asserted that one must call on the Lord to be saved (Rom 10:13). Verses 14-15 outline the steps that one must fulfill to facilitate calling on the Lord. The logical progression of thought is sketched with a series of rhetorical questions. The culmination of the series is actually expressed in the first item—calling on the Lord to be saved. It follows, then, that the last item in the series (being sent in v. 15a) represents the foundational element in the logical train of thought that climaxes with the calling on the Lord for salvation. The temporal sequence is as follows: (1) one must be sent; (2) the one sent must preach the good news; (3) those to whom he is sent and preaches must hear the message proclaimed; (4) the message must be believed; and (5) those who believe must call on the Lord for salvation.⁵⁸

⁵⁵Schnabel, *Acts*, 115.

⁵⁶Morneau, Corwin, and McBee, *Introducing World Missions*, 166.

⁵⁷It is probable that Paul is referencing Joel 2:32, which says, "And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

⁵⁸Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 564.

The emphasis laid bare in Romans 10:13-15 is that all who call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved (v. 13), but those who call upon the name of the Lord must first hear the saving message (v. 14b). The only way to hear the saving message is if one preaches (v. 14), and the only way one can preach is if they are sent (v. 15). The theme of sending is evident in this narrative and continues the flow of sending that is replete in Scripture. The message here is unmistakable that the only way one can repent of sin and follow Jesus is if they hear the gospel and call on the name of the Lord.⁵⁹ Romans 10:17 says, “So faith comes by hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.” Indeed, God has sent all Christians to herald His saving message to those who have not heard or who do not yet believe.⁶⁰

Concluding Exegesis

God is a sending God. In both the Old and New Testaments are multiple examples of God sending his people to accomplish His desired tasks. The specific goal of the Great Commission narratives is that the disciples (and the church today) are sent into the world to make disciples of all nations. Sills gives clarity to the this task of making disciples of all nations: “In Matthew 28:19, Jesus actually said, ‘Go therefore and make disciples of *panta ta ethne*,’ not every geopolitical country. The word *ethnae* means ‘ethnic group’ or ‘people group.’”⁶¹ The Great Commission then, mandates that the

⁵⁹Schreiner explains, “All people without exception reject the revelation of God heralded in nature and turn to idolatry. Romans 10:14-17 verifies this interpretation, for it excludes the idea that salvation can be obtained apart from the external hearing of the gospel. Those who call on the Lord in a saving way must believe in him, but this belief is not possible apart from the *hearing* of a message that someone preaches. And the message is not preached unless one is sent by God.” Ibid., 567-68.

⁶⁰Sills gives a clarifying statement on the role in which every believer plays in being sent by God to proclaim the gospel: “God has called every Christian to international missions, but He does not want everyone to go. God calls some to be senders. If everyone were to pack up and go, who would send, pray, and continue the ministries we leave behind? Conversely, if we all stayed to send, there would be no one to go. God calls others to be goers. Both goers and senders are essential to the missionary enterprise.” Sills, *The Missionary Call*, 58.

⁶¹Sills, *Reaching and Teaching*, 17.

believers in Christ are to make disciples of every people group on the earth.⁶² God has sent the Holy Spirit to empower the believer in Christ with the greatest mission on earth. Believers are sent to preach the good news so that one might hear the saving message and call on the name of the Lord to be saved. God's people are indeed a sent people.

⁶²Piper, *Let the Nations be Glad!*, 166-67.

CHAPTER 3
STATISTICS AND LITERATURE ON CHURCH
PARTICIPATION RATES OF GRADUATING
HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS

The church has been a cornerstone of American culture for hundreds of years. However, in the past thirty years, church attendance has dropped to a new low.¹ In just thirty years, much has changed as it pertains to church attendance and church participation. The decline in this area is significant and is worthy of attention considering the ramifications of the Great Commission in Scripture. The church, regardless of its societal perception, has a clear mission. This mission of the church (all Christians) is the same as it was at its inception in the New Testament: to make disciples of all nations. Making disciples is a non-negotiable tenet of Jesus Christ to the church and to every believer in the world. According to Romans 10:14-15, the body of Christ is sent into the world to make disciples by sharing the gospel. This staggering shift in attendance must be examined in light of Scripture to see what necessary changes need to be enacted to halt this evacuation and to make disciples of all people (Matt 28:18-20).

The role of the church in the fabric of society has been favorable for most of the past thirty years. However, this favorable position is rapidly changing. The church's value in the eyes of the local community has indeed shifted.² The Barna Group exposes this new trend:

¹The Barna Group explains, "From technology to politics, a lot has changed in 30 years. Spiritual routines are no exception. Church attendance, though still a vital part of many Americans' lives, has been inconsistent since Barna began tracking it in 1986. Back then, nearly half (48%) reported going to a church service in the past week. That number has recently trended downward to its lowest point yet (35%)." Barna Group, *Barna Trends 2017* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016), 148.

²The Barna Group writes, "The church has been a cornerstone of American life for centuries. But although most American adults still value the church's presence and service in their community, their

When it comes to serving various needs in their community, half of adults (50%) believe the church can feed the needy (e.g., via food banks/ food pantry), and more than four in 10 adults believe the church can provide shelter for the homeless (43%) and clothing for the needy (47%). These numbers seem high, yet at least half of all adults believe the church is unable to perform these duties. When it comes to instilling morals or teaching people about the Bible and Jesus, the numbers are even lower (38% for both). Unsurprisingly, those who have never attended church have little confidence that the church fulfills these tasks (17% and 13% respectively).

These statistics provide a perspective about the way in which the church is viewed in culture, but these statistics should not derail the church from its purpose.

Recognizing the Need: Statistics and Data on Current Trends in the Church and Student Ministry

Church Attendance in America

A glance at the current state of the church in the America shows that the church is not successfully making disciples as it pertains to church attendance and church participation. In *America at the Crossroads*, George Barna writes,

The frequency of people's participation in every common religious activity—attending church services, reading the Bible, praying, volunteering at a church, joining a Sunday School class, participating in a small group—has significantly declined in the past decade. And the reduction of religious effort is not simply among the secular masses; the decline has been equally as sharp among the born-again segment. The local church has certainly lost its place in the life routine of Americans. Long gone are the days when most people attended a church service a week. These days the turnout barely tops one-third of the population.³

Not only is there a decline in participation in religious activity in America, another strikingly concerning trend is that the church is losing the confidence of the general public. Barna writes,

Millions of young adults are jettisoning organized religion from their lives and questioning the theological underpinnings of the major faith groups. Add to that the media's gleeful reporting of the Catholic Church's sex scandals or the seemingly regular incidents of Protestant church leaders abusing congregational funds, and

views of its role in other areas of life have shifted. Barna found that 80 percent of adults believe the presence of a church was very or somewhat favorable for a community. A small minority (3%) believe a church was a very unfavorable thing for a community." Barna Group, *Barna Trends 2017*, 150.

³George Barna, *America at the Crossroads* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016), 31.

convincing the public that churches add more value to society than they extract will be an uphill battle.⁴

These statistics paint a rather bleak picture of the church in America. The next faction of underperformance in the church is the decline in attendance. Again, George Barna sheds light into this territory in his book entitled *Churchless*. Barna writes,

There is not a single demographic for which church attendance is on the increase. While few segments have demonstrated relative stability in church attendance levels over the past two decades, most people groups in the United States show declines in attendance. Because young adults have the highest levels of church avoidance, their children are less likely to attend churches, increasing the likelihood that they, too, will avoid churches in adulthood.⁵

Barna's research on this topic is very telling of the fact that church attendance in America is declining. The church must work diligently to make disciples who understand the need to gather in churches so that they can advance the mission of Jesus Christ.

Church Participation among Millennials

The decline in church attendance is highest in the Millennial generation (those born between 1980-2000). Thom Rainer writes in *Millennials*,

Sixty-five percent of Millennials do not regularly attend worship services. Saturday night is extending into Sunday morning. Millennials who are leaving home are also leaving home are also leaving church. . . . While only one out of three Millennials attend worship services regularly, only one out of five is involved in a small group Bible study. Millennials are no longer choosing to identify themselves with religion.⁶

⁴Barna Group, *Barna Trends 2017*, 143-44. The Barna Group expounds on this idea by stating, "More than two out of five Americans believe that, when it comes to what happens in the country today, 'people of faith' (42%) and 'religion' (46%) are part of the problem. Further, perceptions of clergy have changed. Clergy members were once commonly viewed as important leaders in society, trusted on a spectrum of issues. Today only one-fifth of U.S. adults strongly believe that clergy are a credible source of insight on the most important issues of our day." Ibid., 150.

⁵George Barna and David Kinnaman, *Churchless* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2014), 9.

⁶Thom S. Rainer and Jess W. Rainer, *The Millennials* (Nashville: B & H, 2011), 47.

Rainer points out that the Millennial generation is avoiding regular church attendance and exiting the church when they leave home. The Barna Group affirms this statement:

There are a number of factors that influence church attendance habits, such as geography, ethnicity, and age. For example, Millennials are the least likely generation to regularly go to church; less than three in ten (28%) of them have attended in the last week. Among Gen-Xers, the number climbs slightly to 33 percent. Meanwhile, Elders are the most church-ed generation; 48 percent say they have been to service in the past week, a full 12 percent more than Boomers (36%).⁷

Millennials are not only the least likely generation to regularly attend church, but they are also questioning the church's validity and importance in their lives. The Barna Group reports the reasons why many Millennials do not perceive the importance of church:

Two in five say church isn't important because they can find God elsewhere (30%), and one-third say it's because church is not personally relevant to them (35%). One in three simply find church boring (31%) and one in five say it feels like God is missing from church (20%). Only 8 percent say they don't attend church because church is "out of date," undercutting the notion that all we need to do for Millennials is to make church "cooler."⁸

These statistics begin to provide a glimpse into the fact that the younger generation in America is not actively involved in the church once they leave home. In *Essential Church*, Thom Rainer gives even more insight into this generational departure:

Students are looking for more; they are on a spiritual journey. They are seeking this amorphous thing called faith, but they are not coming to the church to find it. Only 16 percent of dropouts left the church because they desired to leave organized religion. And only 20 percent of teenage students plan to leave the church while in high school. Conversely, 80 percent of these students do not plan to leave. They just fall off the radar after age eighteen. Sadly, at one of the most critical junctions in life, the transition into adulthood, people are separating faith and church.⁹

There are several factors for the Millennial generation not attending church—it is not a mere difference in style or aesthetic. The Barna Group adds yet another layer to this issue of Millennials leaving the church: "More worrisome are the two-thirds of

⁷Barna Group, *Barna Trends 2017*, 148.

⁸Ibid., 158.

⁹Thom S. Rainer and Sam S. Rainer, *Essential Church* (Nashville: B & H, 2008), 83.

Millennials who believe American churchgoers are a lot or somewhat hypocritical (66%).¹⁰ The perceived hypocrisy of the church is not necessarily a new trend, but it is one that should be noted according to the numbers that bear witness to its effect in the decline of Millennials and their church participation. These statistics only provide a glimpse into the prevailing issues of young Americans' withdrawal from church, but they are a disconcertingly eye opening in this most prevalent issue.

Church Involvement in Discipleship and Evangelism

Discipleship in the church is a foundational doctrine of the church (2 Tim 2:2; 1 Tim 4:7). Barna delves into the topic of discipleship in the church by revealing a downward trend among evangelicals actively sharing their faith:

One of the most alarming trends is the severe drop in the proportion of born-again Christians sharing the gospel with the nonbelievers. The ideal form of church growth, of course, is by attracting nonbelievers to follow Christ and become part of the community of faith. However, in just the last ten years, the share of believers expressing the gospel to non-Christians has plummeted from more than half (55 percent) to barely one-third (35 percent). If the gospel remains a secret, it is virtually impossible for the Church to attract new adherents.¹¹

The church must begin to frame its perspective on the next generation of churchgoers in a whole new light. According to the statistics, the reality is that even inside the evangelical church, the population of born again believers are outnumbered. In *America at the Crossroads*, Barna writes,

Even within church circles they, (evangelicals), are dwarfed by non-evangelical born-again Christians (who are about 30 percent of the population) and notional Christians (people who consider themselves to be Christian but have not confessed their sins and asked Christ to save them, a segment that constitutes about 40 percent of the population). In other words, among all of the adults who consider themselves to be Christian, evangelicals are outnumbered ten to one by those who do not embrace biblical positions on sin, salvation, and Scripture.¹²

¹⁰Barna Group, *Barna Trends 2017*, 158.

¹¹Barna, *America at the Crossroads*, 33.

¹²Ibid., 56. Barna defines evangelical as “those who are driven by their strong conviction that the purpose of their life is meant to love God by serving and obeying Him, and that their Christian faith is

The theological implications of these facts are astounding in that the church must work diligently to not only evangelize non-believers, but also to disciple those in whom are already in the church.

Church Dropouts and the De-Churched

The number of people who once identified with the local church in their childhood or teen years who are no longer participating in church is a large amount.¹³ In *Essential Church*, Thom Rainer and Sam Rainer researched eighteen to thirty-year-old adults in America who attended a Protestant church for at least a year while they were in high school. The research revealed an eye-opening statistic: “Here is the incredible but sad finding of this study: more than two-thirds of young churchgoing adults in America drop out of church between the ages of eighteen and twenty-two.”¹⁴ From these findings, they gleaned the top ten reasons why church dropouts stopped attending church:

meant to be lived wholeheartedly, not merely believed intellectually.” Ibid., 56.

¹³Brandon Shields researched 279 youth participants in Southern Baptist mega churches and found some results contrary to the literature on student dropout rates. Shields work is important to this conversation as it shows an opposing view of some of the statistics in view. Shields work was limited to mega churches in the Southern Baptist denomination so it has limitations inherent to it. Shields writes, “Contrary to prior estimations based in youth ministry literature, this researcher (Shields) found that 88% of the young adults surveyed remained actively involved in a local church after high school. Also, 64.9% of all sample participants reported, ‘I never stopped attending church’ between the ages of 18 and 22. While these retention statistics cannot be applied in a broad manner to all SBC youth ministries, they did suggest that a segment of churches experience a high rate of success in regard to their youth ministry efforts.” Brandon Middle Shields, “An Assessment of Dropout Rates of Former Youth Ministry Participants in Conservative Southern Baptist Megachurches” (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2010), 174. Shields continues, “The discovery of a high rate of retention implied that the discussion on youth ministry philosophy and practice is far from an ‘open-and-shut’ case. Conversely, this statistic calls into question the widely circulated hypothesis that traditional, age-graded youth ministry has been a detrimental approach to evangelizing and discipling teenagers. All of the sample churches ‘segmented’ their students into age groupings, facilitated peer-to-peer interactions, and offered staple youth ministry programs (camps, retreats, mission trips). Youth ministry philosophy may indeed be broken or in need of retooling, but that conclusion certainly cannot be defended with respect to actual empirical data. In recent decades, it has been en vogue for youth ministry critics to extrapolate broader trends from their own observations, experiences, and discussions within their ministry contexts. Observations can be limited and flawed, when held up to the scrutiny of solid research.” Ibid., 175.

¹⁴Rainer and Rainer, *Essential Church*, 2.

1. Simply wanted a break from church.
2. Church members seemed judgmental or hypocritical.
3. Moved to college and stopped attending church.
4. Work responsibilities prevented me from attending.
5. Moved too far away from the church to continue attending.
6. Became too busy though still wanted to attend.
7. Didn't feel connected to the people in my church.
8. Disagreed with the church's stance on political or social issues.
9. Chose to spend more time with friends outside the church.
10. Was only going to church to please others.¹⁵

These ten reasons provide insight into why these de-churched are no longer attending. The authors proceed to answer the primary questions from these ten reasons:

Why do more than two-thirds of churchgoing young adult Americans leave the church? Or to ask the question positively, why do one-third of churchgoing young adult Americans stay in the church? The answer to the latter question emerged from several years of research. *Young adults are likely to stay in the church if they see church as essential to their lives.*¹⁶

This statement, along with the other statistics, reveals that young adults (Millennials) are leaving the church because they do not see it as essential to their lives, for one reason or another. The local gathering of born-again believers has declined in importance to an entire generation. This trajectory must be evaluated with Scripture to move the needle back toward growth and discipleship.

However, this decline is not just in the younger generations; it is in American adults as well.¹⁷ The America population is in great need of spiritual renewal and focus.

¹⁵Rainer and Rainer, *Essential Church*, 3-4.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 5, emphasis original.

¹⁷Barna and Kinnaman write, "When we asked a national sample of churchless people (what is the single most important goal in your life?), the most popular responses were to experience good health (20 percent) and to succeed in their job or career (18 percent). Other frequently mentioned goals were to do a good job parenting their children (10 percent), to be financially successful or comfortable (10 percent), to live a long life (8 percent), and to experience happiness and fulfillment (5 percent). Only 2 percent listed goals related to faith and spirituality. . . . These responses are quite similar to those offered by churchled adults. The only significant difference is the 12 percent of churchled adults who listed a goal related to faith or spirituality. Among churchgoers, faith-related responses were the third-ranked category, marginally higher than parenting and finances. Still, fewer than one in eight churchled people identify something related to faith as their top goal in life." Barna and Kinnaman, *Churchless*, 121-22.

The message of Jesus Christ and his gospel has not been advanced into the hearts of Americans as it was as recently as thirty years ago.

Responding to the Need: Discipleship in Student Ministry

The numbers bear witness to the fact that the next generation of Americans are no longer participating in church activities as they were three decades ago. Steve Parr and Thom Crites offer another glimpse into this by revealing some recent research: “In America today, only about 16% of all churches across every denomination have a significant young adult population.”¹⁸ This shortage begs the question of how the church should respond. What are the reasons behind this decline? Does the church simply need to invest more in the ministries of the next generation?¹⁹

With this lack of return on investment in view, the response to this need is one that must be thoroughly measured in order for the church to refocus its effort on making disciples into the future. This goal of making disciples is not merely to gain church participation; it is to call people into a relationship with Jesus through the gospel message.

¹⁸Steve Parr and Thom Crites, *Why They Stay* (Bloomington, IN: WestBow, 2105), 11. The authors offer more reasons for this decline: “It could be that something in the current environment has driven young Christians away from the church. If we were really honest with each other, we would have to admit that young adults are not seeing much of a difference in Christians and non-Christians in our culture today. Research indicates that this new wave of believers is not staying to fight for their place in church life; rather, they are moving on. They feel unfulfilled, isolated, judged, and dismissed. If young adults have to choose between their culture, their technology, their friends, and their church, more and more are not choosing their local church.” Ibid.

¹⁹Steve Wright examines the church’s investment in the life of a typical student in *ReThink* (Wake Forest, NC: InQuest, 2008), 21-22:

When we consider the investment that has been made in the lives of this generation of students, it is difficult to believe how many students are leaving evangelical churches and their faith. The investment begins much sooner than youth ministry. Children are placed in church nurseries at birth, and then they move into exciting children’s ministries that encourage their faith development. Then next few years are spent in middle school ministries, which include weekend trips, concerts with Christian celebrities, lock-ins, and Bible studies geared for their ages. The same students move into high school ministries with weeklong camps, mission trips, leadership retreats, choirs, discipleship classes, Wednesday night youth groups, Sunday morning Bible classes, and the list goes on and on. The church makes a huge investment by providing professional staff, youth ministry budgets, enhanced youth rooms and sometimes buildings with the latest technology. With all the time, money, and energy poured into teens, why are we not getting a better return for our investment?

This goal—the correct goal—must be to consistently disciple the next generation in harmony with the inspired words of Scripture.

Family Ministry Model

Finding the correct goal is the first step in responding to the need. Scholars and churchmen have set forth multiple ministry models that aid the church in finding the best fit for their ministry context in order to set the proper goals in reaching their people. One model presented to help the church in this endeavor is the Family Ministry Model.

Timothy Paul Jones in his book *Perspectives on Family Ministry* defines family ministry as “the process of intentionally and persistently realigning a congregation’s proclamation and practices so that parents are acknowledged, trained, and held accountable as the persons primarily responsible for the discipleship of their children.”²⁰ This type of ministry has a foremost goal of aligning the family to be the primary disciplers and gospel proclaimers to their children. This type of ministry is paramount on the battleground of rallying the next generation of churchgoers to make disciples of those who have not yet believed in Jesus. Randy Stinson affirms the necessity of this style of ministry:

Family ministry is necessary and significant because what we have been doing is ineffective. Today’s churches offer more youth camps, conferences, Christian music, sophisticated technology, books, and trained leaders than ever before. Yet, for whatever reason, a significant number of children fail to make the transition from youth ministry to mature, Christian adulthood. The sort of ministry that will address this problem can’t be found by adding one more church program found on the shelf of a Christian bookstore. Seminary classes cannot solve this problem. Not even this book can solve the problem. What is needed is a theological and structural reorientation spawning church cultures that draw families together instead of pulling them apart.²¹

Family ministry is presented as an effective approach, not a perfect one. This type of ministry is indeed a reorientation of the goal of the church’s student and children’s ministries. It is primarily concerned with the lack of family involvement in the spiritual

²⁰Timothy Paul Jones, *Perspectives on Family Ministry* (Nashville: B & H, 2009), 40.

²¹Randy Stinson, foreword to *Perspectives on Family Ministry*, 2.

formation of children and young adults in the church, which started in the 1950s.²² This type of ministry is a shift in the “let’s do what we have always done” approach to student ministry. The “status quo” has not produced the results in student retention and discipleship that the church in America has seen in recent decades. The family ministry approach beckons the church to restructure its goals toward the biblical model of making disciples in the home.²³

Establishing the correct goal is the starting point in this ministry model. Jones juxtaposes this idea of setting the *correct* goal by telling a personal story of what pursuing the *wrong* goal in student ministry looks like:

I spent most of that first year (in youth ministry) torn between the conflicting expectations of the pastor, parents, students, and my own conscience. The pastor wanted greater numbers of youth and peace with the parents of these youth. The youth wanted a constant string of entertaining events. The parents wanted entertaining events too, but they also expected these activities, in some inexplicable way, to result in their children’s spiritual maturity. From the perspective of many parents, I was the person who the church had hired for the tasks of discipling and entertaining their children.

²²Brian Haynes traces the history of how the church has moved away from the Family Ministry approach, and writes, “Beginning in the 1950’s the role of the pastor changed from shepherd to growth strategist. Pastors and church leaders attended dozens of conferences and read hundreds of books designed to get more people inside the church facility on Sunday morning. There’s measurable value in this; when people come to our churches, we’re able to influence them for Christ. But the definition of success in ministry changed from an emphasis on spiritual formation to an emphasis on numeric growth. The church chose events as the preferred vehicle for spiritual formation. We often used gimmicks and guilt to bolster numbers. For most churches by the 1990’s, the family didn’t even register as a viable vehicle for equipping the generations. We developed children’s ministries and youth ministries and gave hired professionals the responsibility for mentoring too many children. In short, we did it our way. We built magnificent organizations, but we produced a version of Christianity that is compartmentalized and humanistic. Our culture is now paying the price for ‘our version’ of Christianity.” Brian Haynes, *Shift* (Loveland, CO: Group, 2009), 37.

²³John Steen, *Practical Family Ministry* (Nashville: Randall House, 2015), 40-41. Steen affirms the biblical role of parents as primary disciple makers: “The Bible clearly teaches that parents are given the privilege and responsibility for the discipleship of their children. The reality of the importance of parents in their children’s spiritual development, however, is frequently regarded as countercultural and thus shunned. Christian parents who do not understand or acknowledge their biblical role tend to ‘go with the flow’ by thinking their child’s discipleship will be fully facilitated at church through organized ministries devoted to their ages. Although the church may be faithful and effective designing ministries for their children and youth, it cannot and should not be regarded as a replacement for parents as the primary spiritual influencers and navigators in their child’s life.” Ibid.

What I did not recognize at the time was that the primary problem was not the students' desire to be entertained—that was merely a symptom. The problem was a deeply flawed model of ministry that I had embraced even as I tried to move the ministry in a discipleship-focused direction. This faulty model places the professional minister at the center and makes gaining and retaining students the goal. In the case of student ministry, it turns youth group into a holding pattern for the church's future instead of calling students to live as servants of the gospel in their community of faith here and now.²⁴

Jones is clearly arguing that the student pastor or church leader should not be the focal point of the retention or the evangelization of the next generation. Rather, the youth ministry in the church must be focused on the family and its role in the spiritual formation of their children. Wright offers more insight into this position of family ministry:

Nowhere in Scripture does it teach that it is the church's responsibility to be the exclusive disciple makers. . . . While our desire is to provide "meat" every chance we can—to teach systematic theology, discuss complex ethical issues, help teens wrestle with the questions of faith, look at church history, etc.—our overall objective is to present truth that nourishes everyone, from the new Christian to the long-time believer. We are not the exclusive "meat givers"; parents primarily own that task. Our charge is to resource, train, and involve parents—as well as echo their teaching—as they present the truth to their children.²⁵

According to the Family Ministry model, the church must regain its footing in the home before it concerns itself with retention rates or any other noted problem in student ministry. While the church must be concerned with the lack of students who continue participating after they leave home as adults, both Jones and Wright argue that the first goal is to recapture the centrality of gospel proclamation in the home.

Jones then continues this line of reasoning by asking follow up questions pertaining to the retention rate of students in the church:

But what if gaining and retaining numbers isn't the right goal in the first place? And what if the center of ministry isn't supposed to be the efforts of a pastor or professional minister? What if we centered every aspect of our ministry in the gospel and not in our efforts or methods?²⁶

²⁴Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2011), 55-56.

²⁵Wright, *ReThink*, 143.

²⁶Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 56.

Is there a simple answer to these questions? Perhaps no. However, the answer to these questions are vital in understanding how the church should respond to the need of reaching the next generation with the gospel. These questions are probing in the sense that they challenge what is widely considered as the status quo of student ministry over the past several decades. Jones offers a transparent idea of what a successful family ministry answer would be to these issues:

Family ministry of the sort I am describing in this book is not a program to fix a congregation's retention problems. It cannot be reduced to a series of conferences or activities or seminars. The kind of family ministry that I am envisioning is a movement toward equipping Christian households to function as outposts of God's mission in the world. Through family ministry, families become contexts where Christian community is consistently practiced with the goal of sharing the good news of God's victory far beyond our families. The gospel is rehearsed in families and reinforced at church so that God's truth can be revealed to the world. This isn't about retaining young adults on the attendance rolls; it's about coordinating families around shared, Spirit-motivated perspective on parents and children.²⁷

The Family Ministry approach to retention of students and discipling young adults is to structure the message of the gospel in such a way that students and children hear the gospel through repetition in the home and the church. This model emphasizes the importance of the parents as primary disciple makers instead of putting the onus of this task solely on the church and the church leaders. In this Family Ministry model, the church and the family work together in the saving work of Jesus through the gospel ministry.

Family ministry is indeed concerned with retention rates and with answering the question of why students and young adults are leaving the church at such a rapid rate after high school. However, this is not the only focus of this model. The Family Ministry approach, if applied correctly, will "coordinate families around a shared, Spirit-motivated perspective," which will in turn reach the next generation while simultaneously imparting the importance of staying in church as they reach adulthood.²⁸

²⁷Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 59.

²⁸*Ibid.*

Missional Student Ministry

Another response that is becoming common as it pertains to reaching the next generation is to become a “missional” church or ministry. The definition for the term *missional* established in chapter 1 is “an adjective denoting something that is related to or characterized by mission, or has the qualities, attributes or dynamics of mission.”²⁹ Ed Stetzer gives clarity to the outworking of this term in his book *Comeback Churches*: “Missional leaders and churches are ones that are thinking and acting like missionaries. They understand their culture, lead biblically faithful and culturally relevant churches, and think in missionary ways about their contexts.”³⁰ In order to deposit the gospel to the future of America, the church must focus its efforts on becoming missional.

A missional student ministry begins by challenging students to see their life as if they are a missionary. Alvin Reid adds to this concept when he writes,

By “missional students,” I mean simply this: the core of every student ministry must be the mission of God, centered on knowing God and then living and loving and sharing the gospel. . . . Missional means to see the world with the eyes of a missionary, to look at everything and everyone from the posture of one on a mission so great that everything in life flows from that mission.³¹

Missional student ministry places the mission of the church as its foremost goal. This ministry model is not event-driven or based on entertainment or external things. Reid delves into the issues that arise in an event-driven student ministry as compared to a missional student ministry:

The problem comes when many (perhaps most?) student ministries use *tools* like events or activities as the actual *template* for student ministry. The coming year of ministry starts with the big events—the Disciple Now (DNow) weekend, the camp, the mission trip—and then builds around them. That is event-driven student ministry. Missional student ministry starts with the posture of the student ministry as a missionary outpost in the community, utilizing tools like events and activities only as they assist in the fulfillment of the mission.³²

²⁹See chap. 1n23.

³⁰Ed Stetzer, *Comeback Churches* (Nashville: B & H, 2007), 56.

³¹Alvin Reid, *As You Go* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2013), 26.

³²*Ibid.*, 26-27.

A missional student ministry simply must have an overarching focus on mission in everything it does. All activities and events must foster an environment of mission (reaching non-Christians) in order for the ministry to function missionally. To seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10) is one of the driving Scripture verses that encapsulate a missional student ministry. This verse aims the focus of the ministry on the focus of Jesus in his earthly ministry.

Another shift that has become a significant part of being a missional church revolves around the idea of sending students and young people on short-term mission trips (STM).³³ According to Michael Wilder and Shane Parker in their book *Transformission*, these trips are valuable to students pertaining to positive life transformation. These trips are not to be stand-alone events but should reinforce the overall discipleship process of a student ministry and should also reinforce the imperative of the Great Commission in Scripture.

Notably, these events indeed spawn a positive, life altering experience for students as it pertains to all-things-mission.³⁴ However, *Transformission* warns that these events are not the end, but rather they are a means toward driving home the mission of the church. These STMs often end with an experience of dissonance that can cause the positive effects of the short-term effort to be temporal and short-lived. Wilder and Parker add,

Does STM cause transformation in the lives of participants?, our answer would be yes and no. The answer is yes in the sense that some of the more controlled research

³³Michael Wilder and Shane Parker define short-term trips: “In a conversation about STM, it is essential to clarify what makes an experience ‘short term’. In most student ministry models, a short-term trip will fall along the lower end of the spectrum, with the majority of these opportunities lasting one to two weeks.” Michael S. Wilder and Shane W. Parker, *Transformission* (Nashville: B & H, 2010), 36.

³⁴David Sills writes, “One of the most common benefits of STM’s is not for the nationals the team works with but for the team itself. Many have felt called to missions on such trips. Others return to the United States more determined to pray for missions, missionaries and the world’s lost peoples. Others are more committed to give to missions and lead mission efforts in the local church. STM’s are an invaluable tool for missions education.” David Sills, *Changing World, Unchanging Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2015), 70.

does show positive change. Moreover, in most of the research, there is an initial indication of positive life transformation. . . . The answer is also no, however, because this initial indication of transformation is often merely temporary. It is what we might call good intentions. Likely, the participant has experienced dissonance and is attempting to alleviate it by making these initial commitments. While he has a desire to see the commitments come to full fruition in his life and even sets his mind in that direction, he often lacks the support and follow-through necessary to reinforce such decisions.³⁵

If STMs are supported well on the front and back end of the trip, then they can make a lasting change in the participant's life. STMs aid the church in creating a posture of missional living. The research indicates examples of dissonance and temporal change for some mission goers, but these negative responses can be stayed if there is ample support and follow-through from the sending agency or church. Students should be encouraged to participate in STMs and student ministries should include STMs as part of their missions' strategy.³⁶

Regardless of the student ministry model that a church has in place, and no matter the programs that drive the student ministry, the church must establish its goals clearly and concisely so that the end goal will be reached. Parr and Crites offer a concluding statement on this most important topic: "Bottom line: young adults are leaving the church and may not be coming back. Does that concern you?"³⁷ The church should obviously be concerned with this fact and should likewise be concerned with incorporating the correct student ministry to reach the next generation with the gospel. While no student ministry model or program is the perfect answer to the issue of student

³⁵Wilder and Parker, *Transformission*, 81.

³⁶In conclusion to this topic, Parker and Wilder write, "For this reason, we believe STM must be seen as a strategic component in youth ministry programming. It cannot be a stand-alone event if it is to accomplish lasting transformation in the lives of those whom you have been called to shepherd. Rather, it should be a part of the larger discipleship process. Just as a youth camp or leadership retreat, if done well, functions as part of an overarching strategy to grow students and adults, so must STM. In youth ministries where youth camps act as isolated events, students enjoy the euphoria of the mountaintop experience, only to return home to their old patterns of thinking and behaving. So it is with STM that are disconnected from the whole discipleship process." Ibid.

³⁷Parr and Crites, *Why They Stay*, 12.

retention in the church, having no model is also not the answer. There must be an effort to halt the shifting tide of students who are no longer participating in church when they leave high school. Each individual church has its own decisions to make pertaining to how they are going to shift ministries to reach the next generation of un-churched people. However, one thing remains clear, as the Barna Group indicates, “For the sake of the life-changing message of Jesus, and of the Great Commission to share that message entrusted to us, the Christian community has an obligation to understand the un-churched.”³⁸

Reinforcing the Mandate

The need to reach the next generation is obvious. The church has multiple possibilities at its disposal to aid it in this task of making disciples. However, what is at the core of this task? What is the mandate of the church and of every Christian?

The Mandate to the Church

The church has a clear mandate from Scripture found in the Great Commission of Jesus in Matthew 28:18-20. The directive from Jesus to his church is to go and make disciples and to grow new churches filled with new disciples of Christ. John Mark Terry and J. D. Payne, in *Developing a Strategy for Missions*, write,

While there are many excellent activities that kingdom citizens can be involved in to bring glory to God, the primary New Testament teaching is that the mission of God is first and foremost to do evangelism that results in the birth and growth of churches. The kingdom advances and Jesus builds his church numerically as people are converted. We recognize that the mission of God includes matters such as healing, casting out demons, caring for the poor, and issues of justice. But we would add that such matters either follow conversion, with newly planted churches carrying out such tasks, or are done to open doors for the calling of others to repentance and faith in Jesus, as observed throughout the gospels and Acts. Service and conducting social ministry are both necessary and extremely important but should be carried out in the world so that the peoples of the world may come to declare the greatness of God’s name (Ps. 47).³⁹

³⁸Barna Group, *Churchless*, 4.

³⁹John Mark Terry and J. D. Payne, *Developing a Strategy for Mission* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 6.

This *mandate* is the same as the *mission*. Namely, go and teach people the life saving gospel and thus, produce more Christians who will form the church of Jesus Christ. God has graciously and concisely given the command to His church and He has equipped every Christian to multiply. David Platt offers insight into this topic in his book *Follow Me*:

By God's design, he has wired his children for spiritual reproduction. He has woven into the fabric of every single Christian's DNA a desire and ability to reproduce (make disciples). More than any married couple longs to see a baby naturally born, every Christian longs to see sinners supernaturally saved. All who know the love of Christ yearn to multiply the life of Christ. God has formed, fashioned, and even filled Christians with his own Spirit for this very purpose.⁴⁰

God has empowered Christians with the Holy Spirit to accomplish the work in which He has sent them to do. Therefore, the mission of the church is to go forth as spirit-filled believers who do all that the Lord has commanded in Scripture, and more specifically, in the Great Commission narratives. The mission of the church is precisely to go, teach, baptize, and make disciples.⁴¹ John Piper, in his book *Let the Nations Be Glad*, helps to describe the work and goal of the church as it participates in God's mission:

The most crucial issue in missions is the centrality of God in the life of the church. How can people who are not stunned by the greatness of God be sent with the ringing message, "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods" (Ps. 94:6)?⁴²

⁴⁰David Platt, *Follow Me* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2013), 207

⁴¹Kevin Deyoung and Greg Gilbert add to this discussion of the mission of the church by writing, "The mission is a specific set of things Jesus has sent his church into the world to accomplish and is significantly narrower than 'everything God commands.' That's not to say that our broader obligations aren't important. They are! Jesus and the apostles command us to parent our children well, to be loving husbands and wives, to do good to all people, and many other things. Jesus even tells us in the Great Commission itself (as Matthew records it) to teach people to 'observe all that I have commanded you.' But that doesn't mean that everything we do in obedience to Christ should be understood as part of the church's mission. The mission Jesus gave the church is more specific than that. And that, in turn, doesn't mean that other commands Jesus gives us are unimportant. It means that the church has been given a specific mission by its Lord, and *teaching* people to obey Christ's commands is a nonnegotiable part of that mission. We go, we proclaim, we baptize, and we teach—all to the end of making lifelong, die-hard disciples of Jesus Christ who obey everything he commanded." Kevin Deyoung and Greg Gilbert, *The Mission of the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 62-63.

⁴²John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad! The Supremacy of God in Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 20.

The church must rally around this “ringing message” and move forward in the endeavor of gospel declaration.

Churches who embrace mission understand their purpose. One of the common characteristics of church’s that are on mission is that they are captivated by and rooted in the Word of God. Churches that mold and shape their ministries by the inspired Word of God will move toward the mission of God most effectively. Bruce Riley Ashford expounds,

When the church understands that its mission is rooted in God’s mission and is captured by the incredible privilege of participating in God’s work for his name’s sake, we believe the church will be energized and empowered to pursue its spiritual calling and purpose, namely, to make God’s name known through making disciples to the ends of the earth (Matt. 28:18-20). If the church shapes and orients its mission around God’s mission, it will not fail. We can be confident that God’s mission can and will sustain the mission of the church, for it is God himself who empowers the church through his Spirit (Acts 1:8).⁴³

The church has the promise of God, the power of God, and the Spirit of God to guide it on this mission. Spirit-filled people will carry the gospel to the ends of the earth while bearing the fruit of the Spirit in all they do (Gal 5:22-23). This fruit will aid the church in its endeavor to reach the nations with the good news.

The Mandate for Missions: Developing a Missions Strategy

The church has a clear mandate. From this directive, the church is viewed in Scripture as the primary sending agency for missions to the world.⁴⁴ The church then, as it is commissioned into the world, must choose how to strategize effectively to send people

⁴³Bruce Riley Ashford, *Theology and Practice of Mission* (Nashville: B & H, 2011), 17.

⁴⁴Scott Moreau, Gary Corwin, and Gary McGee affirm this statement: “Churches, of course, are the primary senders. This wasn’t determined by chance or by a vote. God made the church—the ‘bride of Christ’ (see Rev. 19:7; 21:2, 9)—his primary instrument for accomplishing his purposes on earth (Matt. 16:17-19). Foremost among the roles that churches play as local manifestations of the universal church is to prepare members for Great Commission work (Matt. 28:19-20). Churches do this by teaching the full counsel of God regarding the global task, by preparing all members to find and perform their particular part in it, and by sending out those called to go (see Acts 13:1-3; 3 John 5-8).” A. Scott Moreau, Gary R. Corwin, and Gary B. McGee, *Introducing World Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 244.

to do the work. Terry and Payne treat this topic extensively by helping to identify why the church should have a missions strategy and also what the strategy should accomplish. They emphasize that the church is not selling a product or marketing a commodity, but rather, the church is a body of believers who are on mission until Jesus returns.⁴⁵

A missions strategy begins by making plans. Terry and Payne offer a definition of mission's strategy: "The overall process describing what we (the church) believe the Lord would have us accomplish to make disciples of all nations."⁴⁶ The church, then, must make plans, in accordance with the Word of God and with the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, to accomplish the plans God has for it in its current and future endeavors.

STMs have become a popular strategy for the church over the past several years. David Sills writes, "The number of international short-term missions (STM) teams has exploded over the last few decades, and slowly missionaries have begun to see their value."⁴⁷ With the increase in air travel and the globalization of the world, churches can now send STM teams all over the world to share the gospel.⁴⁸ The church must decide if this strategy fits into its overall plan to fulfill the mandate for missions.

While the value of STM teams has begun to be embraced by churches and missionaries alike, some concerns arise with these short-term efforts.⁴⁹ However, the

⁴⁵Terry and Payne, *Developing a Strategy for Missions*, 2.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 5.

⁴⁷Sills, *Changing World, Unchanging Mission*, 69.

⁴⁸Michael Pocock, Gailyn Van Rheenan, and Douglas McConnell state, "An important dynamic of globalization is rapid air travel. Nowhere in the world is more than thirty hours from where you presently sit. If you have a bank account, a computer, a television, and a job, you are in the top 30 percent of the world's population and are considered 'connected' in the process of globalization." Michael Pocock, Gailyn Van Rheenan, and Douglas McConnell, *The Changing Face of World Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 25.

⁴⁹Sills gives a few examples of issues related to STMs: "Some missionaries are concerned about the possibility of creating dependency and have been stung by good-hearted, deep pocketed church members who only want to help. . . . Another concern about STM trips is that they deplete the amount of

shortcomings of these STMs are not enough to discontinue them or to disregard their value completely. Sills suggests,

STM teams are coming. Missionaries should strategize and prioritize STM teams, recognizing how they can help while implementing strategies to use them. Being proactive rather than reactive helps both the missionaries and the STM team to have a positive experience with the most kingdom value.⁵⁰

STMs are just one example of a multitude of ways the church can strategize to reach the nations with the gospel. Whether a church uses STM teams, sends out full-time missionaries from their flock to reach a specific people group, or decides to fund a cooperative mission program to aid in the gospel cause, the reality remains that the church has a clear mandate to reach the nations with the gospel. The Lord Jesus in His Great Commission gives this mandate, and the church is the primary vessel sent to fulfill it.

Conclusion

The need for the church to advance the gospel to the next generation is evident. The mission of the church is clear and the outworking of this mandate is up to the church to decide how it will respond. However, not all is lost in the battle for the church to regain its hold on the next generation of new believers. Crites explains,

Thankfully, not all the news is discouraging. When I look around, I see some things that give me hope. The young generation has an affinity toward altruistic ventures—they want to change the world while buying shoes and sunglasses. They want to make a difference in the world, not just “see” the world. A typical young adult has a desire to know spiritual truths. He or she is searching for a connection with God. Young people need a community, thus there is a significant percentage of the younger generation who has stayed involved in the church.⁵¹

The need for the church to proclaim the gospel to the next generation (and to the nations) is evident. However, the battle is not futile. The Lord Jesus has promised that he will build his church and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it (Matt 16:18).

funds that would otherwise be available for traditional missionaries, if not also causing deficits in the church’s general budget as well.” Sills, *Changing World, Unchanging Mission*, 74-75.

⁵⁰Ibid., 85.

⁵¹Parr and Crites, *Why They Stay*, 13.

Jesus has not left the church without power but has given the Holy Spirit to guide, equip, and empower it with the saving message of the gospel (Acts 1:8). The church is implored to respond, and the way in which the church responds is up to the individual church through the direction and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus has left a great task for the church in this world, but He has not left the church alone in this endeavor. In Matthew 28:20, Jesus offers parting words: “And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” The author of Hebrews reminds the church that Jesus “will never leave you or forsake you” (Heb 13:5). Moreover, the apostle Paul reminds believers to “be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain” (1 Cor 15:58).

CHAPTER 4

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

The purpose of this project was to teach the high school seniors at First Baptist Clarksville the importance of having a missiological framework in their lives before they enter into college or career. This idea stems from one of the most common concerns in youth ministry today: high school graduates dropping out or significantly declining in church participation upon graduation. This concern for graduating seniors needs to be evaluated and the church must act to move the needle in the opposite direction. Individual churches need to work toward finding the reasons for decline and research their own students to find the cause of their departure.

One can scour through plenty of resources on this important topic. Many books and articles have been published on this trend; however, each individual church that has this gap in their graduating students would do well to perform some empirical research with the graduating seniors in its ministry. Churches should work to find out if what the research is saying is actually true in their current context; and if it is true, the church must work diligently to help stay the decline in church participation among its graduates.

FBCT is rich in history. The church has sent several short-term and long-term missionaries into the field over its 185 years of existence. Likewise, it has raised up pastors, deacons, and various other church leaders who have gone on to do great and wonderful work for the kingdom of God. Nevertheless, the issue remains with the graduating seniors that needed to be evaluated.

FBCT does not currently have a streamlined system to connect high school graduates to their next phase of life, whether that is university ministry, single adult ministry (and newly married), or career. This issue is one of the driving forces behind this

project because of a glaring gap in this season of life for FBCT graduates. One of the goals for FBCT, now that this project has been implemented one time, is to apply this course into the yearly curriculum for graduating seniors. The hope is that the substance of this work might aid graduates in understanding their role in the church when they move into their next season of life. Likewise, that the graduates would be motivated to find their place in the church upon leaving the student ministry.

The intentionality behind this project was not merely to pass along theological truth to the graduates, but rather to implore them to encounter the living Jesus and his Great Commission for all of his followers. To cause them to see the gospel as their greatest joy in life and to realize that this gospel is not simply a message to be received, but a life to be lived. This statement was the goal of this work, practically; to build a missiological framework in the lives of high school seniors at FBCT

This course was taught over four different sessions, each of the sessions was ninety minutes in length. The sessions were taught at FBCT. The course was not primarily a lecture format, but it was intentionally interactive and the students were tasked with multiple opportunities to participate and give answers to the questions and information presented. Each student was given a pre-course questionnaire and a post-course questionnaire with the same questions on it. The pre and post-questionnaires were measured to see whether the course caused positive or negative change in the students' understanding of the importance of missions in their lives.

Session Synopses

Session 1

The beginning session of the weekend seminar introduced the biblical foundations of the Great Commission in Scripture along with several other key biblical texts that explain the importance of mission for all Christians. Setting the course for the weekend was crucial in helping the students understand the need for a greater emphasis on the mission of the church, role of the church, and importance of participating *in* the

church as they graduate high school and move on to their next phase of life. The rationale for this project was to aid in the development of students who are committed to the Great Commission after they graduate high school, and to emphasize mission encounters with them through both biblical teaching and actual mission efforts.

This session began by unpacking the five biblical accounts of Jesus' Great Commission in Scripture: Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15, Luke 24:46-48, John 20:21, and Acts 1:8. Two initial questions were posed to the group to ponder while reading the texts: (1) What is the core of what Jesus is teaching about mission in the Great Commission? And (2) What are the implications of Jesus' Commission for the graduating high school senior?

Session 1 focused on the Matthew account of the Great Commission, which says, "And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age'" (28:18-20). In this text, Jesus is communicating one paramount imperative to his hearers: make disciples. This imperative is the foundational tenet of mission. Jesus is calling believers everywhere to go and make disciples, or in simpler terms, go and do missions. David Sills supports this idea of missions as paramount for the church: "To say there is a biblical basis for missions is to understate the entire message of the Bible. Rather than arguing for a biblical basis of missions, we should view it the other way around—the work of missions is the reason for the Bible."¹ This work of missions that Sills is referencing is most prevalent in the Great Commission.

The class then began to look at how Jesus proceeded to give three other directions for all believers: go, baptize, and teach. Upon further study of this text, these

¹David Sills, *The Missionary Call: Finding Your Place in God's Plan for the World* (Chicago: Moody, 2008), 47.

three commands are definitely encompassing aspects of the Great Commission. However, the directive of making disciples is what lands at the center of Jesus' teaching about mission and this is on what this session primarily focused.

In order to glean the gravity of Jesus' discourse, the students were challenged to consider what Jesus means when he says "make disciples." This topic of disciple-making is one of the most crucial elements to the Christian faith and, moreover, to Christian mission. Veritably, discipleship is the single most significant action that a believer in Christ must understand and practice.

The term that Jesus uses when he says go and make disciples is from the Greek word *matheteuo*, which means "to teach."² From this term, one learns that Jesus is literally saying, "Teach people to become a disciple of me." The implication is clear: Jesus' view of mission begins with disciple making.³

What is a disciple? The session continued by answering the question of "what is a disciple?" The participants used *Introducing World Missions*, by Scott Morneau, Gary R. Corwin, and Gary B. McBee, to establish the answer with a working definition. The authors define a *disciple* in terms of Jesus' Great Commission: "Disciples are people who have a deep, abiding commitment to the person (Christ), not simply a philosophy. They hold to Jesus' teaching (John 8:31-32); they love one another (John 13:35), and help each other (Luke 5:1-11)."⁴ To understand this definition better, first the students saw that a disciple is one who abides in Jesus' Word. In John 8:31-32 Jesus says, "If you

²James Strong, *The Strongest Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 3157, entry 3100.

³John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 1186, writes, "On the basis of His authority, the disciples are sent to "make disciples of all nations."

⁴Scott A. Morneau, Gary R. Corwin, and Gary B. McBee, *Introducing World Missions: A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Survey* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 44.

abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

The class discussion stopped at this point to ask the entire group the first discussion question of the session:

1. What does this mean for us as we consider the importance of the mission of making disciples?

Next, a disciple is one who has love for one another. Jesus adds in John 13:35: “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” The students were asked the following questions for group discussion.

2. What does it mean to have love for one another?
3. Is this something that you struggle with at times?
4. How can we make disciples if we do not love one another?

Third, the students continued to see that a disciple is one that desires to share the gospel with others (or, one who wants to help others). The greatest form of helping others is simply sharing the gospel with them, because this is the ultimate message of the Christian faith. In the narrative in Luke 5:1-11, Jesus tells the fishermen that they will no longer simply catch fish, but now they will be fishers of men. They will literally go and share the gospel with people and “catch” them for the kingdom. The principle in this text is that a disciple should desire to go and make more disciples, to literally “catch” other men and women with the good news of Jesus Christ.

The session paused for two more group questions to be answered by the students.

5. Are you currently catching others with the gospel?
6. If this is not a pattern of your life, do you need to evaluate yourself with this text and see how and when Jesus would use us to share his gospel?

The class then continued with a reminder that Jesus’ desire for his followers is to abide in his Word, to have love for one another, and then to go and cause others to

follow suit. This fundamental precept of making disciples is the core of the Great Commission as well as the foremost aspect of Jesus' teaching on mission.

These three directives from the definition of a disciple are not the only things involved in making disciples. David Platt adds to this discussion by writing, "Disciple making involves far more than just leading people to trust in Christ; disciple making involves teaching people to follow Christ. This necessitates that we show people (particularly new Christians) what the life of Christ looks like in action."⁵

As the session was wrapping up, the students were given two more questions from the material for discussion.

7. What does this quote from David Platt mean for us today?
8. How can we teach people to follow Christ? What does Jesus mean when he says in Matthew 28:20 "teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you"?

Teaching the gospel. The class continued by looking at another important aspect of Matthew's Great Commission: to *teach*. Again, to use the original language of Greek, the term *teach* is from the Greek word *didasko*, which means "to provide information in a manner intended to produce understanding."⁶ Imparting the knowledge of whom Jesus is (John 14:6) and what he came to do (Luke 19:10) is a vital part of the Great Commission. Without the crucial aspect of teaching, making disciples would be most difficult, if not impossible.

Correspondingly, David Sills adds to the importance of training and teaching believers to reciprocate the message to others by saying,

Rather than viewing theological education, pastoral preparation, leadership training, and in-depth discipleship as lesser forms of missionary activity, we must return to the biblical understanding of missions that incorporates them as primary and necessary ways of fulfilling the Great Commission.⁷

⁵David Platt, *Follow Me: A Call to Die, A Call to Live* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2013), 191.

⁶Strong, *Exhaustive Concordance*, 1602, entry 1321.

⁷David M. Sills, *Reaching and Teaching: A Call to Great Commission Obedience* (Chicago: Moody, 2010), 13.

Indeed, as Sills suggests, teaching is one of the fundamental aspects of making disciples according to Jesus' spoken words in the Great Commission. With this concept in mind, the students were asked three more questions to cause them to think about the importance of being able to teach the good news of Jesus to the people with which they come in contact.

9. Are you prepared to teach others about Jesus?
10. Are you equipped with the ability to share the good news or do you need to study the Bible more?
11. Will you commit to learning the true message of the gospel?

Group exercise. The session concluded with a fifteen-minute segment for the students to put into practice the act of sharing the gospel. The students divided into teams of two and each of them had five to seven minutes to share the gospel with their partner. The students were encouraged to use their smart phones or Bibles as a resource for this assignment. The session concluded at the end of the group activity.

Session 2

This session began with each of the teams reporting on their group activity from session 1. The students were asked to share some of their positive moments from the gospel sharing activity, along with some of the negative moments. The results were varied in nature, but most of the students gave positive feedback on the assignment from the previous session. The emphasis of the assignment was to challenge the students in sharing their faith. The reports from the group were encouraging to the class because each of the groups were able to discuss some common mistakes or struggles they had in sharing the gospel.

Next, the content for session 2 was broken down into two primary learning segments: (1) recognizing the need for graduating seniors to have a missiological framework upon leaving student ministry, including statistics and data on current trends

in the church; and (2) teaching the students how to resist the temptation of dropping out of church when they move out on their own.

Current statistics on the church in America. The class began with some statistics on the decline in church attendance in America. In *America at the Crossroads*, George Barna writes,

The frequency of people's participation in every common religious activity—attending church services, reading the Bible, praying, volunteering at a church, joining a Sunday School class, participating in a small group—has significantly declined in the past decade. And the reduction of religious effort is not simply among the secular masses; the decline has been equally as sharp among the born-again segment. The local church has certainly lost its place in the life routine of Americans. Long gone are the days when most people attended a church service a week. These days the turnout barely tops one-third of the population.⁸

The decline in church attendance is not specific to one single demographic. Barna sheds light into this territory in *Churchless*:

There is not a single demographic for which church attendance is on the increase. While few segments have demonstrated relative stability in church attendance levels over the past two decades, most people groups in the United States show declines in attendance. Because young adults have the highest levels of church avoidance, their children are less likely to attend churches, increasing the likelihood that they, too, will avoid churches in adulthood.⁹

The decline in church attendance is highest in the Millennial generation (those born between 1980-2000). Thom Rainer explains,

Sixty-five percent of Millennials do not regularly attend worship services. Saturday night is extending into Sunday morning. Millennials who are leaving home are also leaving home are also leaving church. . . While only one out of three Millennials attend worship services regularly, only one out of five is involved in a small group Bible study. Millennials are no longer choosing to identify themselves with religion.¹⁰

The Millennial generation is avoiding regular church attendance and exiting the church when they leave home. The Barna Group affirms this statement:

⁸George Barna, *America at the Crossroads* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016), 31.

⁹George Barna and David Kinnaman, *Churchless* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2014), 9.

¹⁰Thom S. Rainer and Jess W. Rainer, *The Millennials* (Nashville: B & H, 2011), 47.

There are a number of factors that influence church attendance habits, such as geography, ethnicity, and age. For example, Millennials are the least likely generation to regularly go to church; less than three in ten (28%) of them have attended in the last week. Among Gen-Xers, the number climbs slightly to 33 percent. Meanwhile, Elders are the most church-ed generation; 48 percent say they have been to service in the past week, a full 12 percent more than Boomers (36%).¹¹

Not only are Millennials the least likely generation to attend church regularly, they also question the church's validity and importance in their lives. The Barna Group reports the reasons why many Millennials do not perceive the importance of church:

Two in five say church isn't important because they can find God elsewhere (30%), and one-third say it's because church is not personally relevant to them (35%). One in three simply find church boring (31%) and one in five say it feels like God is missing from church (20%). Only 8 percent say they don't attend church because church is 'out of date', undercutting the notion that all we need to do for Millennials is to make church "cooler."¹²

The session stopped at this point for 10 minutes so the students could consider these statistics and answer the following questions. The students were divided into groups of four to talk about the impact of the presented statistics and to discuss the following three questions. Ten minutes were allocated for the groups to compile their answers.

1. Why do you think these statistics are so negative?
2. Do you think these statistics tell the whole story?
3. What can we do to stay these trends and move the needle in the opposite direction?

Challenging the students to stay in church. After the group discussions, the students remained in their groups for the remainder of the class. The statistics that were presented in the first part of this session do not tell the complete story. Like most topics in the world, there are two sides of the story.

The students were introduced to Brandon Shields' work on the topic of dropout rates among youth in the church. Shields researched 279 youth participants in Southern

¹¹Barna Group, *Barna Trends 2017* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016), 148.

¹²*Ibid.*, 158.

Baptist megachurches and found some contrary results to the literature on student dropout rates. He writes,

Contrary to prior estimations based in youth ministry literature, this researcher [Shields] found that 88% of the young adults surveyed remained actively involved in a local church after high school. Also, 64.9% of all sample participants reported, ‘I never stopped attending church’ between the ages of 18 and 22. While these retention statistics cannot be applied in a broad manner to all SBC youth ministries, they did suggest that a segment of churches experience a high rate of success in regard to their youth ministry efforts. . . . The discovery of a high rate of retention implied that the discussion on youth ministry philosophy and practice is far from an “open-and-shut” case. Conversely, this statistic calls into question the widely circulated hypothesis that traditional, age-graded youth ministry has been a detrimental approach to evangelizing and discipling teenagers. All of the sample churches ‘segmented’ their students into age groupings, facilitated peer-to-peer interactions, and offered staple youth ministry programs (camps, retreats, mission trips). Youth ministry philosophy may indeed be broken or in need of retooling, but that conclusion certainly cannot be defended with respect to actual empirical data. In recent decades, it has been en vogue for youth ministry critics to extrapolate broader trends from their own observations, experiences, and discussions within their ministry contexts. Observations can be limited and flawed, when held up to the scrutiny of solid research.¹³

After reading this research, the students were asked to pause for a moment to reflect on what Shields wrote. Before continuing, the students were asked to consider this information for five minutes in their groups.

The remaining time in session 2 was spent with the students in their groups. They were tasked with considering the mandate of the Great Commission (from session 1) with the information from session 2 on the statistics and trends of youth ministry in America. The students were assigned to compile their answers for all five questions in this session and were asked to be ready to present them at the beginning of session 3. The last two questions were:

4. How does the mandate of making disciples in Scripture inform our duty to participate in the church upon graduation?
5. What can you do as a group of High School Seniors to be sure that you are not losing interest in your duty of making disciples when you graduate?

¹³James Brandon Shields, “An Assessment of Dropout Rates of Former Youth Ministry Participants in Conservative Southern Baptist Megachurches” (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2008), 174-75.

Session 3

The session began with a twenty-five minute discussion of the answers from the previous class. Each group reported their findings and discussed their ideas and concerns to the assembly. I compiled the answers so that they may be evaluated as potential ideas and (or) ministry opportunities in the future.

Session 3 was divided into two main topics of discussion: (1) short-term missions (STM) and long-term mission (LTM) opportunities, and (2) living on mission.

Referencing the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus makes it clear that in order to fulfill the Great Commission, his disciples must *go*. The Greek word for *go* in this text is from the word *poreia*, which means “going about one’s business, a way of life.”¹⁴ It also has the connotation or application of pursuing the journey on which one has entered, to continue on one’s journey. This *go* is where this aspect of the Great Commission is seen as simply a function of the primary motivation. To *go* simply means that the disciple of Jesus must continue on his or her journey in life, all the while doing so in an intentional manner to make disciples.

The students were then challenged to understand the idea of the reality of their own *sentness*.¹⁵ Cronshaw and Hammond write, “Sent people understand that just as God sent his Son into the world, Jesus sends us to continue his work and share his life. Sent people realize that their reason for existence is not to consume but to serve.”¹⁶

Jesus states that his followers are to make disciples of all nations, so there is an implication that *going* can mean traveling across national and linguistic barriers to proclaim this message. However, for the believer, the essential yet fundamental aspect of *going* is

¹⁴Strong, *Exhaustive Concordance*, 1637, entry 4197.

¹⁵Darren Cronshaw and Kim Hammond, *Sentness: Six Postures of Missional Christians* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2014), 37.

¹⁶*Ibid.*

inherent to everyday existence. Whether it is in one's normal daily ventures or one is able to travel the world and proclaim the message of Jesus, all followers of Christ are sent.

The following questions were asked to cause the students to reflect upon their own "sentness":

1. Do you realize that each of you are sent by Jesus everyday?
2. How does this motivate you as you consider your normal daily ventures; school, home, sports, social media, etc. . . ?

Interestingly, in *Sentness*, by Cronshaw and Hammond, the idea that "perhaps the most extraordinary act of mission and obedience is to stay in your ordinary house and work in your ordinary job in the name of Jesus."¹⁷ Whether one goes to the nations or remains in their ordinary context, a clear implication from the Great Commission is that all believers are sent. Looking back to the Gospel of Matthew, the imminent necessity for followers of Jesus to *go* is vast. Jesus tells his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few" (Matt 9:37-38). The implication here is vivid: believers are called to *go*.

The students were then challenged to consider participating in an STM or perhaps to begin to pray for future LTM participation. Next, the class was broken into groups of four to discuss the topics of STMs and LTMs. The groups were give five minutes to write down at least three benefits of participating in STM or LTM's and write down at least three potential difficulties in participating in these type of efforts. After five minutes, each team began to give their answers.

After the groups reported, the session continued the discussion about STMs and LTMs. The class was introduced to Sills' book entitled *Changing World, Unchanging Mission*. In this work, Sills writes of the positive impact of STMs:

One of the most common benefits of STMs is not for the nationals the team works with but for the team itself. Many have felt called to mission on such trips. Others return to the United States more determined to pray for missions, missionaries and

¹⁷Cronshaw and Hammond, *Sentness*, 54

the world's lost peoples. Others are more committed to give to missions and lead missions efforts in the local church.¹⁸

The students were asked to consider this question as the session continued:

3. Are you willing to go (or at least consider going) on an STM this year?

Long-term missions: The life of William Carey. Session 3 ended with a brief discussion on the life of William Carey. He is widely considered the father of modern day missions.¹⁹ Carey's life was given to the proclamation of the gospel to the unreached. His impact on the people of India is still present today and his example of living a Great Commission life is an example for all Christians to study and repeat.

Carey felt the calling of God on his life to leave the comfort of his home and the embrace of loved ones to go to the ends of the earth to share the gospel with an unreached people. Sills writes,

William Carey, the Father of Modern Missions, set the example for countless aspects of missionary life for generations to come. After he sailed to India for lifelong missionary service at the end of the eighteenth century, many followed his pattern of leaving home, believing that they would never see their loved ones on earth again. They sailed on tall ships to unknown countries to serve their target people groups.²⁰

William Carey was indeed the forerunner for modern world missions. His fervor for the Great Commission should serve as a motivator for anyone who desires to fulfill the calling of Jesus on their life, whether that means going to another continent, or going to a neighbor down the street.

¹⁸David Sills, *Changing World, Unchanging Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2015), 70

¹⁹David Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005), 349, explains, "Carey remains the best candidate for the honor of being called "Father of Evangelical Missions." Although he did many things to demonstrated and even further God's kingdom purpose, Carey was the one who was committed specifically to fulfilling Great Commission mission by actively sending out missionaries to accomplish it."

²⁰Sills, *Changing World, Unchanging Mission*, 45.

The students were given a paper on the life of William Carey. This document was not an assignment but rather a resource for the students to use as they continue studying LTM's.²¹

Session 4

This session began by dividing the students into groups of four. An assignment was given to each group for the purpose of review from the first three sessions. The groups were to answer the following questions:

1. What is the Great Commission?
2. What is the main idea that Jesus is conveying in the Great Commission?
3. What are some of the barriers that you face on a daily basis in making disciples?
4. What are some of the reasons that we have discussed for graduating seniors lack of participation in the church upon graduation?
5. What can we do to begin to shift these current trends?

The students were given fifteen minutes to compile their answers, and then each group presented their answers to the class for discussion. The class was allocated thirty minutes to discuss these answers.

After the group activity, the topic for the final session moved to a practical and intentional discussion. The topic was STMs and the opportunity for each student to participate in an STM at the church. Several key areas about STMs were discussed, including (1) the motivation behind STMs. (2) the sacrifices that an STM can cause; money, time, leaving home for the first time, flying on an airplane for the first time, missing their family members, etc., and (3) the potential value of an STM (as previously discussed in session 3).

This final session concluded with a reminder of the task that these graduating students have in front of them: to make disciples in Clarksville while they are here. The

²¹See appendix 3.

students were given statistics on the diverse population of Clarksville and how it has boomed in population over the past 20 years. One recent study showed,

Clarksville was the fifth-fastest growing large city nationwide from July 2014 to July 2015, showing a 1.7% increase in a year's time. In 2015, Clarksville's city population was 149,176, which increased from 142,357 in 2013. For the county as a whole, the head count was 179,881 in 2015. Growth rates projected in the 2010 Census showed Clarksville will have a population of 170,000 by 2020.²²

With such an influx of population and the added transiency of Fort Campbell, Clarksville has become a very diverse city. The students were reminded that they must be ready to serve a variety of people from different ethnic and religious backgrounds every week. They must be open to share the good news whenever the opportunity arises. The session concluded with a time of prayer for each of the students and their next chapter of life.

Results of the Project

The students in the course were given pre- and post-course questionnaires that were designed to measure whether the course caused positive or negative change in their understanding of the importance of missions in their lives. The results were very positive. The rate of participation was not 100 percent; fifteen of the original twenty-one students completed both the pre and post-course questionnaires.

The surveys were broken down into four sections from the original research questions of the project. The first research question asked, What is the current understanding of the Great Commission among the high school seniors at FBCT? Comparing pre- to post-course surveys using a paired, one-tail *t*-test, there was a statistically significant improvement ($t_{(16)} = 2.07, p = .0273$) in the participants' understanding.

The second research question asked, Do the students have a basic knowledge of salvation and baptism? Comparing pre- to post-course surveys using a paired, one-tail

²²*The Leaf Chronicle Factbook 2016-2017*, 10th ed., accessed October 20, 2016, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/218559860/>, 63.

t-test, there was no statistically significant improvement ($t_{(14)} = .58, p = .2853$) in understanding.

The third research asked, What is the students' understanding of the role and purpose of the church in our culture today? Comparing pre- to post-course surveys using a paired, one-tail *t*-test, there was a statistically significant improvement ($t_{(14)} = 2.31, p = .0183$) in their understanding.

The fourth and final research question asked, Are short-term and long-term mission efforts important to the graduates, and do they have any interest in participating in them? Comparing pre- to post-course surveys using a paired, one-tail *t*-test, there was a statistically significant improvement ($t_{(14)} = 2.67, p = .0091$) in these affective changes.

The goals set forth in chapter 1 of this project were successfully met. The research questions were answered and the participants showed an overall statistical improvement from pre to post-course testing. The one area in which there was an absence of statistical improvement was found in research question 2. The overall purpose of establishing these goals was to gauge the level of understanding of missions for the students. Based upon final marks, it is evident that this project aided the students in their knowledge of the mission of Jesus Christ and his church.

CHAPTER 5

PROJECT EVALUATION

High school seniors are in the midst of an ever-changing world. They face new ideas and new paradigms around every corner. These soon-to-be alumni are experiencing new ideologies and new cultural norms as soon as they graduate, if not beforehand. In this shifting climate, the church has a responsibility to build a solid biblical foundation in the hearts and minds of these graduates. The primary way to begin to establish this footing is to give students the resources they need to have a grounded theology of God and his mission.

Chapter 2 of this project contended that the church has been given a clear commandment from Jesus in the Great Commission narratives in Scripture to make disciples. Graduates need to be discipled in the Word of God as they are entering into the working world or the university setting because their beliefs and convictions are sure to be tested and scrutinized as they continue walking through life. This endeavor is significant because of the growing shift in the culture toward non-traditional, non-biblical ideologies.

This project sought to teach the graduating students at First Baptist Clarksville, Tennessee, the importance of understanding the mission of Jesus Christ for all believers. More specifically, to teach this mission to students who are leaving the youth ministry and entering the next phase of life. This task is an essential component of the New Testament church as has been clearly articulated all throughout the entirety of Scripture. The role of the church in this regard is vital for the gospel to continue to go forth into the coming generations, so that the name of Jesus might be glorified and that many more would come to a saving faith in him. These truths from Scripture are to be taught and emphasized to the graduates “so that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and

arise and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments” (Ps 78:6-7).

Evaluation of the Project’s Purpose

The purpose of this project was to teach the high school seniors at First Baptist Clarksville the importance of having a missiological framework in their lives before they enter into college or career. This purpose of the project was successfully met. The project was designed to cover a threefold process in meeting its purpose.

The first part of the project assessed the missiological understanding of high school seniors at FBCT. As stated in chapter 1, this assessment was necessary so that the student ministry staff could measure the biblical knowledge of the high school seniors. This assessment was administered by giving the students a survey to gauge their level of understanding of missions in Scripture. This was the starting point in the process because calculating the level of knowledge and understanding of biblical missions for the graduates informed the content for the rest of the project. In addition, it helped guide the questions and group discussions in the sessions. This aspect of the project’s purpose was successfully completed.

The next portion of the project enabled its purpose to be fulfilled in the development of the four-part course that introduced the students to the importance of having a missiological framework before they enter into college or career. As noted in chapter 1, the overall objective was to impart biblical knowledge to the students in the area of missions and evangelism. This purpose was fulfilled in the making of the four-session course and in the implementation thereof. By teaching this material to the graduating seniors over the four sessions, the participants were able to consider the biblical command of missions and the practical ways in which they can participate in missions in their current context.

A post-course survey was administered and revealed a statistically significant improvement in the knowledge of the students overall understanding of the importance of

missions in their lives. The results of the post-course survey showed that the students increased in their knowledge of the Great Commission in Scripture, understanding of the role of the church in our culture today, and overall understanding of the importance of short- and long-term mission efforts. However, the students already had proficient knowledge of biblical salvation and baptism, thus, this research area did not show statistical improvement. Through this course, the students were able to glean important ideas and biblical precepts from the material that caused them to rethink their paradigm of mission. This statistical improvement is another validation of the project's overall purpose being met and completed.

The evaluation of the project's purpose is that it accomplished what it intended. The objective evidence of improvement was backed with subjective evidence. The students listened to the presented material and were able to understand the importance of developing a missiological framework in their lives before graduating high school. The project's purpose was clearly articulated to the participants and their response to it was an overall affirmation that the purpose of the project was successful.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

The project established four goals at the onset. The first goal was to assess the missiological understanding of the high school seniors at FBCT. This goal was successfully completed by administering a pre-course survey to the graduating seniors. The survey was designed to gauge the students' knowledge of missions in Scripture, along with several other key biblical precepts on missions and evangelism. This goal was considered successfully met because the surveys were completed, scored, and the knowledge of the students was determined.

The second goal of the project was to develop a four-part course that introduced the students to the importance of having a missiological framework before they enter into college or career. This course entailed both instructional and practical elements. The intention of this course was to convey the weightiness of the Great Commission in

Scripture, while enhancing the students' understanding of the necessity of missions for the believer in Christ. An expert panel consisting of pastors in Southern Baptist churches measured this goal. The panel evaluated the scope, sequence, and theological fidelity of the course's instructional components as well as the viability of the course's practical components. This goal was successfully met because 90 percent of the evaluation indicators were marked as sufficient or above.

The third goal of this project was to build the missiological framework into the lives of the high school seniors at FBCT by implementing the four-part course. The course guided the participants through the material over the span of a weekend conference setting. During each of the gatherings, the students were taught biblical and theological precepts that detailed the outworking of the Great Commission in Scripture along with other biblical examples that supported the topic of missions. At the conclusion of the course, participants were encouraged to put their knowledge to the test by participating in a short-term mission trip in the summer of 2018. The third goal was measured by the percentage of students who completed the course. This goal was not considered successfully met because there was less than 90 percent participation rate from the students.

The fourth goal of the project was to measure the level of improvement in understanding of the Great Commission and missiological knowledge of the students. This goal was considered successful because the one-tail, paired *t*-test revealed statistical improvement among the students in three of the four research sections. There was a marked improvement in the majority of the students, with most of the students showing considerable improvement.

Strengths of the Project

The first strength of this project was found in the assessment survey. The survey has enabled FBCT and its student ministry leaders to assess the level of biblical and missiological knowledge of the graduating seniors. This information has greatly aided the student ministry in gauging its effectiveness from a teaching and programming

perspective. The overall return on this survey was positive and it affirmed many of the existing processes that the student ministry has in place. Likewise, some of the lower responding ranges have caused the student ministry staff to evaluate how it can better inform the students of the necessity of missions in the future. Without this survey, the youth ministry at FBCT would not have the empirical data to decipher its strengths and weaknesses in the area of missions.

The next strength was found in the response from the participants in the four-part course. The sessions invoked excitement in the students about missions and about the role in which they play in this most noble endeavor. Many of the students had not participated in mission work (either short- or long-term). By walking through the content of the sessions, the students began to see not only that they *could* participate in mission work, but most importantly, that they *should* be actively participating in the mission of Jesus Christ and his church. The overall excitement and energy from the students was both encouraging and validating to the work of the student ministry at FBCT.

Another strength of the project was found in the session that discussed the possible difficulties/pitfalls that were soon to be thrust into the fore of their lives upon graduating from high school. This was by far the most interactive session of the course as the students were actively engaging in both social and cultural ideologies of what they would potentially face after graduation. The reality that the students discussed was that their time and schedules were going to distinctly differ from their current daily routines, and that they must find a way to be faithful with their time. This was some of the most helpful dialogue for the participants because they were able to discuss how they would deal with these issues from a biblical and missiological perspective.

The final strength of the project was perpetuated by the students developing a deeper rapport with one another and where they are currently in their phase of life. They were able to see that they are not in this endeavor alone, and that they have a church family to walk through life with. Notably, another by-product of this rapport was that

they were able to better articulate the “why” behind FBCT’s missions strategy and how they can participate in it together, which is vital in the furtherance of the mission to the next generation of graduates.

Weaknesses of the Project

The most glaring weakness, by great measure, was the rate of participation from the high school graduates. Twenty-one students signed up for the course and participated in at least one or more of the sessions. However, only fifteen completed the course with a pre- and post-course survey. The rate of participation was not primarily due to disinterest in the material, but was linked to scheduling conflicts with other areas of their life. After assessing the timing of the course, it has been decided that the course will be administered in the spring semester going forward, instead of the beginning of the school year.

The next area that needed improvement was in clarifying a strategy to connect the missiological framework from the student ministry to the college/university ministry at FBCT. There were a couple of contributing factors to this issue. First, the course should have had a portion dedicated to connecting the students with the college ministry. The shortfall in this regard was neglecting to include the pastor that leads the college ministry in a portion of one of the sessions of the course. This would have enabled the students to make a better connection with the college ministry by introducing them to its pastor and allowing them to interact with him in an open forum. The college pastor will be included in the sessions in the future. Secondly, in this regard, there was not enough time allocated in the sessions to discuss this important strategy, and therefore, it was not effective for the graduating students. This strategy should have been included in the course but it was neglected. FBCT has a glaring weakness in its ability to connect students to the university ministry and this issue was not rectified in any of the sessions of the course. It will be included in the course the next time it is taught.

The implementation of the course over a weekend setting turned out to be a weakness because it was an inconvenience to some participants. The idea of doing it over

the course of three days was to make the most of a weekend instead of trying to fit it in over the span of several days or weeks. Even though the intentions were good, it turned out that the rate of participation was not as high as expected. The reality that became evident was that the students would be more likely to participate over the course of several weeks (i.e., teaching the course on Sundays or Wednesdays when they are already planning to be at the church).

What I Would Do Differently

The first thing I will do differently when this course is taught next year is to promote it better on the front end. This promotion will involve more time in the preparation of the material (now that I have learned from the first go around) and in the marketing of the course to the students. I did not use all of the media outlets available (social media, website, monthly newsletters) to promote the project. Looking back, I will use all of our forms of communication with both the students and their parents to help promote the course in the future. In addition, I will use some of the students who have already taken the course as promoters of the event in the future.

Likewise, I will do a better job of communicating the value of this course to the parents of the graduates. I did little to inform the parents of the purpose of this project. This void in reaching the parents with the goal of the project was a miss on its overall success. Going forward, not only will I do a better job of informing parents of the contents of the course, but I will also encourage them to participate in some fashion. This should allow an increase in the rate of participation from the students and encourage the participants to take the information home and discuss it with their families.

The timing of the implementation of the course was another apparent problem. The sessions were taught at the beginning of the fall semester. It seems that even though this course was well intended because naturally the church has more participation at the beginning of the school year, this time was not ideal. Multiple factors are involved in this problem: sports, back-to-school events and clubs, getting readjusted to a new schedule,

etc. After this initial implementation, it is apparent that the course should be taught either at the beginning of the spring semester or closer to the actual graduation date of the students.

The final thing I would do differently next time is to provide the students with more take home tasks. While I do not want to add anymore “homework” to their already existing stack of academic assignments, I do think that this material is important enough to take home and process on their own so that they can come back and share their findings with the others. I did not initially consider providing these take home tasks, but after assessing the importance of the material, I think the students would benefit from having more time to process the information on their own.

Theological Reflections

First, the most notable theological reflection from this project is simply that “the gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes” (Rom 1:16). It is because of this gospel that this project was born into existence. The need for graduating students to understand this fundamental tenet of Scripture is paramount in their understanding of what actually transpired when they heard the gospel and were saved by Jesus Christ (if indeed they have been saved).

Moreover, the purpose of imparting a missiological framework in the lives of the high school seniors at First Baptist Clarksville, Tennessee, can only happen if the students have been saved by Jesus Christ. This revelation is not new for me, but it became clear to me as I was delving into the depths of missiology that the most important thing for these graduates to consider is what actually transpired at their moment of salvation. It became clearer and clearer that the graduates must first understand that they have been saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ Jesus alone, before they can even begin to consider the depths of missiology. I was struck by the simple explanation from the apostle Paul when he writes, “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not of your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no

one may boast” (Eph 2:8-9). The salvation granted to all who would believe in Jesus is the foundation and starting point for *every* missiological discussion. This salvation must be the focus of the content before one can begin to discuss the mission of Jesus Christ.

The next striking theological implication from this project for me was the simple importance of discipleship. At the onset of this project (and even in the preparatory stages of research and writing), my main goal was to be the most theologically and academically adept author/teacher that I could be. While this was not a bad goal or aspiration, and while my intentions were good in this regard considering this is an academic effort, it became evident to me that this project was less about academia and more about discipleship. After all, the goal of the project was to impart a missiological framework in the lives of the graduating seniors; it was not to make them smarter or more theologically advanced in their studies. Therefore, I learned that the goal was not merely to discuss missiology with the graduates; but rather, to impart the gospel to them in such a way that they are more like Jesus after the course was finished than they were when it began. Likewise, to cause them to grow in their love for their Savior, so that they might actually want to participate in missions and evangelism as they move on to their next phase of life. In short, I wanted realized that this project should cause them to have such a deep love for Jesus that short-term and long-term missions were not seen as an opportunity that they could pursue, but instead a calling that they could live out.

The implications of this newfound perspective caused me to see this project through new lenses. I began to see each participant as a young person in need of discipleship, not just more information. Discipleship is the most important theological implication of the project.

The premise of this project was based upon the theological implications of the mission of Jesus Christ, primarily found in the Great Commission narratives in the New Testament. Reflecting upon the theology of this Great Commission is a most glorious task. The message of Jesus Christ to all of his followers is one that should be considered daily,

not just in a conference setting or at a missions emphasis weekend. As I began to probe the five-fold Great Commission narratives, I began to internalize them in my own life. This began to work itself out in my weekly teaching, preaching, and planning as a pastor (not just as a seminarian). The overall theological implications of this project for me was that the mission of Jesus Christ must be at the fore of our lives, every single day. This mission is urgent in nature, and eternal in value. The church must work diligently to impart this mission to its people so that the gospel of Jesus Christ might be shared to a lost and dying world.

The concluding theological implication from this project is found in Romans 10:9-15, where the apostle Paul writes,

Because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent?

Personal Reflections

My first personal reflection was briefly mentioned in my theological reflections, but I want to give it more depth. Personally, I had the wrong motive at the beginning of the project, which was to "get this thing done as quickly as possible so that I can finally finish school." I am sure this is a normal motive for some doctoral students, but regardless of the impetus behind the motive, it was not the correct one. Upon writing chapters 2 and 3, I began to see this project in a new light.

It became clear to me that this project was about making disciples of Jesus Christ, not simply doing academic work. As I began to scour through Great Commission texts, I was struck with the fundamental teaching of Jesus and the fact that so many graduating seniors miss this central tenet of Christianity. If the numbers and statistics are true in chapter 3, then thousands (if not millions) of high school seniors in America will

either leave the church upon graduation, or who will take a “church break” upon leaving their homes. These statistics, along with the message of Jesus in the Great Commission, began to open my eyes to the fact that no matter how good this project was from an academic perspective, it was something that needed to be done for the students in my ministry. Graduates need to be exposed to the spiritual difficulties and temptations they will be facing when entering into the throes of their next phase of life. They need to be equipped with the gospel so that they can “extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one” (Eph 6:16). Indeed, it did not take a long time for me to see that this project was about making disciples of the graduating seniors in my ministry, not just to finish a degree program.

Along these same lines of thought, this project personally affected me in my perspective on the urgency of the gospel. As mentioned, this project began to inform my preaching, teaching, and ministry practice. I began to see the Great Commission in the midst of my daily and ministerial endeavors. Because of the amount of time I spent researching the mission of Jesus in Scripture, I was motivated to make it stick in my own life. This project became as real to me as it was to any of the students who would participate in it. As it turns out, the “work” that had to be done for this project was not so much to gain a degree as it was to help me in my personal and pastoral ministry. Interestingly enough, at the conclusion of my writing chapter 3, I received a new pastoral role at our church. I became the campus pastor/lead preaching pastor, of our newest campus in town. The timing of this new opportunity came on the heels of me spending the better part of three months studying the Great Commission. This project has informed and motivated me in my new role as the pastor of this new church, to move it in the direction of being a Great Commission-focused church that has this mission of Jesus Christ at the fore of everything we do. I will be eternally grateful for the work I have done on this topic because regardless of who might benefit from it, I know that I have grown immensely in my personal desire to be a Great Commission Christian.

Conclusion

In the grand sweeping narrative of the Bible, God's children land centrally as the messengers and proclaimers of his gospel of salvation, to the ends of the earth. This task of sharing the good news is not an option for the believer, but rather it is a command for everyone, everywhere. Imparting this message of salvation to the next generation is of paramount importance.

The goal of building a missiological framework in the lives of the high school seniors at First Baptist Clarksville, Tennessee, is indeed a noble endeavor that must not be taken lightly. The implementation of this project fulfilled this purpose with the strengths, weaknesses, and methodology mentioned in this chapter. On the other hand, this task was not completed by doing this project per se, as there will always be more gospel work to accomplish. Indeed, "the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few" (Matt 9:37).

This project was successful in the scope of reaching the participants with the urgent message of Jesus Christ. The hope for this project is that the contents of the work presented will land on the hearts and minds of the graduating seniors, and compel them to pursue Christ as they enter into the adult phase of life. Lastly, the desire of this project is that one day these graduates will take this message of Jesus Christ and advance it to their children, and to their children's children, for the glory of God and for his kingdom.

APPENDIX 1

PRE- AND POST-COURSE SURVEY

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to gather your knowledge of matters related to the Great Commission in Scripture. This research is being conducted by Chad Scarbro for the purposes of collecting data for a ministry research project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time

By completion of this questionnaire, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project

Personal Identification Number

Date _____

Please read each question very carefully and answer honestly by circling one answer.

1. I have a basic knowledge of the Great Commission in Scripture.
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Somewhat Disagree
 - d. Somewhat Agree
 - e. Agree
 - f. Strongly Agree

2. I can clearly articulate what the Great Commission in Scripture teaches.
 - a. No
 - b. Yes

3. I have a basic knowledge of missions in the Bible and its mandate for the believer in Christ.
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Somewhat Disagree
 - d. Somewhat Agree
 - e. Agree
 - f. Strongly Agree

4. There are specific biblical commands that motivate mission efforts around the world.
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Somewhat Disagree
 - d. Somewhat Agree
 - e. Agree
 - f. Strongly Agree

5. Missions participation is something that the church and its members should actively pursue.
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Somewhat Disagree
 - d. Somewhat Agree
 - e. Agree
 - f. Strongly Agree
6. Missions, both local and international, are a priority to my faith in Christ.
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Somewhat Disagree
 - d. Somewhat Agree
 - e. Agree
 - f. Strongly Agree
7. A person is not genuinely saved until they are baptized.
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Somewhat Disagree
 - d. Somewhat Agree
 - e. Agree
 - f. Strongly Agree
8. Baptism is the ultimate goal in all missions work.
 - a. No
 - b. Yes
9. Baptism is mandatory for church membership.
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
10. A person must be both a member of the church and baptized in order to participate in missions.
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Somewhat Disagree
 - d. Somewhat Agree
 - e. Agree
 - f. Strongly Agree
11. When I go to college or move to a new town, joining a new church is important to me.
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Somewhat Disagree
 - d. Somewhat Agree
 - e. Agree
 - f. Strongly Agree

12. If I join a new church in college, its mission's emphasis is important to my joining that church?
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Somewhat Disagree
 - d. Somewhat Agree
 - e. Agree
 - f. Strongly Agree

13. As a college student next year, I should make it a priority to participate in missions, even if I have a busy schedule.
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Somewhat Disagree
 - d. Somewhat Agree
 - e. Agree
 - f. Strongly Agree

14. There are specific biblical commands that motivate mission efforts around the world.
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Somewhat Disagree
 - d. Somewhat Agree
 - e. Agree
 - f. Strongly Agree

15. I can describe the mission's emphasis of First Baptist Clarksville, Tennessee. ^[1]_[SEP]
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Somewhat Disagree
 - d. Somewhat Agree
 - e. Agree
 - f. Strongly Agree

16. The church should be the primary missions sending agency in the world.
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Somewhat Disagree
 - d. Somewhat Agree
 - e. Agree
 - f. Strongly Agree

17. The International Mission Board (IMB) should be the primary missions sending agency and the church should be second.
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Somewhat Disagree
 - d. Somewhat Agree
 - e. Agree
 - f. Strongly Agree

18. I feel like I have the opportunity to use my gift to edify the church.
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Somewhat Disagree
 - d. Somewhat Agree
 - e. Agree
 - f. Strongly Agree

19. I have participated in a mission trip.
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

20. Mission trips are important to me.
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Somewhat Disagree
 - d. Somewhat Agree
 - e. Agree
 - f. Strongly Agree

21. My parents encourage me to participate in missions.
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Somewhat Disagree
 - d. Somewhat Agree
 - e. Agree
 - f. Strongly Agree

22. I am interested in participating in the mission trip to Alaska for the seniors this summer.
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Somewhat Disagree
 - d. Somewhat Agree
 - e. Agree
 - f. Strongly Agree

23. Active participation in the Great Commission of Scripture is absolutely necessary in order for a Christian to properly express his or her faith
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Somewhat Disagree
 - d. Somewhat Agree
 - e. Agree
 - f. Strongly Agree

APPENDIX 2

COURSE EVALUATION RUBRIC

Name of evaluator _____

Date _____

Course Evaluation/ Rubric					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Understandability					
The curriculum is written at a level that is appropriate for High School Seniors.					
Applicability					
The curriculum helps students understand the necessity of the Great Commission in Scripture.					
The curriculum is a resource for students to use as a personal guide and motivator to live a life on mission.					
Practicality					
The curriculum will help equip students to live missionally when they move on to College/career.					
The curriculum will help equip students to know God better and grow spiritually.					

APPENDIX 3

THE MISSION STRATEGY OF WILLIAM CAREY

The life ambition and pursuit of William Carey was to make the gospel of Jesus Christ known to all nations by whatever means possible. He was the pioneer, the visionary, and in many ways he was the trendsetter of modern missions. These reasons, plus many more are why Dr. Carey is widely considered among scholars and commonly known among Christians as the Father of Evangelical Missions.¹

William had a clear agenda: to share the gospel of Jesus Christ to the heathen. His mission strategy has been described as five-pronged approach, which will be introduced below. This strategy is what ultimately compelled him to pick up his family and move to India as a missionary to the Indian people.

The research in this effort will show how this five-pronged mission strategy played out in two primary areas of his life. First it will be demonstrated in his family life, and second, it will be substantiated in his writing. William Carey's mission strategy is one that needs to be dissected due to the immense fruit in which it produced during his lifetime, and is still producing in many missiological circles in the world today.

William Carey's Missions Strategy

His strategy has been summarized into a five-pronged approach: “(1) Widespread preaching, (2) distribution of the Bible in their vernacular, (3) church

¹David Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005), 349, writes, “Carey remains the best candidate for the honor of being called ‘Father of Evangelical Missions.’ Although he did many things to demonstrated and even further God’s kingdom purpose, Carey was the one who was committed specifically to fulfilling Great Commission mission by actively sending out missionaries to accomplish it.”

planting (4) profound study of non-Christian religions, and (5) ministerial training in a comprehensive program.”²

Biographical History of William Carey

Carey was a God-fearing man, ordained to the pastorate of the Baptist church at Olney, in 1787. He was a shoemaker by trade, but he spent much of his time studying pioneer missionary literature. The book that made the single greatest impact on his life was written by one of his contemporaries in the church, Andrew Fuller. The book was called *The Gospel Worthy of all Acceptation*. It is said of William’s reaction to this book, “As a result of reading this work, it became immediately clear to him that if it was the duty of all men to believe the gospel, then it was equally the duty of those who had been entrusted with the gospel to endeavor to make it known to all nations.”³ This response would lead to Dr. Carey devoting the rest of his life to leverage the gospel to the nations. His response to this book is very enlightening as to Dr. Carey’s missions’ strategy.

Over the course of a few years, William developed a gallant mission plan that was motivated by his love for the God who had redeemed him and for his overwhelming desire for the heathen around the world to know this same life-giving, gracious, and loving God.⁴

Dr. Carey was so desirous of reaching the heathen (the unregenerate) with the gospel of Jesus Christ that he gave his life to this end.⁵ The mission agenda (or strategy)

²David Sills, *The Missionary Call* (Chicago: Moody, 2008), 66. Daniel Webber agrees with this five-pronged strategy. Daniel Webber, *William Carey and the Missionary Vision* (East Peoria, IL: Versa, 2005), 47. Webber would add that number 5 should be a priority today to train the indigenous ministers in the work of the Great Commission.

³Webber, *William Carey and the Missionary Vision*, 14.

⁴Ibid., 21. Webber adds, “Here are Carey’s missionary motives: love for and obedience to the God who had redeemed him, and the state of the world without Christ.”

⁵The book of Titus describes the regeneration a person receives from God when they are saved by his grace. Thus, the term “unregenerate” is used here to describe what Carey meant when he used the term “heathen.” Titus 3:4-6 says, “But when the goodness and loving kindness of our God and Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy,

of William Carey is clearly observable in his family life, his writing, and in all of his missionary efforts. His zeal for gospel propagation was so remarkable that it influenced him to toil in research and analysis of the Great Commission in Scripture. Carey later documented this erudition in his famous work entitled *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen*.

Carey's deserved title as the pioneer for world missions is cemented into the minds of many evangelical scholars because they understand him to be a man who felt the calling of God on his life to leave the comfort and embrace of loved ones, to go to the ends of the earth to share the gospel with an unreached people. David Sills says, "William Carey, the Father of Modern Missions, set the example for countless aspects of missionary life for generations to come. After he sailed to India for lifelong missionary service at the end of the eighteenth century, many followed his pattern of leaving home, believing that they would never see their loved ones on earth again. They sailed on tall ships to unknown countries to serve their target people groups."⁶ William Carey was indeed the forerunner for modern world missions. His fervor for the Great Commission primed his going, and his love for the gospel of Jesus compelled him to stay in India, where God had called him.

Notably, it needs to be stated here that there is no viable argument that would assert that William Carey was the *only* post-apostle missionary to the lost world. Bruce Riley Ashford says, "Missions to the unreached did not stop with the apostles and restart with William Carey. Admittedly, missionaries were few in number, but they did go forth to preach the gospel."⁷ But make no mistake about it; Carey is the figurehead for modern

by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ."

⁶David Sills, *Changing World, Unchanging Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP), 45.

⁷Bruce Riley Ashford, *Theology and Practice of Mission* (Nashville: B & H) 178.

missions because of his trailblazing effort in going to India, while simultaneously working to send out missionaries to fulfill the work of Jesus' Great Commission.

William Carey's function as the Father of Evangelical Missions is largely due to his groundbreaking work in going to the unreached for the chief purpose of the transmission of the gospel. His most significant penning of his mission strategy was composed in his aforementioned famous work entitled *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*. His strategy was lived through him, communicated by him, and its diffusion is still in practice today. This strategy was not complex, but rather; it was the first of its kind to challenge the church of his day to use means to reach the heathen.

Thesis: The following will show how this five-pronged mission strategy played out in two primary areas: his family life and his writing. The emphasis of this research is to uncover the man William Carey, and the mission strategy that he engendered. Furthermore, these two areas will be considered throughout the remaining portion of this work.

The Life of William Carey

William Carey's Family Life

The missionary philosophy that William Carey fashioned was most primarily built on Scripture, specifically the Great Commission in Matthew 28.⁸ To begin to gain clarity of Carey's mission strategy, it is important to learn more about him as a husband, father, and man.

Some examples of titles that William Carey espoused are: spouse, father, missionary, teacher, preacher, and bible translator. But these are not all; there is more to be said of who he was and what he accomplished. "Throughout his thirty-two years

⁸Matt 28:18-20 says, "And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

(1792-1834) as a missionary to India, Carey worked as a translator, factory manager, farmer, agriculturalist, author, social activist, scientist, medical worker, and educator. These marketplace ventures provided financial support and the relational basis for the establishment of the Serampore mission that resulted in the translations of Scripture into dozens of Indian dialects, preaching of the gospel, the planting of churches, and the establishment of Christian schools and a seminary.”⁹ All of these functions are just a glimpse of the attributes that depict the man that is known as the Father of Evangelical Missions.

William was first a father and a husband. He and his first wife Dorothy had seven children.¹⁰ However, three of the children (Ann, Lucy, and Peter) died during their childhood years. Family was a very important aspect of Carey’s life and missionary strategy. Webber states, “Clearly Carey believed that missionary teams should be comprised of families, married men with their wives and children who would both work together to procure the necessities of life in a strange land and also model Christian community to their unbelieving neighbors there.”¹¹ Family was very important to William. Perhaps the greatest example of this in his life was the story that documents his return home to Piddington after his initial embarkation on the *Earl of Oxford*. The following is a tertiary look at this account.

The Family’s Journey to India

Before Dr. Carey’s first trip to India (or so he thought was his first trip), his wife Dorothy would not concede to go with him. Mrs. Carey was pregnant with their son

⁹Michael Pocock, Gailyn Van Rheen., and Douglas McConnell, *The Changing Face of World Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker), 234.

¹⁰Timothy George, *Faithful Witness* (Samford, AL: Christian History Institute), 157. It should be noted that Mrs. Dorothy Carey was not the ideal companion for Dr. Carey, especially pertaining to their mission field. George asserts, “In their more than 25 years of married life, William and Dorothy Carey never attained the blissful ideal of conjugal partnership.”

¹¹*Ibid.*, 157.

Jabez and she was not willing to surrender to her husband's missionary call to go to India. This precarious set of circumstances grieved William, as he knew that God had called him to go. Even so, he increasingly resigned himself to the idea that he must go alone without his loved ones if indeed Mrs. Carey would not relent in her intention of staying. Later, even though Dorothy would not agree to go with William, she would consent to allow their oldest son Felix to travel to India with her husband. Obviously, this was still not the idyllic situation that William desired.

The circumstances as they were did not dissuade William from boarding the *Earl of Oxford* to set sail for India. A helpful description of William's last few days before leaving is described as; "the next two days were spent in settling Dorothy and the children with her family at Piddington. She, only weeks now from delivery, could not be persuaded to go, nor he to stay."¹²

The day of embarkation to India had arrived. William boarded the *Earl of Oxford* with six others including his son Felix, Dr. and Mrs. Thomas, and their daughter, along with two cousins of the Thomas family.¹³

As the ship left the safety of the Thames River and began to sail into the open waters of the North Sea, it advanced to the Isle of Wright where they would anchor in the harbor and await their convoy. The reason for their port at the Isle of Wright was due to the circumstances that happened two months prior to their trip.

On February 11, France had declared war with Great Britain. Thus, no British vessel could enter the open waters unaided. This uncertainty caused the captain of the *Earl* to dock the ship and wait for a convoy. For six weeks, the ship would sit in anticipation of a cavalcade of allies.

During this undesired waiting period, Dr. Carey received news from home that his son Jabez was born. In the meantime, unbeknownst to William, one of his fellow

¹²George, *Faithful Witness*, 78.

¹³*Ibid.*, 82.

travelers (Dr. John Thomas) was being pursued by creditors who claimed that he owed them a sum of 100 pounds. The pursuant creditors would disallow William Carey and his team of missionaries to re-board the *Earl of Oxford* to India when the consort of supporting ships arrived.

This obstacle to their travel proved to be providential in regard to Dr. Carey's desire for his family to go with him to India. Webber adds, "still nursing hope that Dorothy might after all be persuaded to go, Carey, with Felix and Thomas in tow, caught the midnight coach to Northampton."¹⁴ Upon arrival in Piddington to see his wife Dorothy and their three-week-old son Jabez, William was resolute in his desire to persuade his wife to join him on his next journey to India. Dorothy, however, was not convinced that she should join him anymore than she had been for the previous venture.

Dr. Thomas was greatly distressed over Dorothy's lack of compliance, so he proceeded to go back to her for one more desperate plea on behalf of William to persuade her to go. By the grace of God and through the insistent appeal of Dr. Thomas, Dorothy conceded to join them, so long as her sister, Katherine Plackett, accompany her.¹⁵

Through many more various travails and peril, the Carey mission team arrived in India five months after their journey began. Their arrival was a great relief for the team, however; the trials and tribulations of life on the mission field were only beginning.

Dr. Carey's family had to make some obvious transitions in the way they went about their daily lives. This took its toll on the entire family, but especially Mrs. Carey. Timothy George says of the family's adjustment to new life in India, "Unlike William and the children, Dorothy never adjusted to the 'distress and danger' of life in India. The

¹⁴George, *Faithful Witness*, 85.

¹⁵Webber, *William Carey and the Missionary Vision*, 85. Webber adds further detail of Thomas' plea to Dorothy to go with them: "'It's of no use,' said Carey, 'we are losing time'. Undaunted, Thomas insisted, and this time prevailed. If she did not go with them, he said, her family would be dispersed and divided forever. And, *she would repent of it as long as she lived!* So urgent was Thomas' pleading that, as Dorothy later said, she was 'afraid to stay at home.' She would go on one condition, that her unmarried sister, Katherine Plackett, accompany her. She bravely agreed."

years took their toll—enforced exile from her native land and close-knit family; poor housing; a subsistence diet; sickly children; oppressive heat; and, finally, the loss of little Peter carried away by the fever—all these forces conspired to render Dorothy unable to cope with reality.”¹⁶ Sadly, Dorothy’s inability to cope with the stressors of ministry in India caused her mental and physical health to weaken very rapidly. Dr. Carey documented her mental breakdown in several of his letters to home. He often referred to her as “Poor Mrs. Carey” as her mental stability was waning.

As Dorothy’s condition continued to worsen, it is acknowledged that she made wild accusations to Dr. Carey. It is said that she “tried on more than one occasion to kill him.”¹⁷ The obvious stress that this must have placed on William Carey is almost inconceivable. However, he continued to labor in the ministry that God had given him because he knew the importance of caring for his family amidst the trials and difficulties of mission work. His ability to accomplish his arduous tasks of bible translation and gospel propagation only speaks to the immense character in which the Father of Evangelical Missions personified. Mercifully, on December 8, 1807, Dorothy’s battle with mental and physical suffering came to an end.

William would not continue as a widower very long. He proceeded to wed Charlotte von Rumohr just five months later. Charlotte “was devoted to Carey and contributed large sums to the support of the mission out of her private estate. She and Carey were able to share a common vision of their life together which blossomed into deep lasting love.”¹⁸ After thirteen years of marriage, Charlotte passed away at the age of 60.

Dr. Carey would join himself to a third (and final) Mrs. Carey in the summer of 1822. Her name was Grace Hughes. She was the final and most primary caregiver for

¹⁶George, *Faithful Witness*, 158.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid., 160.

William as he resided the closing years of his life. They lived in happiness together. “Doubtless [their happiness] was true, although one hardly needs to read between the lines to surmise that Charlotte remained the indelible love of his life. In his last will and testament, he left to Grace her choice of whatever English books in his library she would desire—a bequest of considerable monetary value. But he instructed his executors to make sure he was buried by the side of his second wife, Charlotte Emilia Carey.”¹⁹

Suffice to say that William Carey was a devoted husband and father. This portrayal of his family life is vital in understanding the Father of Evangelical Missions. His personal life is one that in every way supports and upholds his mission strategy. He was first a husband and father who loved his family unconditionally. He disciplined his wives and his children in a Deuteronomy 6 manner which is ultimately realized in the faithfulness of his second and third wives, and in his three sons who became missionaries.²⁰ This brief glimpse into Dr. Carey’s family life is undeniably important in understanding his philosophy of mission. His desire for the Great Commission to advance to the heathen began in its rightful place, at home.

Dr. Carey was persuaded that the only way that he could fulfill his five-pronged strategy of mission was if he could have his family with him. He knew that he would face difficulties, but he remained steadfast in his love for his family in the midst of these tribulations. He acknowledged that God’s calling on his life was first and foremost to be a father and husband. If William was to fulfill his mission strategy, he must take care of his family first.

¹⁹George, *Faithful Witness*, 161.

²⁰Deut 6:5-7 says, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.”

The *Enquiry*

Along with all of William Carey's accomplishments as the Father of Missions, perhaps his greatest effort came in the words that he drafted in his *Enquiry*. This remarkable document gives affirmation of William Carey's passion for the gospel of Jesus Christ, while congruently capturing his great concern for genuine obedience to the Word of God.²¹ Timothy C. Tennent adds, "Carey's groundbreaking book focused on the importance of obeying the text of the Great Commission. The subsequent missions literature of the nineteenth century is filled with motivating calls to obey this final command of our Lord."²²

The *Enquiry* begins with an alluring summons that one must use every lawful method available to reach the lost world for Christ and to obey the Great Commission of Scripture:

As our blessed Lord has required us to pray that his kingdom may come, and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven, it becomes us not only to express our desire of that event by words, but to use every lawful method to spread the knowledge of his name. In order to do this, it is necessary that we should become in some measure acquainted with the religious state of the world; and as this is an object we should be prompted to pursue, not only by the gospel of our Redeemer, but even by the feelings of humanity, so an inclination to conscientious activity therein would form one of the strongest proofs that we are the subjects of grace, and partakers of that spirit of universal benevolence and genuine philanthropy which appear so eminent in the character of God himself.²³

His opening declaration leaves no doubt of the crux of the matter that William Carey is trying to convey to his readers. This passionate refrain is paramount to the remaining portion of his book because it opens the eyes of the observer to the vast need for gospel preaching and teaching.

²¹Scott A. Morneau, Gary R. Corwin, and Gary B. McBee, *Introducing World Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker), 124. This book adds to the significance of the *Enquiry* by stating, "Not easily discouraged, Carey published a lengthy tract entitled *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* (1792), which justified overseas evangelism and became the first manifesto of the modern missionary movement."

²²Timothy C. Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 184.

²³Webber, *William Carey and the Missionary Vision*, 55.

Unmistakably, Carey is so consumed by the gravity of a lost world apart from Christ that he uses the next five sections to implore his book to implore the readers of the urgency (and eternity) of using means for the conversion of the heathen. Listen to the passion from his quill in chapter three as an underpinning to the rest of the book: “It must undoubtedly strike every considerate mind, what a vast proportion of the sons of Adam there are, who yet remain in the most deplorable state of heathen darkness, without any means of knowing the true God, except what are afforded them by the works of nature; and utterly destitute of the knowledge of the gospel of Christ, or of any means of obtaining it.”²⁴

William Carey was inspired by the gospel of Jesus Christ, and this passion compelled him to write his timeless work on missions. The *Enquiry* is compiled into five sections or chapters. Each of them equally important to his overall mission strategy.

Contents of the *Enquiry*

Section I. *An Enquiry whether the Commission given by our Lord to his Disciples be not still binding on us.*

Section II. *Containing a short Review of former Undertakings for the Conversion of the Heathen.*

Section III. *Containing a Survey of the present State of the World.*

Section IV. *The Practicability of something being done, more than what is done, for the Conversion of the Heathen.*

Section V. *An Enquiry into the Duty of Christians in general, and what Means ought to be used, in order to promote this Work.*

Brief Summary of the *Enquiry*

The following will not be a comprehensive review of each section of the *Enquiry*, which has been done with much rigorous scholarship previously.²⁵ But the

²⁴Webber, *William Carey and the Missionary Vision*, 85

²⁵For a robust bibliography on William Carey, see *ibid.*, 51-52, where he provides a list of twenty-three books that only begin to skim the surface of what has been written about the life and the work of William Carey.

ensuing paragraphs will uphold the weightiness of what is in the *Enquiry*, while shedding light into the mission strategy of Carey from his writing.

First, Carey did not sway on his conviction of the need to preach to the lost around the world while simultaneously wrestling with the tension of the lost that are near home. The command that Jesus gives in Acts 1:8 is clear: “and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Carey indeed took this message to heart and understood that Jesus was calling his children to go and preach the gospel, as they had means. A laudable statement from Carey in section I states:

That there are thousands in our own land as far apart from God as possible, I readily grant, and that this ought to excite us to ten-fold diligence in our work, and in attempts to spread divine knowledge among them is a certain fact; but that it ought to supersede all attempts to spread the gospel in foreign parts seems to want proof. Our own countrymen have the means of grace, and may attend on the word preached if they choose it. They have the means of knowing the truth, and faithful ministers are placed in almost every part of the land, whose spheres of action might be much extended if their congregations were but more hearty and active in the cause: but with them the case is widely different, who have no Bible, no written language, no ministers, no good civil government, nor any of those advantages which we have. Pity, therefore, humanity, and much more Christianity, call loudly for every possible exertion to introduce the gospel amongst them.²⁶

A second emphasis from the *Enquiry* that supports Carey’s mission strategy to go to the heathen is evidenced by his unyielding stance to refute distance as an obstacle for gospel proclamation. He contends that God has now granted men with the ability to travel abroad and these travels have only illuminated the need for the gospel to be preached to the unreached. “Men can now sail with as much certainty through the Great South Sea, as they can through the Mediterranean, or any lesser sea. Yea, and providence seems in a manner to invite us to the trial as there are to our knowledge trading companies, whose commerce lies in many of the places where these barbarians live.”²⁷

²⁶Webber, *William Carey and the Missionary Vision*, 61.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 88. Carey specifically notes the modern invention of the mariner’s compass as a gift from God to enable sailing to far off places.

A third indication of Carey's mission strategy from his *Enquiry* is vividly perceived in his desire to bid adieu to earthly treasure, and forgo his dependency on the pursuit of things therein. He calls all ministers of the gospel to consider the following:

A Christian minister is a person who in a peculiar sense is 'not his own' (1 Corinthians 6:19); he is the 'servant' of God, therefore ought to be wholly devoted to him. By entering on that sacred office he solemnly undertakes to be always engaged, as much as possible, in the Lord's work, and not to choose his own pleasure, or employment, or pursue the ministry as a something that is to sub serve his own ends, or interests, or as a kind of bye-work. He engages to go where God pleases, and to do, or endure what he sees fit to command, or call him to, in the exercise of his function. He virtually bids farewell to friends, pleasures, and comforts, and stands in the readiness to endure the greatest sufferings in the work of his Lord, and Master.²⁸

Clearly, Dr. Carey believes that the gospel is worthy of all acceptance for all people, and that the ministers of the gospel must be willing to devote their life to this end. The Great Commission was not finished with the apostles but rather; it is given to all who have been born again to new life in Christ. William Carey is urging all ministers, pastors, and missionaries to consider God's calling on their lives and to evaluate where God would bid them go. He is not postulating that all ministerial leaders must leave their kindred and go to the ends of the earth, but it must be a consideration for all who have given themselves to the ministry of Jesus Christ.

A fourth example from Carey's *Enquiry* that affords the reader another opportunity to peer into his overall mission strategy is delivered in his plea for constant prayer. "Many can do nothing but pray, and prayer is perhaps the only thing in which Christians of all denominations can cordially, and unreservedly unite; but in this we may all be one, and in this the strictest unanimity ought to prevail. Were there whole body thus animated by one soul, with what pleasure would Christians attend on all the duties of religion, and with what delight would their ministers attend on all the business of their calling. We must not be contented however with praying, without exerting ourselves in

²⁸Webber, *William Carey and the Missionary Vision*, 91.

the use of means for the obtaining of those things we pray for.”²⁹

This insightful prose from the pen of Dr. Carey exemplifies his mission strategy once again. Those that are sent and those that are the sender’s must understand the necessity of prayer. The God-given avenue of prayer is binding and incumbent upon those who desire to see the lost and unregenerate saved, regardless of whether one can physically go to the nations or not.

In the midst of Dr. Carey’s call to prayer, the overarching theme of using means to accomplish the task of gospel propagation is neatly tucked into his admonition. Carey makes known the urgency of prayer while coinciding with the necessity to use whatever means possible to go to the un-evangelized. Prayer is both a means for the goer and the sender. Neither of these two parties can fulfill the Great Commission without it.

Conclusion

The results of Carey’s mission’s philosophy is described by David Sills as:

His philosophy of missions resulted in a ministry that continues to influence the discipline of missiology. In a sense, he was the forerunner of the creative-access-platform missionaries and tent-maker missionaries we see today. When he first arrived in India, he had to dodge the British authorities since the British East India Company had determined that missionary work would only upset the delicate balance of the indigenous population, and so forbade such activity. He worked to provide for his family and mission community in a variety of occupations ranging from professor to manager of an indigo plant. He was very active in his hobbies of botany and geography, taught himself numerous languages, and left behind a legacy whose influence continues this day. His accomplishments include over forty translations of the Bible, a dozen missions stations all over India, grammars and dictionaries in many languages, three sons who became missionaries, the translation of the Hindu classics into English, and premier horticultural research and training.³⁰

The five-pronged mission strategy of William Carey is plainly observable in his family life and his writing. His desire for widespread preaching (or propagation) of the gospel is what propelled him to take his family and sail to India. Carey was consumed by the desire to spread the news of Jesus to people who have little or no access to the

²⁹Webber, *William Carey and the Missionary Vision*, 96.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 67.

gospel. Therefore, this is what caused him to believe that it was worth picking up his family and boarding the ship to leave family and friends and go to a far away land.

His constant battle with his first wife was not enough to deter him from his mission. He knew that God called him to preach to the people of India and he modeled this in the midst of the most trying times.

Dr. Carey rigorously translated the Bible and other English classics into the over forty languages of the Indian people. His other works, most notably his *Enquiry*, also bear witness to his great desire of reaching the nations with the life-giving gospel of Jesus Christ.

William Carey's life ambition and pursuit to make the gospel of Jesus Christ known to all nations by whatever means possible, is most laudable. The impact of his trailblazing mission strategy continued to produce fruit throughout the nineteenth century. "Many of the missionary societies founded in the nineteenth century owed their existence to his influence. Increasing numbers of Christians, having heard of Carey's exploits, felt called to similar careers."³¹

The legacy of William Carey is worthy of much consideration and reflection. His life is one that will impact mission's strategies forever. Lastly, the Bible says in 1 Timothy 3:1, "if anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task." William Carey is exhibit-A in this regard.

³¹Justo L. Gonzalez. *The Story of Christianity* (New York: HarperCollins), 423.

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ABSTRACT

BUILDING A MISSIOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK IN THE HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS AT FIRST BAPTIST, CLARKSVILLE, TENNESSEE

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017
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This project examines the necessity of building a missiological framework in the lives of high school seniors before they enter college or career. Chapter 1 explains the rationale behind the project while also identifying the need for this research.

Chapter 2 expounds upon the biblical and theological support for a missiological framework for students. This chapter examines Old Testament and New Testament examples of mission.

Chapter 3 provides a look into the theoretical and practical literature that pertains to the topic of missions for students and for the church. Three research areas are examined: current trends in student ministry, discipleship in student ministry, and the necessity of short and long-term mission efforts.

Chapter 4 describes the project. This chapter identifies the eight-week course that was taught to the students.

Chapter 5 records the summary of the project along with identifying what transpired during the entirety of the process.

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