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EQUIPPING MEMBERS OF TRINITY BAPTIST CHURCH IN
AMARILLO, TEXAS, FOR PERSONAL EVANGELISM

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Nathaniel Justin Magloughlin
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APPROVAL SHEET

EQUIPPING MEMBERS OF TRINITY BAPTIST CHURCH IN
AMARILLO, TEXAS, FOR PERSONAL EVANGELISM

Nathaniel Justin Magloughlin

Read and Approved by:

William F. Cook III (Faculty Supervisor)

Joseph C. Harrod

Date _____

I dedicate this project to the men who have invested in my spiritual life.

To Kem Lindsay, who encouraged me to be a leader and to pursue Christ above all.

To Stephen Davie, the pastor under whose preaching God
undeniably called me to full-time Christian ministry.

To Jeff Long, who gave me my first church staff position and modeled
exceptional expository preaching and church leadership.

To Russell Moore, who mentored me and allowed me to co-teach a Sunday School class
with him during my seminary years.

To Randy Stinson, who has been an encouragement and a source of wisdom pertaining to
staffing and leadership issues.

To Bill Cook, my pastor during my graduate work at Southern Seminary, whose life so
wonderfully exemplifies the balance between scholarship and pastoral shepherding.

I am thankful to God for the grace that He has shown me
through the ministry of these men.

Additionally, I dedicate this project to the church that I both serve and love, Trinity
Baptist. Apart from your support, none of this would be possible.

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PREFACE

Aside from my new birth in Christ, my wife is the greatest gift I have ever received. Amy is the most selfless, thoughtful, and responsible person I know. She cares for our family tirelessly, serves others willingly, and loves me fully and faithfully. Most of the time I imagine that this must be a labor of love. Thank you, Amy. You will never know how much my life is enriched because I am married to you. For your example of godliness, pursuit of Christ, and willingness to allow me time to work on this doctor of ministry degree during these past several years, I am grateful.

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Nate Magloughlin

Amarillo, Texas

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Trinity Baptist Church exists to proclaim Christ and make disciples of those who claim Christ, all for the glory of Christ.¹ This mission statement is based on the apostle Paul's words to the church at Colossae: "Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me" (Col 1:28-19).² Trinity Baptist Church (TBC) is influenced by the fact that Paul's main purpose in ministry and in life was to proclaim Christ in order that sinners would be saved and sanctified. While depending fully on God's Spirit, Paul boldly spoke the name of Jesus and taught others the ways of Jesus. While making disciples involves much more than personal evangelism, it certainly includes it. Unfortunately, many professing Christians seem to view evangelism as the job requirement of the pastoral staff sensing little personal responsibility in the matter. In light of the fact that proclaiming Christ (personal evangelism) is at the heart of TBC's mission statement, this project will focus on equipping the church for more effective personal evangelism.

Context

TBC opened its doors in Amarillo's Wolfen neighborhood in October of 1950, and has continually been characterized as a theologically conservative, Bible-believing,

¹ Trinity Baptist Church adopted this mission statement in 2007, after I became pastor. While we have tweaked the statement and developed it more fully over the years, this statement has guided ministry planning since its adoption.

² Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the English Standard Version.

missions-minded church. In its earliest days, TBC was primarily a neighborhood church, completely surrounded by residential homes. However, in the 1970s and 1980s, led by its various pastors, TBC began to purchase properties north of its building. By the mid-1980s, this once neighborhood church was visible from Interstate 40. As it sits today, TBC's main parking lot is adjacent to the access road that runs parallel to the Interstate.

While TBC has a long history of pastors who were faithful to preach God's Word, it was during the tenure of the most recent former senior pastor (June 1985 to December 2005) that the church began to experience tremendous numerical growth.³ While visibility from Interstate 40 certainly helped, perhaps the greatest factor behind the church's growth was the former senior pastor's preaching ministry. Many came to hear his biblically sound, expository preaching. Both the children's ministry and youth ministry also experienced growth during these years. During his tenure, the church baptized 35 people per year on average, or one baptism for every 25 members. As people were consistently coming, the church voted to build what is called the Recreation Outreach Center (ROC), which houses both classrooms and athletic facilities. The building of the ROC is evidence that TBC was depending on an attractional model of church growth and evangelism.

It was also during the tenure of this senior pastor that the church developed its reputation in the community as a reformed Baptist church. In the early 2000s, the doctrines of grace became both more pronounced and more prominent. It was also during this period that TBC experienced a decline in attendance over disagreements related to Calvinistic doctrines and the senior pastor's unexpected resignation.⁴

³ At its peak in the late 1990s, Sunday school attendance averaged nearly 900. TBC did not have a history of recording corporate worship attendance numbers; however, based on data that I requested while a candidate for the role of senior pastor in 2007, Sunday school attendance regularly surpassed worship attendance, often by as many as 150 people.

⁴ According to former staff members, the strong emphasis the former senior pastor placed on Calvinism and the doctrines of grace led to declining attendance. By the

While a church's past does not necessarily determine its future, it does help to explain its current situation. In the community, TBC continues to have a reputation for being a theologically conservative, reformed leaning church. Currently, TBC averages about 600 people on any given Sunday morning in two worship services that can be described as blended. Between the two worship services, TBC hosts multiple Sunday school classes for all ages. On Sunday nights, over 150 adults participate in small groups that focus on sermon application while TBC provides ministry programs for children and youth.

While current attendance numbers indicate positive growth, this growth is not primarily the result of baptizing the lost (conversion growth). TBC's growth is largely the result of Christians who have either relocated to Amarillo or are dissatisfied with their former churches (transfer growth).⁵ While growth is positive, numbers alone do not indicate church health. Therefore, in February of 2015, a focus group of TBC members completed Lifeway's Transformational Discipleship Assessment (TDA), a helpful tool used in gauging spiritual development.⁶ While the TDA revealed strengths in terms of Bible literacy, doctrinal knowledge, and seeking God, it showed evangelism (sharing Christ) to be a weakness.

time he resigned in December 2005, the average Sunday school attendance was down by nearly 200 people.

⁵ Data from the Membership Class reveals that many who join TBC have been Christians for years. Furthermore, several retired pastors and former missionaries have joined TBC in recent years.

⁶ LifeWay Research, "Transformational Discipleship Assessment," 2012, accessed February 1, 2015, <http://tda.lifeway.com>. The assessment rates participants in nine categories on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest score. The categories are Bible engagement; obeying God and denying self; serving God and others; sharing Christ. exercising faith; seeking God; building relationships; unashamed; and doctrinal positions. According to the assessment, the average scores in any given category translate to one of three conclusions: (1) a score of 0.0-1.9 equals "Limited Evidence of Spiritual Development"; (2) a score of 2.0-3.9 indicates "Moderate in Spiritual Development"; (3) a score of 4.0-5.0 suggests "Consistent in Spiritual Development."

The TDA revealing a weakness in personal evangelism is not to imply that TBC does not value missions. In 2016, TBC sent out 130 missionaries.⁷ Additionally, TBC consistently places in the top 100 of all Southern Baptist Churches in total giving to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering (LMCO) each year.⁸ Furthermore, many members are serving locally in various non-profit ministries and organizations.⁹

In light of TBC's participation in and financial support of missions, the TDA's results in the category of sharing Christ were a bit surprising. While still scoring in the "moderate in spiritual development" range, these scores were buoyed by two specific questions that were more theoretical than practical. Simply understanding the gospel message and the responsibility to share it does not necessarily translate into the actual verbal communication of it. Similarly, confidence in doctrinal beliefs does not necessarily translate into living in accordance with those beliefs. Based on this identified weakness, as one might expect, the frequency of conversions and baptisms at TBC is low. From 2007 to 2017, TBC averaged 15 baptisms per year, many of which include the children of regular attenders. The declining number of baptisms, along with the declining baptismal rate over the years, indicates that the church has lost its outward focus.

Rationale

Ironically, TBC's strength, helping Christians mature spiritually, reveals its weakness, a failure to equip and motivate maturing Christians to engage the lost in personal evangelism. TBC is failing its core mission to proclaim Christ and make disciples; a clear mandate of the New Testament. While the Great Commission

⁷ Locations include Lubbock, TX; Provo, UT; Peru; Thailand; Taiwan.

⁸ From 2007-2017, TBC members gave nearly \$2,000,000 toward the LMCO. None of these funds were budgeted funds.

⁹ Based on an internal survey conducted in fall 2017, TBC church members were volunteering in over fifty local ministries and non-profit organization.

necessitates personal evangelism, TBC members are reluctant to engage the lost in the local context with the gospel.¹⁰

It is imperative to address these weaknesses revolving around personal evangelism for several reasons. First, spiritual maturity includes active participation in personal evangelism. Christians who are not proclaiming Christ fail to live as ambassadors for Christ, which is a primary function (2 Cor 5:18-21). As a church whose purpose is to make disciples, such an omission is unacceptable. Whereas once the church experienced growth through an attractional model, for various reasons, this model is no longer effective. Second, the church that primarily grows through transfer growth is not ultimately following the example of Jesus in seeking and saving the lost (Luke 19:10). While transfer growth may be able to sustain a church in the short-term, it is not an indicator of long-term health. Therefore, TBC must begin to view Amarillo as a mission field and seek to engage others with the gospel. Finally, for TBC to truly exist for the glory of God, it must embrace the responsibility and privilege of sharing Christ with the lost, thus promoting His glory.

To address this weakness in personal evangelism, I wrote and taught a six-week evangelism training curriculum to a carefully selected group of church members.¹¹ Through the curriculum, I sought to clarify the nature of the gospel and the responsibility of all believers to engage in personal evangelism. The curriculum addressed common barriers to engaging in personal evangelism as well as various motivations for engaging in personal evangelism. The curriculum challenged participants to embrace biblical truth, to adopt the practices and attitudes of Jesus, and provided opportunities for participants to rehearse the gospel message. While only about 10 percent of TBC's Adult Sunday school

¹⁰ Potential reasons may include fear of rejection, lack of experience, perceived lack of opportunity, misapplications of the doctrines of grace, complacency, etc.

¹¹ The curriculum was written in December 2017 to January 2018 and taught during the first quarter of 2018.

participated in the evangelism training class initially,¹² to help create a culture of evangelism, I preached a series on evangelism in conjunction with the implementation of the evangelism training class.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to equip members of Trinity Baptist Church in Amarillo, Texas, for personal evangelism.

Goals

In order to accomplish its stated purpose, this project focused on executing several related goals.

1. The first goal was to assess the current practices of and hindrances to engaging in personal evangelism among select members at TBC.
2. The second goal was to develop an evangelism training curriculum to equip select members to engage in personal evangelism.
3. The third goal was to increase confidence and knowledge concerning personal evangelism among select members at TBC through a six-week training curriculum.

Research Methodology

The research methodology for this project included pre-project and post-project surveys, as well as a rubric for evaluating the evangelism training curriculum. Definitive research methodology measured the accomplishment of the three goals.¹³

The first goal was to assess the current practices of and barriers to engaging in personal evangelism among select members at TBC. This goal was measured by administering the Pre-Project Personal Evangelism Survey,¹⁴ which was designed to

¹² Depending on the effectiveness of the class, the goal was to teach the evangelism training curriculum in all the adult Sunday school classes.

¹³ All of the research instruments used in the project were performed in compliance with and approved by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

¹⁴ See appendix 1. This survey is also referred to as the pre-training survey.

identify the participants' current practices of personal evangelism as well as hindrances to their practice. One objective was to note common practices that lead participants to regular evangelistic encounters. A second objective was to identify the most common hindrances to personal evangelism. I administered the pre-training survey electronically three weeks prior to the start of the evangelism training class. Selected members completed the survey anonymously to encourage honesty in their responses. In order to match pre- and post-training survey responses to conduct a *t*-test, participants selected a four-digit identification number. It was expected that participants would complete the survey within fifteen minutes. This goal was considered successfully met when each member of the small group completed the survey and the results were analyzed.

The second goal was to develop a six-week evangelism training curriculum designed to equip participants to engage in personal evangelism.¹⁵ The curriculum was loosely tied to a six-week sermon series on personal evangelism and provided participants with specific suggestions associated with engaging in ongoing personal evangelism as well as overcoming common hindrances to sharing the gospel. This curriculum was evaluated by a team of experts using a rubric to determine the identified criteria.¹⁶ This goal was considered successful when reviewers indicated each curriculum piece met or exceeded the "sufficient" level on the measurement instrument. Any curriculum piece that did not meet this threshold was revised and re-evaluated by the experts until it was deemed sufficient.

The third goal was to increase confidence and knowledge concerning personal evangelism among the selected members at TBC through a six-week training curriculum.¹⁷

¹⁵ See appendix 2 for both leader guides and learner guides.

¹⁶ See appendix 3.

¹⁷ The curriculum reviewed by the experts served as the six-week training curriculum.

I taught the curriculum during TBC's Sunday school hour for six consecutive weeks. This goal was measured by administering the Post-Project Personal Evangelism Survey.¹⁸ The survey was administered electronically one week after the completion of the six-week training curriculum. To gauge the effectiveness of the curriculum, it was necessary that each selected member participate in all six sessions. If any member was absent for any reason, that individual was required to watch a video recording of the session later. This goal was considered successfully met when the t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-training survey scores.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

The following definitions of key terms were used in the ministry project:

Personal evangelism. Personal evangelism “involves the effective communication of the essential gospel message with the view towards seeing people supernaturally become followers and imitators of Christ.”¹⁹

Two limitations applied to this project. First, the accuracy of the pre- and post-training surveys depended on the willingness of participants to be honest about their views and practices concerning personal evangelism. This issue was mitigated by making the surveys anonymous. Second, the effectiveness of the evangelism curriculum was diminished when participants failed to attend each class session. To mitigate the impact of missed sessions, each session was video recorded and made available to each participant.

Three delimitations were placed on this project. The first delimitation concerned the size of the evangelism training class. Roughly 10 percent of the average adult Sunday school attendance participated in the evangelism training class. The second

¹⁸ See appendix 1. Participants were asked four additional open-ended questions in order to gain further insight into the effectiveness of the project. This survey is also referred to as the post-training survey.

¹⁹ Will McRaney, Jr., *The Art of Personal Evangelism* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2003), 43-44.

delimitation concerned the demographic of the class. The class was limited to members of TBC who had not reached retirement age. Finally, the evangelism curriculum itself spanned only six-weeks to accommodate the participants' busy schedules.

Conclusion

While evangelism is to be a priority of every believer, too often it is a neglected spiritual discipline. While there are any number of reasons for such neglect, none are acceptable to God. Furthermore, pastors are responsible to equip the saints for the work of ministry (Eph 4:12). This project will serve as a tool to equip TBC's members for the work of personal evangelism. To the extent that this project is successful, God will be glorified as His people faithfully proclaim Christ. Additionally, Lord willing, many people will place their faith in Jesus and God's kingdom will expand.

CHAPTER 2

THE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR EQUIPPING MEMBERS OF TRINITY BAPTIST CHURCH FOR PERSONAL EVANGELISM

Introduction

While many Christians fail to live in obedience to Scripture’s mandate to engage in personal evangelism, few could use ignorance as an excuse. Those who have grown up attending Sunday school have heard countless times about the importance of telling others about Jesus. Such children have sung songs encouraging the importance of evangelism. The popular children’s song “Fishers of Men,” for instance, repeats Jesus’ words recorded in Matthew’s Gospel: “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matt 4:19). Many have sung those songs so many times that its tune cannot be unlearned. Those familiar with the song know which phrases repeat, how many times they repeat, and in what order they repeat. However, being familiar with such songs has not translated into fulfilling the song—that is, fulfilling Jesus’ mandate. In *The Art of Man-Fishing*, eighteenth-century Puritan Thomas Boston suggests that Jesus gives both a duty and a promise when He calls people to Himself.¹ While Jesus’ call is first and foremost a call to follow Him, Boston argues that God will make His followers “fishers as to success; that is, he makes them catch men to himself by the power of his Spirit accompanying the word they preach.”² The call to follow Jesus carries along with it both the privilege and responsibility to engage in personal evangelism. As Boston notes,

¹ Thomas Boston, *The Art of Man-Fishing: How to Reach the Lost* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2012), 22.

² *Ibid.*, 23.

fishing for men is carried out in the power of the Holy Spirit, who indwells and empowers followers of Jesus for effective gospel proclamation, according to God’s will. This chapter examines five New Testament passages that provide a biblical basis for engaging in personal evangelism. Jesus’ heart for the lost and the presence of the Holy Spirit will serve as motivation and encouragement for such an endeavor.

Matthew 9:35-38

The journey to develop a biblical and theological basis for equipping Christians to engage in personal evangelism begins with Jesus’ travels throughout the cities and villages of Galilee, specifically Capernaum. Matthew informs that Jesus was “teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and affliction” (v. 35). This description of Jesus’ ministry emphasis is not unique to this passage. Throughout the Gospels are similar references to the focus of Jesus’ ministry, which often include teaching, preaching, and healing.³ Significantly, as noted by Grant Osborne, “The phrase ‘the gospel of the kingdom’ is important in Matthew . . . and means Jesus’ joyful news concerns the inbreaking kingdom, that is, the new reign of God in him.”⁴ Such “news” is inseparably connected to the gospel message—that forgiveness of sin and reconciliation with God is found through faith in Jesus Christ. However, what is not as common is the description Matthew provides concerning Jesus’ emotional state. Matthew informs that Jesus had compassion on the crowds “because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (v. 36). The Greek verb for compassion is a descriptive word that implies feelings of genuine affection and pity for someone. John

³ See Matt 4:23-24; Mark 1:21-28, 1:39; Luke 4:31-44.

⁴ Grant Osborne, *Matthew*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 365. Osborne argues, “Matt 9:35-38 functions as a primer to the Mission Discourse” in Matthew’s Gospel (363). It should be noted that Jesus commissions the apostles to a similar ministry of teaching, preaching, and healing in Matt 10.

Nolland suggests, “Compassion involves so identifying with the situation of others that one is prepared to act for their benefit.”⁵ The reason the people were in such a poor condition is because of a lack of leadership; they were like sheep without a shepherd. The sheep-shepherd imagery is used in both the OT and NT, and both in positive and negative contexts. The context in this case is clearly negative. David Turner writes, “The imagery implies that the religious leaders of Israel are not faithful shepherds of Israel but vicious predators.”⁶ Jesus confirms what God spoke through the prophets.⁷ In keeping with the symbolism, the religious leaders brutalized the people with their unscrupulous, self-serving ways.

As one moved with compassion, Jesus was prepared to act for their benefit. As previously noted, the sheep-shepherd imagery is used in both positive and negative contexts in Scripture. In light of the faithlessness of Israel’s leaders, through the Prophet Ezekiel, God declares His intention to shepherd His people: “I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down declares the Lord God. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak” (Ezek 34:15-16). While Israel’s leadership had failed to shepherd the people, God’s compassionate purposes ensure that His people will be cared for. For this reason, God became man. While the people were as sheep without a

⁵ John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2005), 407.

⁶ David L. Turner, *Matthew*, The Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 407.

⁷ Through Ezekiel, God spoke judgment on the faithless leaders of Israel. The people of God had become scattered as their leaders attended to only their own needs (Ezek 34:1-6). With great force, God speaks against the faithless leaders of Israel who have not strengthened the weak, healed the sick, bound up the injured, or sought out the lost. Instead, the faithless leaders have treated the people cruelly, ruling over them with harshness and force.

shepherd, Jesus came to fulfill God's promise to shepherd His people. Jesus says, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11).

While the cross is the ultimate display of God's compassion for lost sinners, Jesus' immediate response to what He observed in the crowd was to encourage others to engage in compassionate ministry. Jesus switches from the sheep-shepherd imagery to an agricultural metaphor (vv. 37-38). Jesus compares lost and unreached people to "a vast crop of ripe grain in need of harvesters."⁸ While Jesus does not directly instruct His disciples to go and work the harvest at this point, a clear implication of his instructing them to pray to the "Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest" (v. 38) is that He desires His people to engage in the harvest of souls.⁹ R. T. France rightly comments, "Laborers here are not angels sent out to execute final judgment on the nations, as his Jewish readers would expect, but men sent out to rescue others from judgment."¹⁰ To work the harvest is to engage in evangelism and disciple-making, for through faith in the gospel one is rescued (Gal 1:3-5).

Jesus' compassion for those who need to be rescued is seen in the urgency he assigns to harvest work as He calls His disciples to "pray earnestly." Nolland correctly suggests, "There is an urgent need for sufficient workers to be able to harvest the crop before it spoils."¹¹ In other words, the time for rescue is short. Just as the time to harvest

⁸ Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 167.

⁹ Jesus does send out his disciples to work the harvest in Matt 10.

¹⁰ R. T. France, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, Tyndale Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1985), 175. France also suggests that the harvest mission is God's mission and "under His control" (176).

¹¹ Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 408.

grain is time-sensitive, there is coming a day when rescue for the unreached will be too late.¹²

Several implications pertaining to personal evangelism can be gleaned from this passage. First, followers of Jesus are to be intentional about harvest work—about personal evangelism. Jesus’ default mode was to see and engage hurting people. Whether Jesus was in a major city or on the outskirts of town, he was interested in others. Such compassion for the hurting ought to characterize Christians as well. Uncompassionate people close their eyes to the needs of others, focusing only on their own interests.¹³ Second, followers of Jesus must be prayerful about harvest work—about personal evangelism. John Calvin writes, “No man will of himself become a sincere and faithful minister of the gospel, and . . . [no man will] discharge in a proper manner the office of teacher but those whom the Lord raises up and endows with the gifts of his Spirit.”¹⁴ Prayer is of the utmost importance because harvest work is under the control of the sovereign God. Through His Spirit, God equips people for such ministry and ultimately makes evangelism fruitful. What the harvest needs is God sent, Holy Spirit empowered, compassionate and capable laborers to work it.

Matthew 28:16-20

From the villages of Capernaum to a mountain in Galilee, the next step in developing a biblical and theological basis for equipping Christians to engage in personal evangelism is found. The Great Commission is one of Jesus’ most recognizable speeches

¹² By “too late,” I do not mean to imply that God will withhold His grace to the truly repentant. That time is running out has to do with the temporal nature of physical lives and the immanent return of Jesus Christ.

¹³ See Luke 10:25-37. Jesus tells the Parable of the Good Samaritan in response to a lawyer’s question about the identity of the neighbor that he is supposed to love.

¹⁴ John Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Calvin’s Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 421.

in the NT. Its importance is obvious as Scripture records its general content multiple times.¹⁵ While many recognize that Jesus was giving the church her marching orders in the Great Commission, many lament the fact that this disciple-making mandate has become “the Great Omission.”¹⁶ Unfortunately, this omission is not unique to churches, but all too common among individual professing Christians as well. In exegeting this passage, it is clear that Jesus primarily has in mind disciple-making, not specifically personal evangelism. However, personal evangelism is a vital aspect of the disciple-making process, as being a disciple of Jesus depends on hearing and responding to the gospel.

Prior to His ascension, Jesus commissions His followers to make disciples of all nations. Matthew notes that Jesus directly gives His instructions to the eleven disciples (v.16).¹⁷ Considering this fact, some may wonder whether the instruction to engage in personal evangelism and to make disciples is limited to a certain group of people. France offers helpful insight into this question: “To accept that only the eleven were present does not, of course, require us to believe that the commission and the promises of vv.18-20 applied only to them; here, as often, they represent the whole body of Jesus’ ‘brethren.’”¹⁸ In other words, Jesus’ words apply to all Christians indiscriminately.

Before examining the specifics of His commission, a word on Jesus’ authority is in order. As one who is fully God, and in light of His perfect submission to the Father

¹⁵ See also Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47; John 20:21; Acts 1:8

¹⁶ This term refers to the fact that disciple-making is so widely neglected today.

¹⁷ Jesus commissions them prior to the apostles’ choosing Matthias to replace Judas.

¹⁸ France, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 412. Given the fact that Jesus’ commission and promise to be with them “to the end of the age” are linked, I conclude that Jesus’ commission and promise extends to all Christians until “the end of the age.”

in His mission to reconcile sinners to God, Jesus states, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (v. 18). Concerning Jesus’ authority, Leon Morris writes,

In His risen state He was in a situation very different from when he had been the penniless preacher and healer . . . [In His resurrection] He has received the fullest possible authority, for it is authority in heaven and on earth . . . supreme authority throughout the universe.¹⁹

God the Father has the right to grant such authority to the risen Jesus. Osborne suggests that Matthew utilizes the divine passive when he writes, “Has been given” in verse 18.²⁰ While some may question whether Jesus had previously possessed all authority, from the disciples’ perspective, Jesus’ claim to have all authority, as well as His promise to be with them always, served to bolster confidence in carrying out their God-given mission.²¹ Additionally, Jesus’ authority should increase the urgency with which Christians carry out this mission. Unwillingness to engage in evangelism and disciple-making is nothing short of disobedience against the Lord Jesus. Somehow, too many Christians disbelieve either that Jesus possesses all authority, or they have convinced themselves that they are excluded from submitting to His authority.

Based on His universal authority, Jesus commissions His disciples to go and make disciples. Blomberg notes that Jesus’ call to make disciples, and not His instruction to go, is “the main command of Christ’s commission.”²² That said, he cautions his readers against making too much or too little of this fact. First, Blomberg writes, “Too

¹⁹ Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans 1992), 745-55.

²⁰ Osborne, *Matthew*, 1078. Additionally, Osborne suggests that Jesus fulfills the identity of the one who is like the son of man from Daniel’s prophesy in Dan 7:1-14 (1079).

²¹ Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1065. Nolland argues that Matt 28:18 is essentially a reaffirmation of Jesus’ authority after the authorities in Jerusalem had rejected it.

²² Blomberg, *Matthew*, 431. The Greek word translated “go” is a participle that supports the main verb, “make disciples.”

much is made of it when the disciples' 'going' is overly subordinated, so that Jesus' charge is to proselytize merely where one is."²³ Jesus certainly intends for His followers to adopt a lifestyle of disciple-making, but one should not lose sight of the fact that the commission involves making disciples of all nations. The Greek term translated "nations" (v. 19) is a typical "Greek term for Gentiles . . . [which serves to] extend the range of their mission" beyond the people of Israel.²⁴ It seems clear, then, that for some, going will require them to leave the familiar, and, like Paul, speak the gospel where it has not been heard (Rom 15:20). On the other hand, Blomberg notes,

Too little is made of it [the fact that "go" is a participle] when all attention is centered on the command to "go," as in countless appeals for missionary candidates, so that foreign missions are evaluated to a higher status of Christian service than other forms of spiritual activity.²⁵

Essentially, Jesus is commissioning His followers to make disciples wherever they are and wherever they go. In that sense, Jesus is encouraging His disciples to live with a constant awareness of their mission to share the good news.

While the call to live on mission is readily understandable, it is imperative to understand what Jesus means when He calls his disciples to "make disciples" (v. 19). Blomberg helpfully suggests, "The verb 'make disciples' commands a kind of evangelism that does not stop after someone makes a profession of faith."²⁶ Aside from the first participle ("go"), two other participles ("baptizing" and "teaching") support the main verb ("make disciples") of verse 19. Morris writes, "The Master is not giving a

²³ Blomberg, *Matthew*, 431.

²⁴ France, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 413.

²⁵ Blomberg, *Matthew*, 431.

²⁶ *Ibid.* While important as the first step of obedience in following Christ, baptism initiates the new believer into the membership of the church. However, baptism is not the end goal of evangelism and conversion. Christ-like maturity is the goal (Col 1:28-29).

command that will merely secure nominal adherence to a group, but one that will secure wholehearted commitment to a person.”²⁷ As previously noted, the Great Commission has been labeled the Great Omission by some in the Christian community. All too often, churches (and individuals) give an inordinate amount of attention to securing professions of faith, yet fail to give proper attention to teaching converts to observe all that Jesus has commanded. Such neglect has led to the pervasive immaturity that characterizes many Christians today, and helps to explain why so few Christians engage in personal evangelism. Turner’s suggestion that Jesus’ commission to make disciples was essentially a mandate for His disciples to “reproduce themselves” is sound.²⁸ However, much of what plagues the church today is that immature Christians are being reproduced in mass. Reproduction matters little if what is being reproduced fails to resemble the prototype.

Acts 1:8

In developing a biblical and theological basis for engaging in personal evangelism, I have noted that Jesus’ compassion for sinners prompted Him to encourage His followers to pray that God would raise up people to work the harvest. This presupposes that Jesus expects Christians to engage in personal evangelism—to work the harvest. Jesus’ Great Commission teaches that working the harvest includes disciple-making—not simply evangelism—and that this is the expectation of all Christians. Just prior to His ascending to the right hand of the Father, Jesus promises His followers that the Holy Spirit will come upon them and empower them to serve as His witness. The

²⁷ Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 746. Disciples of Jesus are both learners and followers of their Master, characterized by a desire to be like their Master—like Jesus. Thus, in the context of Christian discipleship, learning presupposes obedience. Disciples are called to teach converts to obey all that Jesus has commanded.

²⁸ Turner, *Matthew*, 689.

Holy Spirit is the power behind effective evangelism and disciple-making, and the way in which Jesus fulfills His promise to be with His disciples to the end of the age.²⁹

The events leading up to Jesus' ascension were both emotionally charged and confusing for the disciples. Even though Jesus had predicted his crucifixion on several occasions, when it finally came to pass, Jesus' followers were dismayed.³⁰ While they experienced great joy at the news of Jesus' resurrection, they also lived in fear of the Jewish leaders (John 20:19). They were beginning to understand Jesus' identity and mission more clearly, but the disciples' question to Jesus just before His ascension indicates that they were still confused. As Luke records, the disciples asked Jesus if He was about to "restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). This question betrays the fact that Jesus' disciples were still unclear about how Jesus fulfilled the role of Messiah. Like most of the Jews, the disciples still expected the Messiah to be a political and military figure who would restore Israel to a prominent position among the nations. They longed for the day that Israel was again a thriving, independent nation—for "the former glory of the days of David and Solomon."³¹ While Jesus did not reject the notion of Israel's restoration, His answer reframes their expectations. Polhill notes, "The disciples were to be the true, 'restored' Israel, fulfilling its mission to be a 'light for the Gentiles' so that God's salvation might reach 'to the ends of the earth' (Isa 49:6)."³² In other words, Jesus

²⁹ In Rom 8:9, the apostle Paul refers to the Holy Spirit as both the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ.

³⁰ See Luke 9:21-22; 9:43-45; 18:31-34. Jesus understood His own death as fulfilling the words of the prophets (Luke 18:31). For instance, Jesus fulfilled the role of Isaiah's suffering servant (Isa 53) as He died "to give His life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

³¹ John B. Polhill, *Acts*, The New American Commentary, vol. 26 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 84.

³² *Ibid.*, 85. See Acts 1:7.

directs their attention to their mission of worldwide evangelism, and indicates the way in which they will accomplish it—through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit is first and foremost fulfilled at Pentecost. Luke records the coming of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus' disciples: "They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4).³³ I. Howard Marshall notes that while Pentecost serves as the primary fulfillment of the promise, "it is secondarily fulfilled on many other occasions."³⁴ The baptism of the Holy Spirit refers to the initial indwelling of the Spirit in the life of a new Christian.³⁵ While the book of Acts records various comings of the Holy Spirit, it is imperative to recognize that the Holy Spirit indwells every true follower of Jesus Christ.³⁶ Upon conversion, believers are "sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it" (Eph 1:13-14). The Holy Spirit is God's down payment; His pledge of ultimate salvation.

The Spirit who indwells and seals the believer for ultimate salvation is referred to in Scripture in a variety of ways, all of which give insight into His ministry in believers' lives.³⁷ Jesus equates the Holy Spirit with power, promising His disciples that

³³ Peter links the fulfillment of Jesus' promise to send the Holy Spirit with Joel's prophecy (Joel 2:28-32) in his sermon at Pentecost (Acts 2:14-41). Jesus equates Pentecost with the baptism of the Holy Spirit in Acts 1:5 when he prophesies that they "will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.)

³⁴ I. Howard Marshall, *Acts*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 5 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2008), 65.

³⁵ See Acts 19:1-6. These disciples at Ephesus were not yet genuine Christians for they had not the Holy Spirit.

³⁶ Acts 8:17 and Acts 19:6 both recount the Spirit's initial coming to indwell the believers. As noted, Rom 8:9 states that all who belong to Christ are indwelled by the Holy Spirit.

³⁷ For instance, in John 14, Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of truth (v. 17), the Helper/Comforter (v. 26), and Teacher (v. 26). In John 16:8, Jesus states that the Spirit will "convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment." It is the Spirit who guides followers of Christ in all truth, who declares the things of God to

when the Holy Spirit comes, they will receive power (v. 8).³⁸ In doing so, Jesus insinuates that their ability to fulfill their mission to serve as His witnesses depends on such power. Simon Kistemaker claims, “Only through the indwelling person and power of the Holy Spirit are the disciples able to witness for Jesus Christ.”³⁹ Luke highlights several instances where the Spirit’s power is manifest throughout the book of Acts.⁴⁰ Darrell Bock notes, “The Spirit is tied to power . . . which refers here to being empowered to speak boldly by testifying to the message of God’s work through Jesus.”⁴¹ Jesus also correlates the Spirit’s ministry with proclamation, saying “And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say” (Luke 12:11-12).

It must be clarified, however, that the Spirit’s power is not reserved solely for the speaker. Paul teaches that those who are apart from faith in Christ, devoid of the Spirit, are unable to understand spiritual things. Paul argues, “The word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing” (1 Cor 1:18).⁴² Spiritually dead individuals cannot and

the people of God, and thus glorifies Jesus (vv. 13-14). Paul refers to the Holy Spirit as the One who reveals spiritual truth to followers of Christ (1 Cor 2:6-16) in order that they may understand the things of God.

³⁸ See also 2 Tim 1:7.

³⁹ Simon J. Kistemaker, *Acts*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 54.

⁴⁰ For example, see Acts 4:33 (Peter and John); Acts 7 (Stephen); Acts 9 (Paul); Acts 10 (Peter and the Gentiles); Acts 11 (Barnabas). For a helpful commentary on the difference between baptism of the Holy Spirit and the filling of the Holy Spirit, see John R. W. Stott, *The Baptism and Fullness of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1964).

⁴¹ Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 63.

⁴² In 1 Cor 2:14, Paul writes, “The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because

will not respond to the gospel message in a saving way apart from the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration. Unless God grants faith and repentance, the sinner apart from Christ will remain hardened to the gospel.⁴³ Recognizing this fact is important because one's faithfulness to live as Jesus' witness does not depend on whether someone responds positively to the gospel.

Having promised the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus commissions His disciples to be His witnesses to the ends of the earth. To be a witness is to testify to what one has seen, heard, or experienced personally. Concerning the role of a witness, Bock writes, "A witness . . . is someone who helps establish facts objectively through verifiable observation. As such, a witness is more than someone with merely subjective and person impressions."⁴⁴ David Peterson gives insight into who Jesus was specifically addressing:

The word witness is almost exclusively applied to the Twelve in Acts. . . . The implication is that the apostles have observed Christ's suffering and resurrection and can now uniquely give testimony or bear witness to those events and their significance in light of Jesus' teaching, especially his explanation from the OT of the way of the kingdom of God is realized.⁴⁵

While the Apostles did hold a unique position as close associates of Jesus, one should not conclude that Jesus' commission excludes all other followers of Jesus to serve as His witnesses. As with the Great Commission, practically speaking, all of Jesus' disciples are called to be His witnesses. Peterson notes, "Other believers in Acts are witnesses to Christ only in a secondary or derived sense, sharing with unbelievers the testimony of the

they are spiritually discerned."

⁴³ That salvation is the work of God is evident in the NT. See John 1:9-13; Acts 11:18; Acts 16:14-15; Eph 2:10; Titus 3:4-8; 1 Pet 1:3.

⁴⁴ Bock, *Acts*, 64.

⁴⁵ David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2009), 111.

apostles that they have come to believe for themselves.”⁴⁶ Since the days of the early church, Christians have been carrying on the apostolic testimony, and in that sense, serving as Jesus’ witnesses.

While some question what exactly Jesus meant by “the end of the earth” (v. 8), Bock asserts that Jesus intended an expansive mission that is both “geographic and ethnic in scope, inclusive of all people and locales.”⁴⁷ He continues, “The kingdom message will move out gradually and encompass all. The church’s call is to be missionary in direction and eschatological in focus. The world is the end goal, pointing to complete deliverance that drives the present mission and gives it focus.”⁴⁸ According to Jesus, the mission’s epicenter is Jerusalem. From there, the gospel will penetrate Judea and Samaria, and then stretch to the ends of the earth. As Marshall explains, generally, the program Jesus outlines “corresponds to the structure of Acts as a whole.”⁴⁹ Hence, the book of Acts records not the finality of the disciples’ mission, but its beginning stages. This mission continues today, carried on by the power of the Holy Spirit through faithful followers of Jesus.

Romans 10:13-17

As seen, Jesus has commissioned, and expects, His followers to engage in personal evangelism. By sending the Holy Spirit, Jesus has provided the power to carry out the mission. Additionally, based on Jesus’ commission in Acts 1:8, being a witness of

⁴⁶ Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 112.

⁴⁷ Bock, *Acts*, 65. For more on what Jesus meant by “the end of the earth,” see E. Earle Ellis, “The End of the Earth,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 1 (1991): 123-32.

⁴⁸ Bock, *Acts*, 66.

⁴⁹ Marshall, *Acts*, 65. Acts 1:8 provides a general outline for the movement of the gospel as recorded in the Book of Acts: Jerusalem (chaps. 1-4), Judea and Samaria (chaps. 8-12), and the ends of the earth (chaps. 13-28).

Jesus Christ is essential to the identity of those who are in Christ. The apostle Paul elaborates on the necessity of witnessing for Jesus when he writes, “So faith comes through hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ” (Rom 10:17). Because faith comes through hearing the gospel, personal evangelism is necessary. Tom Schreiner writes, “Faith would not exist without hearing the gospel, and the word proclaimed is nothing other than the gospel of the crucified and resurrected Lord.”⁵⁰ Verse 17 serves as a summary to Paul’s flow of thought in the previous verses. To understand Paul’s summary statement, one must first give attention to its context.⁵¹

Paul contrasts the righteousness that comes through obedience to the Law and the righteousness that comes through faith in Jesus in Romans 10. Earlier in his letter, Paul argues that none are justified by obedience to the Law because all have rebelled against the Law (Rom 3:9-20). He directs his readers to the righteousness of God that has been “manifested apart from the law . . . the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe” (Rom 3:21-22). He claims that “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes” (Rom 10:4), due to the fact that Jesus fulfilled God’s Law perfectly, and that His righteousness is imputed to those who trust in His finished work.⁵² The gospel proclaimed is that forgiveness of sin, reconciliation with God, and eternal life are found through trusting in the finished work of Jesus Christ in His perfect life, substitutionary death, and resurrection to life. Paul emphasizes the importance of belief when he writes, “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord

⁵⁰ Tom Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 564.

⁵¹ While this text is often cited with reference to foreign missions, the sequence leading to one “calling on the name of the Lord” (Rom 10:13) applies to engaging in personal evangelism as well. What Paul communicates in Rom 10:13-17 applies to all sinners equally, regardless of race or nationality.

⁵² I deal with imputed righteousness more fully when examining 2 Cor 5:17-21.

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” (Rom 10:9-10). To be “justified” is to be declared innocent (righteous) by God. Consistent with the worldwide emphasis of Jesus commission, Paul is clear: “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Rom 10:13).⁵³ In the immediate context of the verse, “everyone” signifies Jew and Gentile without distinction.⁵⁴

To “call on the name of the Lord” presupposes belief that Jesus is the Son of God in whom salvation is found. Douglas Moo suggests that Paul understood Jesus to be divine, noting, “In the OT . . . the one on whom people called for salvation was Yahweh.”⁵⁵ The sinner’s willful disobedience against the Holy God elicits His wrath. The consequence of sin is death, eternal death (Rom 6:23). Leon Morris writes, “We must understand *calls on* in no mere formal sense; it is calling on the Lord out of a sense of inadequacy and need and proceeds from a genuine conviction that the Lord can be relied on.”⁵⁶ Hence, to call on the name of the Lord is to recognize that Jesus alone can rescue people from God’s wrath and eternal death.

In Romans 10:14-17, Paul asks a series of rhetorical questions emphasizing the necessity for Christians to engage in personal evangelism. First, considering the importance of calling on the name of the Lord, Paul asks, “How will they call on Him in whom then have not believed?” (v. 14). Clearly, no one will call upon (and trust in) anyone for salvation if they do not consider that person able to save them. The task for

⁵³ Paul quotes the prophet Joel (Joel 2:32) who speaks of salvation from God’s wrath on the Day of Judgment.

⁵⁴ This is clear from Rom 10:11-12.

⁵⁵ Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), 660.

⁵⁶ Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 388.

Christians, then, is to proclaim the person and work of Jesus Christ, and how He alone is uniquely qualified to save them. Paul hints at this in his second rhetorical question: “And how are they to believe in Him of whom they have never heard?” (v. 14). At a basic level, to be Jesus’ witness is to declare the sufficiency of Jesus Christ in reconciling man to God. Schreiner writes, “The saving proclamation of the gospel always involves the proclamation of Jesus as Lord, who died for our sins and was raised from the dead.”⁵⁷ In order for someone to possess saving faith, a person must know who Jesus is (and why they need Jesus). Commenting on the meaning of “the word of Christ” (v. 17), Schreiner continues, “It centers on Jesus the Messiah and His saving work on the cross.”⁵⁸ Paul’s third rhetorical question makes the case for such proclamation: “And how are they to hear without someone preaching?” (v. 14). The term “preaching” implies proclaiming or heralding a message. Morris’s clarification is helpful:

We should not confuse *preach* here with the modern Sunday morning sermon (that too may be in Paul’s meaning, but it is not the kind of thing he has primarily in mind). His verb properly denotes the action of a herald, someone who was given a message and told to proclaim it.⁵⁹

Essentially, when Paul refers to preaching, he includes any public or interpersonal communication of the good news. Paul’s final rhetorical question alludes to the commissioning of the preacher. He asks, “And how are they to preach unless they are sent?” (v. 15). Colin G. Kruse writes, “To be ‘sent’ here denotes being sent with a commission. Paul himself was sent and commissioned by Christ (1:4-5), and here he implies that all preachers of the gospel should be sent by Christ.”⁶⁰ As previously seen,

⁵⁷ Schreiner, *Romans*, 567.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 390.

⁶⁰ Colin G. Kruse, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2012), 417.

the Great Commission applies to all Christians, and in that sense, all Christians have been “sent” with the gospel. Concerning those who proclaim the gospel, Paul quotes the prophet Isaiah, writing, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” (Rom 10:15; Isa 52:7). Moo suggests that the quotation of Isaiah 52:7 serves to “provide scriptural confirmation of the necessary role of preaching . . . [and] suggests that the last condition for salvation listed by Paul in vv.14-15a has been met.”⁶¹ Similarly, Richard Longenecker believes that by quoting the prophet Isaiah, Paul adds “a prophetic acclamation of acceptance to the four steps . . . and suggests that this fourth prerequisite for the bringing about of divine salvation on behalf of Paul’s Jewish kinsfolk has already been met by God in His sending preachers to the people of Israel.”⁶² It should be noted that not everyone who hears the gospel will respond in faith and repentance. Paul notes that not everyone has believed and obeyed the message of the gospel (v. 16).⁶³ While it is true that many have and will reject the gospel, the fact that saving faith comes through the proclamation of the gospel demands that Christians engage in personal evangelism.⁶⁴

Second Corinthians 5:17-21

The fifth and final Scripture passage in the quest to clarify a biblical basis for engaging in personal evangelism is found in the Corinthian correspondence. In 2 Corinthians 5:17-21, Paul discusses the ministry of reconciliation, calling himself (and by

⁶¹ Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 664.

⁶² Richard N. Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans, 2016), 885.

⁶³ Paul refers specifically to disbelieving Jews, again quoting the prophet Isaiah (Isa 53:1). The prophecy concerning the Suffering Servant is a clear and direct reference to Jesus and to the salvation that He accomplishes through the cross. In the same way that many Jews failed to believe the prophecy of the end of the Babylonian exile and the return to Zion, widespread disbelief also characterized the message of the person and work of Jesus. See Kruse, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, 417.

⁶⁴ Paul does not intend to limit gospel communication to proclamation. Saving faith could result from learning of the gospel from some other medium as well.

extension, all Christians) an ambassador for Christ. Throughout his letters to the church at Corinth, Paul defends his own apostleship against various people in the church who were questioning his legitimacy and authority. He contrasts his ministry as one who has been commissioned by God with those who peddle the Word of God (2 Cor 2:17). Paul understands his ministry to be one of godly persuasion, motivated by a proper fear of the Lord (2 Cor 5:11). That is, as an apostle of Christ Jesus, Paul seeks to persuade sinners to believe the gospel and be reconciled to God.

One of the realities associated with conversion to Christ is spiritual regeneration. Paul writes, “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation” (v. 17). Being “in Christ” implies being connected to Christ through faith, and presupposes having called upon the name of the Lord for salvation. Such people have been renewed in Christ’s image and are no longer slaves to sin, but spiritually alive in Christ, having been regenerated by the Holy Spirit (Rom 6:10-11; Eph 2:1-9).⁶⁵ According to 2 Corinthians 5:18, spiritual life is from God, who “through Christ reconciled us to Himself” (v. 18). Calvin associates being made a new creation with the “grace of regeneration, which God confers peculiarly upon His elect.”⁶⁶ The term “reconciled” (v. 18)—which is used only by Paul in the NT—suggests relational peace. By employing the concept of reconciliation, Paul assumes a broken relationship between God and man. Previously, I noted that sin (rebellion against God) places one under God’s wrath. Paul writes, “But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us . . . for if while we were enemies of God we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, now that we are reconciled,

⁶⁵ For a helpful discussion on what Paul means by “the old has passed away; behold, the new has come,” see Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1997), 296-99.

⁶⁶ John Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, *Calvin’s Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 231.

shall we be saved by his life” (Rom 5:8, 10). David Garland notes, “When the verb [reconcile] is used in the active voice, God or Christ is always the subject. When it is used in the passive voice, humans are the subject. In other words, ‘God reconciles; man is reconciled.’”⁶⁷ Hence, in any gospel proclamation, it is wise to note that God is not being reconciled to man, but man to God. As noted, the agent through which God reconciles sinners to Himself is Christ—through His death on the cross.

Not only has God reconciled sinners to Himself through Christ, Paul states that He has given “us the ministry of reconciliation” (v. 18). While there is some disagreement with regard to who Paul includes in his use of “us,” most commentators believe that Paul refers both to his own experience, as well as to the greater community of believers.⁶⁸ Such an interpretation is consistent with conclusions elsewhere in this chapter. That is, Paul’s readers should understand themselves to be ministers of reconciliation because both the Great Commission and Jesus’ commission to be His witnesses before His ascension applies to all believers. As mentioned, Paul is the only NT author to utilize the concept of reconciliation. One may wonder how Paul developed his understanding of this concept and its application to salvation. In his study on the origin of Paul’s concept of reconciliation, Seyoon Kim suggests that Paul developed his ideas “out of his theological reflection on his personal experience on the Damascus road.”⁶⁹

⁶⁷ David E. Garland, *2 Corinthians*, The New American Commentary, vol. 29 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1999), 289.

⁶⁸ Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 304. Based on Paul’s exhortation to the Corinthians to “be reconciled to God” (v. 20), some scholars claim that Paul refers only to the apostles as having received the ministry of reconciliation.

⁶⁹ Seyoon Kim, “2 Cor. 5:11-21 and the Origin of Paul’s Concept of ‘Reconciliation,’” *Novem Testamentum* 39 (October 1997): 383. Kim notes that Paul’s use of reconciliation reflect both the Hellenistic and Jewish background, but his consistent formulation of God reconciling human beings to Himself is unique.

In the remaining verses of chapter 5 (vv. 19-21), Paul explains how God reconciles sinners through Christ, and defines what it means to be a minister of reconciliation. Colin Kruse points out, “The ministry of reconciliation is primarily the proclamation of what God has done.”⁷⁰ Paul writes, “In Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them” (v. 19). Paul identifies the reason reconciliation is needed (trespasses), and the result of reconciliation (God does not count their trespasses against them). Jesus paid the sin-debt for those who are “in Christ” by dying on the cross for their sins (Col 1:20-22). The apostle John writes that Jesus “is the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 2:2).⁷¹ Reconciliation then, “involves the non-imputation of trespasses, i.e., forgiveness, which is complemented by the imputation of righteousness.”⁷² When Paul writes, “In Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself” (v. 19), emphasis should be placed on the means of reconciliation rather than the incarnational aspect of God being in Christ. As Garland notes, Paul’s “theological agenda here does not center on affirming the incarnation,” but on explaining how God reconciled the world.⁷³ Additionally, the switch from “reconciled” (v.18) to “reconciling” (v.19) indicates the idea of incomplete action. Garland continues by suggesting that although God’s act of reconciliation is complete, “it is only incomplete in the sense that [it] . . . requires human response . . . God does not count our trespasses against us. But it

⁷⁰ Colin G. Kruse, *2 Corinthians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 8 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1987), 125.

⁷¹ The NIV uses the phrase “atoning sacrifice” instead of propitiation. The point is that Jesus is the sacrifice that appeases God’s wrath on sin.

⁷² Murray J. Harris, *2 Corinthians*, in vol. 10 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 354. The imputation of Christ’s righteousness is addressed in the discussion of v. 21.

⁷³ Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 293.

remains for us to accept that we have done wrong, to repent of it, and to accept God's offer of friendship."⁷⁴

Paul's use of the term "world" (v. 19) should be understood primarily in terms of the nations—Jews and Gentiles who turn to Christ. As Kruse notes, it is difficult to understand Paul's use of the term "world" as applying to all humanity, for he teaches elsewhere that the "sins of unbelievers are and shall be counted against them."⁷⁵ Additionally, Paul is not referring to created order here. While Paul does refer to the created order as being held in "slavery to corruption" (Rom 8:21), such bondage is due to man's sin, not the sin of the creation.

Verse 20 flows naturally from verse 19. As those who have been entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation (v. 19), Paul writes, "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making His appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God" (v. 20). Garland suggests, "Our modern perception of an ambassador as an official of the highest rank chosen and certified by a government to represent it before another helps us to appreciate the magnitude of Paul's claim . . . an ambassador makes the case for the one who sent him."⁷⁶ Considering the accusations against Paul's legitimacy circulating in the church, Paul emphasizes that he speaks not his own words, but the very words of God: "God making His appeal through us" (v. 20). Ralph Martin explains that in his role as an ambassador, Paul "is representative of Christ and God at one and the same time."⁷⁷ While the apostles held a unique role in the history of the church, as argued, all Christians should understand themselves to be ambassadors for

⁷⁴ Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 293.

⁷⁵ Kruse, *2 Corinthians*, 127.

⁷⁶ Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 295, 298.

⁷⁷ Ralph P. Martin, *2 Corinthians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 40 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 317.

Christ. Thus, all Christians have an important role in urging and appealing others to be reconciled to God through Christ.

Paul's exhortation to the Corinthians to be "reconciled to God" (v. 20) should be understood in light of the Corinthians' general disregard for Paul and their failure to reject false teachings (2 Cor 11:4). It is unlikely that Paul specifically has in mind conversation to Christ when imploring them to be reconciled to God, as he generally believes them to have already experienced salvation. That said, he may have multiple purposes in mind. For the unregenerate in the church fellowship, Paul would certainly be calling them to faith in Jesus. However, as Garland explains, "The fundamental problem behind the Corinthians' misunderstanding of Paul and their discord is that they are not fully reconciled to God . . . they have fallen short because of their bickering, sinful lifestyles . . . participation with idols," and acceptance of false teachings.⁷⁸

Second Corinthians 5:21 is, according to W. Hulitt Gloer, "an inspired commentary" on the statement in verse 15 that one has 'died for all,' in which Paul sets out precisely how 'not counting their trespasses against them' and 'by means of Christ' are related."⁷⁹ Paul writes, "For our sake [God] made Him [Christ] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God" (v. 21). Multiple interpretations exist as to the meaning of this verse. Any view suggesting that Jesus became a sinner on the cross should be rejected as heretical. The NT makes it clear that Jesus was perfectly sinless (Heb 4:15). The interpretation that "Christ was made a sin offering" garners some degree of support, as Paul's theology of atonement certainly

⁷⁸ Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 299. See also Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 311.

⁷⁹ W. Hulitt Gloer, "Ambassadors of Reconciliation: Paul's Genius in Applying the Gospel in a Multi-Cultural World: 2 Corinthians 5:14-21," *Review and Expositor* 104 (Summer 2007): 595.

involves sacrifice for sin.⁸⁰ Paul's theology of atonement certainly involves sacrifice for sin, which he associates with Jesus's death.⁸¹ Kruse notes, however, that the word for sin, (*hamarita*) "is never used in this way in the New Testament . . . [except possibly in Rom 8:3, and it is] doubtful whether it carries that meaning there."⁸² In light of Paul's arguments elsewhere (Gal 3:13), the best interpretation is that Paul means that "Christ was made to bear the consequence of our sins."⁸³ Christ bore the consequences of man's sin, not simply as a representative for man, but as a substitute for man. Garland writes, "God provided Jesus to stand in for sinful humanity. Even though Jesus was sinless, God deals with him as though He were a sinner by letting Him die an accursed death . . . the result of this transaction is that 'we might become the righteousness of God' in Christ."⁸⁴ The message of the cross is that Jesus paid the sin-debt for all who will trust in His finished work on the cross and in the resurrection. Furthermore, through faith in Jesus, God imputes Jesus' perfect righteousness to the sinner (Rom 3:21-4:5). This is the righteousness that Paul wrote of in Philippians—the righteousness that comes based on faith in Christ (Phil 3:9). Reconciliation, then, involves both the forgiveness of sin and the imputation of righteousness, and this through faith in Jesus.

Conclusion

In this analysis of five NT passages, I have identified the biblical mandate for Christians to engage in personal evangelism. Matthew's Gospel highlights the fact that the Great Commission applies not just to the apostles, but to all of Jesus' disciples, and

⁸⁰ Kruse, *2 Corinthians*, 127.

⁸¹ Ibid. See Rom 3:24-25 and 1 Cor 5:7.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 302.

that harvest work is to be motivated, at least in part, by compassion for the lost. In the opening chapter of Acts, one learns that Jesus' commission to be his witness is to be carried out in the power of the Holy Spirit who indwells all followers of Jesus. In Romans, Paul makes it clear that evangelism is necessary because faith comes through hearing the gospel. Finally, in 2 Corinthians, Paul emphasizes that Christians have been given the ministry of reconciliation. In doing so, he supplies the substance of the gospel message that Jesus' followers are to proclaim.

CHAPTER 3
THEORETICAL, PRACTICAL, AND HISTORICAL ISSUES
RELATED TO EQUIPPING CHURCH MEMBERS
FOR PERSONAL EVANGELISM

Scripture encourages Christians to engage in personal evangelism. The biblical and theological basis for this is clear. Unfortunately, like in many areas of life, obedience to a scriptural mandate does not necessarily depend on the clarity of the mandate. For instance, a parent can clearly articulate to a child the expectation to complete certain chores. The child may even affirm his understanding of his responsibility. However, none of this guarantees that the child will comply. Any number of things can deter the child from doing his chores. The child may get distracted with other activities or become overwhelmed with other responsibilities. Perhaps the child faces external obstacles or possesses insufficient knowledge or ability to complete that task. Additionally, depending on the chore, the child may be afraid to do what has been asked of him. Finally, it must be admitted that sometimes rebellion stands behind such disobedience—the child simply does not want to do what he has been asked to do.

In considering issues related to equipping members of Trinity Baptist Church for personal evangelism, attention will now be given to identifying and addressing the various reasons people give to justify non-involvement in personal evangelism. Along with addressing common barriers to engaging in personal evangelism, attention will also be given to identifying common characteristics in those who regularly engage in personal evangelism.

Common Barriers to Engaging in Personal Evangelism

In his book on evangelism, Nick Pollard suggests that most non-believers fall into one of four categories when it comes to interest in the gospel and spiritual things.¹ According to Pollard, while the first three categories include people who are genuinely interested in Christianity, and may even want to become Christians, this accounts for a minority of people. Of the fourth category Pollard writes, “The vast majority of people today . . . are simply not interested [in the gospel].”² While some may be hostile to the gospel, others are simply indifferent toward it. In light of the variety of negative responses to the gospel message, Christians have grown increasingly reluctant to share the gospel and engage in personal evangelism. While fear is certainly a factor, many other factors keep people from personal evangelism, including ignorance, a lack of discipline, incorrect theological beliefs, and sinful rebellion.

Fear is an undeniable emotion associated with personal evangelism. Timothy Beougher suggests that “all believers who share Christ with others have to work through the issue of fear.”³ Common fears include the fear of failure, the fear of rejection, the fear of public speaking, the fear of loss of relationship, and the fear of persecution. Potential witnesses for Jesus may fear not knowing how to respond to questions they may be asked, being ostracized neighbors, or causing problems at work.⁴

Rather than dismiss all such fear as unrealistic, it would be wise to recognize that the world is opposed to Christ and opposed to Truth. As Jesus sent out His disciples, He said to them, “Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise

¹ Nick Pollard, *Evangelism Made Slightly Less Difficult: How to Interest People Who Aren't Interested* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1997), 13-14.

² *Ibid.*, 14.

³ Timothy K. Beougher, *Overcoming Walls to Witnessing* (Charlotte, NC: Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, 1993), 9.

⁴ Mark Dever, *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 21.

as serpents and innocent as doves” (Matt 10:16). Just prior to His death, Jesus told His disciples, “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. . . . A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you” (John 15:18, 20). By “world,” Jesus refers to the evil organized system that is opposed to righteousness and empowered by the evil one—“the ruler of this world” (John 12:31).

After Jesus’ death, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus’ words proved true. Throughout the NT, one reads of the persecution that the early followers of Christ experienced. The book of Acts is filled with accounts of Christians facing opposition, at times specifically for proclaiming the gospel. Peter suggests that Christians should not be surprised when they face trials (1 Pet 1:6-7, 3:13-17, 4:12-19). James anticipated the trials that Christians would face, calling his readers to count it all joy (Jas 1:2). Paul’s experience with persecution led him to write, “Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Tim 3:12). Once, after preaching the gospel, Paul was stoned and left for dead (Acts 14:19-23). By God’s grace, Paul quickly recovered and encouraged the believers to continue in the faith: “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God” (v. 23). Of course, none of this caught Paul by surprise because, from his conversion, Jesus made it clear that Paul would suffer for the sake of His name (Acts 9:15-16). Such warnings in Scripture help people prepare for what to expect, and to not lose heart when facing difficulty.

Along these same lines, Rico Tice admits that Christians today face a “growing hostility to Christianity,” suggesting that “it’s not just apathy we face—it’s antipathy.”⁵ While there may not be physical harm, Tice suggests, “If you are going to talk about Jesus, you are going to get hurt. It is going to sever some relationships. It is going to

⁵ Rico Tice with Carl Laferton, *Honest Evangelism: How to Talk about Jesus Even When It’s Tough* (Surrey, England: Good Book, 2015), 15.

provoke people . . . we will face rejection enough of the time to give us second thoughts” about sharing the gospel.⁶

In light of the threat, it is no wonder why people become fearful about personal evangelism. Even the apostle Paul was no stranger to fear. While ministering in Corinth, the Lord Jesus said to Paul in a vision, “Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people” (Acts 18:9-10). If the apostle Paul experienced fear at times, it should not be a surprise that Christians today experience fear as well. The question remains, will Christians today, like Paul, continue to be faithful to engage in personal evangelism, regardless of the threat? In other words, what should Christians make of the fear they experience?

Scripture offers several answers to the fear that Christians experience. First, it is imperative to remember that Jesus promises to be with His followers (Matt 18:18-20).⁷ Understanding that the One who possesses all authority in heaven and on earth is with His own ought to bolster confidence in carrying out one’s God-given mission. Additionally, understanding that God has given His followers His Spirit is another source of comfort and strength in the midst of fear. As previously noted, God has given His followers the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of power—in order to accomplish the mission of evangelism (Acts 1:8). Elsewhere, Jesus promises to clothe His disciples with “power from on high” (Luke 24:49).⁸ The apostle Paul reminds Christians that “God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control” (2 Tim 1:7). Scripture teaches that the Holy Spirit is actively involved during the proclamation of Christ both in the speaker and in the

⁶ Tice and Laferton, *Honest Evangelism*, 15.

⁷ In the immediate context of the Great Commission, one should note that the promise of Jesus’ presence is especially focused on the process of making disciples, which includes personal evangelism.

⁸ This too, of course, is a reference to the Holy Spirit.

hearer. The Holy Spirit gives believers courage to speak (Acts 4), words to speak (Luke 12:12), and remembrance of truth (John 16:13-14). Likewise, the Holy Spirit gives the non-believer wisdom to understand and faith to believe the gospel messages (1 Cor 2).

Not only has God given Christians the Spirit of power, but Paul reminds his readers that the gospel itself is the power of God (Rom 1:16). Greg Laurie believes that this truth ought to give Christ followers confidence when evangelizing: “When you quote Scripture, you do not have to shout it or quote in an ‘otherworldly’ way. You can, in a very conversation manner, share the Word of God.”⁹ Furthermore, would be evangelists would do well to remember that God’s grace is sufficient and that His power is perfected in and through the weakness of His messengers (2 Cor 12:9). While Paul may not have been referring specifically to the proclamation of the gospel when discussing his “weakness,” Jesus’ words are clearly applicable to the fear associated with evangelism. Beougher asserts that fear can be helpful, necessary, and even desirable because it can lead Christians to confident dependence on God, as well as “alert and in a spirit of prayer.”¹⁰ When experiencing fear at the prospect of engaging in personal evangelism, Scripture points believers to the presence and power of God. Such truths need to be meditated on and personally appropriated in order to combat the fear related to engaging in personal evangelism.

Before transitioning to the next barrier to engaging in personal evangelism, it should be noted that oftentimes it is the fear of man that causes hesitation and reluctance to witness for Jesus. Paul addresses this briefly when he writes, “For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ” (Gal 1:10). In his helpful book *When*

⁹ Greg Laurie, *Tell Someone: You Can Share the Good News* (Nashville: B & H, 2016), 99.

¹⁰ Beougher, *Overcoming Walls to Witnessing*, 11.

People Are Big and God Is Small, Edward Welch identifies three reasons people struggle with the fear of man. He suggests that because certain people can expose and humiliate, reject, ridicule, or despise, and attack, oppress, or threaten, it is easy for some to fall into the fear of man.¹¹ The antidote to the fear of man is to learn the fear of God. Welch rightly suggests that people can grow in the fear of God by reading and meditating on God’s Word in order to understand God’s character more fully.¹² As God becomes more significant, the opinions of others become less significant. Will Metzger encourages readers to battle the insecurity caused by the fear of man “by looking to Christ not others” as most significant.¹³

Closely related to the barrier of fear is a second barrier to engaging in personal evangelism—ignorance. Ignorance may revolve around claims of not knowing the gospel well enough to communicate it, or it may stem from a fear of not knowing how to answer questions that may be asked. Those with the little experience in sharing the gospel may feel inadequate to communicate the message well. However, everyone who has genuinely believed the gospel ought to know enough to be able to communicate it.¹⁴ In fact, if a person claims inability to share the gospel based on a lack of knowledge alone, it is likely because that person has not embraced the gospel in a saving way. Hence, it is important for believers to always be prepared to give reason for their faith to anyone who may ask. Peter writes, “In your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to

¹¹ Edward T. Welch, *When People Are Big and God Is Small: Overcoming Peer Pressure, Codependency, and the Fear of Man* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1997), 23. Welch suggests that idolatry is at the root of fearing man more than God, and thus repentance is in order. *Ibid.*, 151.

¹² *Ibid.*, 102-3.

¹³ Will Metzger, *Tell the Truth: The Whole Gospel to the Whole Person by Whole People* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1984), 111.

¹⁴ At its heart, the gospel is the message that forgiveness of sin and reconciliation with God is found only through faith in Jesus Christ.

make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Pet 3:15). As Christians seek to understand the gospel more fully by meditating on Scripture, and seek to become more familiar with common objections to the Bible and Christianity through personal study, Christians will be better equipped to give a defense for what they believe.¹⁵

Additionally, Christians can utilize resources when engaging in gospel conversations. Gospel tracts can be helpful tools as they often outline the gospel and provide the necessary information to communicate (and sometimes the exact words to say). However, as Laurie notes, there is no one size fits all approach to the evangelism: “It is important for us to know that when sharing our faith, we do not deal with everyone the same way. It is worth noting that Jesus never dealt with any two people in the exact same way.”¹⁶ For this reason, many advocate the sharing of one’s personal testimony as a way to communicate the gospel to others.¹⁷ Laurie declares, “Every one of us can tell our story. You don’t have to be an expert in theology to do so.”¹⁸ Following Paul’s example contained in Acts 22, one’s personal testimony ought to include a summary about life before one becomes a Christian, details of the circumstances of one’s conversion, and a few words on how life is different since becoming a Christian. While personal testimonies

¹⁵ Some common objections to the Bible and Christianity include the following: If God is good, why is there so much suffering in the world? How can a loving God send anyone to hell? Aren’t all religions basically the same? For an excellent resource on dealing with such questions, see Randy Newman, *Questioning Evangelism: Engaging People’s Hearts the Way Jesus Did* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2004). While the Holy Spirit is essential to personal evangelism, the Spirit’s presence does not diminish the individual believer’s responsibility to be prepared for evangelistic encounters.

¹⁶ Laurie, *Tell Someone*, 67.

¹⁷ Beougher defines a personal testimony as “simply telling the story of how you became a Christian and what Christ has done in your life since then.” Beougher, *Overcoming Walls to Witnessing*, 22.

¹⁸ Laurie, *Tell Someone*, 83.

can be an effective tool in communicating the gospel, Dever cautions that simply sharing one's testimony is not necessarily the same thing as presenting the gospel message: "In telling people how we have seen God help us, we may not actually make clear his claim on our lives or explain what Christ did on the cross."¹⁹ In other words, sharing one's personal testimony falls short of evangelism if it fails to address the nature and character of God, the sinfulness of man, the finished work of Jesus, and a summons to faith and repentance.²⁰

Another common area of ignorance as it relates to engaging in personal evangelism revolves around how to transition every day conversations to gospel-centered conversations. Many Christians admit struggle in this area. While there is no easy solution to this struggle, John Leonard emphasizes the importance of relationships when engaging in personal evangelism: "A real approach is not a presentation that you memorize, because the gospel you share is shaped by the person the Lord has brought into your life. It is molded by the person's particular circumstances, problems and struggles."²¹ Such an approach to evangelism demands that Christians know both the gospel and the people with whom they evangelize well. Similarly, Alvin Reid prioritizes gospel conversations over gospel presentations: "Effective evangelistic conversations connect the unchanging gospel with the specific issues that people face."²² Reid wisely contends that because many conversations revolve around an individual's passions and pains, believers should

¹⁹ Dever, *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism*, 73.

²⁰ J. I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1961), 58-73.

²¹ John S. Leonard, *Get Real: Sharing Your Everyday Faith Every Day* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2013), 6.

²² Alvin L. Reid, *Sharing Jesus without Freaking Out: Evangelism the Way You Were Born to Do It* (Nashville: B & H, 2017), 68. Reid resigned as the senior professor of evangelism and student ministry at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in May of 2018.

connect the truth of God’s Word to life’s circumstances.²³ Donald Whitney suggests that an effective way to “turn the conversation towards spiritual matters is to ask the person how you can pray for him or her.”²⁴ While asking someone how you can pray for them does not guarantee the opportunity to engage in personal evangelism, it may lead to it. Laurie recommends spiritual chumming as a great way to engage people in spiritual conversations: “Make a spiritual point, and see if they respond.”²⁵ Spiritual points may include making statements about Scripture, answered prayers, purpose in life, church, or religion. The fact is, there are any number of ways to transition conversations to spiritual matters, but one must be willing to take conversational and relational risks trusting that God will honor such efforts.

A third barrier to engaging in personal evangelism is a lack of discipline when it comes to evangelism. While it is not uncommon to hear professing Christians claim that they lack opportunities to share the gospel with nonbelievers, often this is due to their own lack of effort and planning. Christians who are intentional about self-discipline in the area of personal evangelism find time in their busy schedules to interact with the lost.

In his letter to the Colossians, Paul writes, “Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of your time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person” (Col 5:5-6). Making the best use of one’s time includes making plans to engage non-believers in personal evangelism. Whitney suggests that evangelism is a “natural overflow of the Christian life,” and that one of the main reasons why Christians fail to witness is that they fail to discipline themselves

²³ Reid, *Sharing Jesus without Freaking Out*, 47-48.

²⁴ Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, rev. ed. (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2014), 131.

²⁵ Laurie, *Tell Someone*, 57.

for it.²⁶ When Paul instructs the Colossian believers to walk in wisdom toward outsiders, he implies that Christians will have interaction with non-believers. Will McRaney writes, “We must go to the world of lost people and not wait or expect them to come to us. It is our responsibility to take the initiative to enter into their presence to share.”²⁷

Unfortunately, too many Christians today lack genuine relationships with non-Christians. While there are likely many reasons for this reality, too often the failure to develop friendships with nonbelievers is motivated by selfishness and comfort. Christians can be guilty of wanting to protect themselves (or their children) from the evil influences of the world. While on the surface this may seem legitimate (even praiseworthy), taken to an extreme, such a strategy results in isolation from lost people and disobedience to God’s call to proclaim Christ. Reid suggests that there is a pervasive “Christian subculture” that exists today where professing Christians spend most of their time around “saved people.”²⁸ Driven by the desire for comfort and ease, too many Christians choose to spend their time with people who hold to similar values at the expense of befriending lost people.²⁹

Given the tendency toward selfishness, Christians must discipline themselves for evangelism. Beougher recommends that Christians assess their current and potential relationships and identify and invest in non-Christians.³⁰ Investing in such relationships

²⁶ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 127-29.

²⁷ Will McRaney, Jr., *The Art of Personal Evangelism: Sharing Jesus in a Changing Culture* (Nashville: B & H, 2003), 196.

²⁸ Reid, *Sharing Jesus without Freaking Out*, 10.

²⁹ It should be noted that Jesus was known as a friend of sinners (Luke 7). He spent ample time with people who had less than stellar reputations and who held to values much different than His own. While one must exercise wisdom in choosing with whom to spend time, to insulate oneself from lost people altogether is not the answer.

³⁰ Beougher, *Overcoming Walls to Witnessing*, 48-53. When assessing current and potential relationships, one should include neighbors, co-workers, community friends, social-group friends, the parents of children’s friends, etc.

may include inviting people over to one's house for a meal, cultivating common interests together, or being available to serve and help when the opportunity arises in an effort to intentionally build relationships. Beougher emphasizes, "Effective evangelism is built on relationships."³¹ Finally, Laurie's encouragement to recognize "that you are right where God wants you to be" is sound.³² While I return to the concept of God's sovereignty later, it is important to note that God is sovereign over all the affairs of man. Christians can be confident that God has a (gospel) purpose for their workplaces, neighborhoods, and social settings.³³

A fourth barrier to engaging in personal evangelism stems from bad doctrine and incorrect theology. For instance, if Christians mistakenly believe that the eternal destiny of a non-believer depends solely on their ability to communicate the gospel at a specific moment in time, such pressure may lead them to remain silent rather than to witness. Whitney speculates that "many Christians feel too unprepared for such a challenge, or simply have too little faith and falter at entering into such an eternally important conversation."³⁴ Such thinking, however, is clearly unbiblical. While personal evangelism is serious business, Christians are not ultimately responsible for a non-believer's acceptance or rejection of the gospel message. In fact, Jesus makes it clear that those apart from faith in Christ are "condemned already" (John 3:18). Instead, Christians should understand personal evangelism as the means of rescuing the lost from certain spiritual death.

³¹Beougher, *Overcoming Walls to Witnessing*, 53.

³² Laurie, *Tell Someone*, 37.

³³ For a great resource on disciple-making and gospel intentionality, see Jeff Vanderstelt, *Saturate: Being Disciples of Jesus in the Everyday Stuff of Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 170-228.

³⁴ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 123.

A second area of bad doctrine and incorrect theology that negatively influences faithful and consistent evangelism deals with the way of salvation. When professing Christians are not thoroughly convinced that salvation is found through faith in Jesus' atoning work alone, then evangelistic zeal will suffer. Unfortunately, the church is not immune to the influences of the world and priorities of the culture. As the banners of tolerance and relativism gain more popularity, professing Christians—suffering either from poor biblical teaching or pressure from society—are losing confidence in the exclusivity of Christ. A 2011 study from the Barna Group found that 25 percent of born again Christians believe that all people will eventually be saved or accepted by God.³⁵ Similarly, in a 2012 study on the exclusivity of salvation in Jesus, LifeWay Research found that 26 percent of adults who attend Protestant churches agreed (to varying degrees) that “if a person is sincerely seeking God, he/she can obtain eternal life through religions other than Christianity.”³⁶ Such statistics are troubling and a clear indication that church leadership must do a better job of teaching the fundamentals of the Christian faith. False doctrines such as pluralism and universalism invariably undermine evangelistic efforts, rendering witnessing unnecessary.

A third area of bad doctrine and incorrect theology associated with evangelism revolves around God's sovereignty. Scripture affirms that God is sovereign over

³⁵ Barna Group, “What Americans Believe about Universalism and Pluralism,” April 18, 2011, accessed January 5, 2018, <http://www.barna.com/research/what-americans-believe-about-universalism-and-pluralism>. This same study found that nearly 40 percent of born again Christians indicated that they believe Christians and Muslims worship the same God. It should be noted that according to a statement on this webpage, “born again Christians are defined as those who have made a commitment to Jesus Christ and who believe they are going to heaven because of their confession of sins and accepted Christ as their savior. It is not based upon self-identifying with the label ‘born again.’”

³⁶ LifeWay Research, “Pastors Uphold Christian Exclusivity, Poll Finds,” March 30, 2012, accessed January 5, 2018, <http://lifewayresearch.com/2012/03/30/pastors-uphold-christian-exclusivity-poll-finds>. The same study found that 2 percent of Evangelical pastors and 11 percent of mainline pastors agreed with the statement.

everything, including salvation (John 6:44; Acts 13:48; 1 Pet 1:3).³⁷ While Scripture also makes it clear that evangelism is both expected and necessary—because “faith come from hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ” (Rom 10:17)—some have concluded that evangelism is unnecessary because God will save who He wants to save anyway. J. D. Payne addresses this by answering the hypothetical questions, “If God is sovereign, why do we need to share the gospel? Shouldn’t God be able to save those he wishes, regardless of what I do or don’t do?”³⁸ In answering these questions, Payne accurately states that while God is sovereign, He has ordained the means—personal evangelism—to accomplish His plan in the world.³⁹

One can imagine this question being asked by an individual steeped in Hyper-Calvinism.⁴⁰ Hyper-Calvinism (or false Calvinism) views gospel preaching solely as a means for the ingathering of the elect. Iain Murray notes,

Gospel preaching for Hyper-Calvinists means a declaration of the facts of the gospel . . . [without] encouraging individuals to believe that the promises of Christ are made to them particularly until there is evidence that the Spirit of God has begun a saving work in their hearts.⁴¹

When one questions whether the gospel can be freely offered to all sinners, eventually both evangelistic fervency and faithfulness will diminish. Along with Spurgeon, it is

³⁷ Greater attention is given to God’s sovereignty in salvation later in this chapter.

³⁸ J. D. Payne, *Evangelism: A Biblical Response to Today’s Questions* (Colorado Springs: Biblica, 2011), 38.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁴⁰ Hyper-Calvinism denies there is a universal command in Scripture for individuals to repent and believe. Murray writes, “It is those who have been spiritually quickened to see a Saviour and not those who are in the death of unbelief and indifference, to whom the exhortations of the gospel must be addressed. In this way, a scheme was devised for restricting the gospel to those who there is reason to suppose are elect.” See Iain Murray, *The Forgotten Spurgeon* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2002), 47.

⁴¹ Iain H. Murray, *Spurgeon v. Hyper-Calvinism: The Battle for Gospel Preaching* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1995), 69.

imperative that Christians understand that the warrant for receiving the gospel “rests not in anything in the sinner but solely in the command and invitations of God.”⁴² Clarity on this issue paves the way to faithful evangelistic efforts. In summary, concerning God’s sovereignty as it relates to evangelism and salvation, Christians would do well to embrace Packer’s words: “Evangelism is man’s work, but the giving of faith is God’s.”⁴³

The final barrier to engaging in personal evangelism that this chapter addresses revolves around sinful rebellion. It must be admitted that in some cases, refusing to engage in personal evangelism is due to self-centeredness, indifference, or even worse, shame. While any number of excuses can be given for inattention to personal evangelism, personal sin is often involved. For instance, failing to discipline oneself for personal evangelism is oftentimes due to self-centeredness. Many professing Christians simply prefer to dictate their own schedules and focus on their own well-being. Whitney rightly rebukes such self-centered agendas when he writes, “No one who is indwelt by the Spirit of Jesus can remain unfeeling toward either the temporal or the spiritual needs of others.”⁴⁴ To remain indifferent to and unconcerned for the lost, refusing to engage in personal evangelism (which has clearly been commanded of Christians), is to rebel against God. Tice declares,

The reason that, even if we have everything straight in our heads, we won’t witness is because of what’s going on in our hearts. . . . I can have all the understanding that I need . . . but unless I have identified and am uprooting the idols of my heart, I still won’t . . . tell people about Jesus.⁴⁵

⁴² Murray, *The Forgotten Spurgeon*, 48. In other words, all sinners are commanded to repent and believe regardless of whether they sense their own guilt and need.

⁴³ Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 40.

⁴⁴ Donald S. Whitney, *Ten Questions to Diagnose Your Spiritual Health* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2001), 73.

⁴⁵ Tice and Laferton, *Honest Evangelism*, 45.

In other words, the sin of idolatry, often associated with the exaltation of self and the fear of man, is a barrier to witnessing.

Common Characteristics of Those Who Engage in Personal Evangelism

Having identified several barriers to engaging in personal evangelism, attention will now be giving to identifying common characteristics possessed by people who faithfully engage in personal evangelism. Specifically, this section will identify four spiritual characteristics: spiritual maturity, compassion for the lost, prayer, and confidence in God's sovereignty.

Those who faithfully engage in personal evangelism possess a certain degree of spiritual maturity and Christ-likeness. Specifically, such people display godly character, have an awareness of their identity and mission as followers of Christ, are self-disciplined, and live for the glory of God. Spiritual maturity is something of a vague concept, and is assessed differently by different people. However, one might argue that spiritual maturity is closely associated with personal holiness. In other words, for someone to be considered spiritually mature, that person will also possess a high degree of personal holiness. Holiness is not determined by a list of dos and don'ts, but by one's commitment to the things of God. Sinclair Ferguson states that holiness includes a "deeply personal, intense, loving devotion [to God]. . . . A belonging to him that is irreversible, unconditional, without any reserve on our part. Simply put, it means being entirely his, so that all we do and possess are His."⁴⁶ While no one will fully live up to this high standard of holiness, understanding spiritual maturity in terms of devotion to God is helpful. Devotion to God assumes Christ-like character as well as Christ-like activity.

⁴⁶ Sinclair Ferguson, *Devoted to God: Blueprints for Sanctification* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2016), 4.

As for character, Spurgeon suggests that holiness of character is a must for any man who would be a soul-winner: “God will not go to work with an instrument which would compromise His own character.”⁴⁷ In other words, blatant hypocrisy ruins one’s witness and undermines the power of the gospel. One area of holiness that Spurgeon emphasized is humility: “Humility is one of the chief qualifications for usefulness; many have passed away from the roll of useful men because they have been lifted up with pride.”⁴⁸ Those who are driven by pride and serve for their own glory are unlikely to remain faithful to engage in personal evangelism when facing the difficulty that inevitably comes with witnessing for Jesus. However, those who are committed to God’s glory, and not their own, are in a better position to endure such hardships. Spurgeon is not alone in associating humility with evangelistic faithfulness. Reid identifies humility, integrity, and purity as attributes of those who are faithful evangelists.⁴⁹ Finally, and perhaps obviously, Dever suggest that a desire to live obediently to God will characterize those who are faithful to engage in personal evangelism. Noting that evangelism is the command of the risen Lord Jesus, Dever suggests that to evangelize is to obey.⁵⁰

Christ-likeness includes more than just character qualities. A Christ-like person will also have similar passions and pursuits as Jesus. Of Jesus, Stephen Olford writes, “The consuming passion of His soul was to seek and to save that which was lost. In every sense

⁴⁷ C. H. Spurgeon, *The Soul Winner: Advice on Effective Evangelism* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2008), 30. In light of the importance of holiness of character, Spurgeon writes, “I do beg you to attach the highest importance to your own personal holiness.” *Ibid.*, 31.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁴⁹ Alvin Reid, *Introduction to Evangelism* (Nashville: B & H, 1998), 107-12. His list also includes passion, conviction, priorities and attitude. I address some of these later.

⁵⁰ Dever, *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism*, 96.

of the word, He was the successful Soul-Winner.”⁵¹ Any definition of spiritual maturity and Christ-likeness that excludes a commitment to what Jesus was committed to is deficient. Because of this, a spiritually mature person will both value and engage in personal evangelism. Spiritually mature people understand their identity and God-given mission as Christians. Faithful evangelists have embraced their identity as witnesses for Jesus and desire to obey God in this mission. Reid writes, “A reason we’ve not done so well at reaching America in recent years is we’ve lost personal ownership of the mission.”⁵² Too many professing Christians fail to realize that their identity in Christ is closely connected to their mission to evangelize. As stated, too many professing Christians find it easy to ignore Jesus’ clear instruction to go and make disciples (Matt 28:19), and to be His witnesses to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). In light of the NT teaching, Spurgeon declared, “Our main business, brethren, is to win souls.”⁵³ As noted in chapter 2, according to Paul, Christians have been commissioned as ambassadors for Christ (2 Cor 5:20). Tice reminds his readers that “evangelism is not just for extroverts, brainboxes, or full-timers,” but for all Christians.⁵⁴ Similarly, Thom Rainer suggests that Christians who understand their commissioning and give more than mere lip service to the doctrines of lostness and salvation through faith in Christ alone will be faithful personal evangelists.⁵⁵ Like the apostle Paul, faithful evangelists possess both a sense of duty and eagerness to share the good news (Rom 1:14-15).

⁵¹ Stephen Olford and David Olford, *The Secret of Soul Winning* (Nashville: B & H, 2007), 6-7.

⁵² Reid, *Sharing Jesus without Freaking Out*, 11.

⁵³ Spurgeon, *The Soul Winner*, 29.

⁵⁴ Tice and Laferton, *Honest Evangelism*, 81.

⁵⁵ Thom S. Rainer, *I Will: Nine Traits of the Outwardly Focused Christian* (Nashville: B & H, 2015), 59-69.

Understanding their God-given role, faithful evangelists are intentional about disciplining themselves to engage in personal evangelism. Beougher suggests, “We must discipline ourselves to learn how to share the gospel, discipline ourselves to spend time in prayer, discipline ourselves to spend time with non-Christians, and discipline ourselves to take advantage of opportunities to reach out with the love of Christ.”⁵⁶ Just as a lack of discipline serves as a barrier to engaging in personal evangelism, discipline in this area results in evangelistic engagement. It is important to recognize that simply being around non-Christians does not ensure the opportunity to witness. Therefore, an aspect of discipline associated with personal evangelism revolves around time management and planning. Christians who are faithful to engage in personal evangelism “plan to make time to build relationships or to put themselves in positions where “they will be able to talk to non-Christians.”⁵⁷

The final aspect of spiritual maturity to draw attention to focuses on the proper motivation for evangelism. A hallmark of Paul’s teaching on the Christian life is that God’s glory should be foremost in the believer’s minds (1 Cor 10:31). Christians who are faithful to engage in personal evangelism have connected the dots between living as faithful evangelists and seeking God’s glory. To this end, Puritan pastor Richard Baxter writes, “Ministerial work must be carried out purely for God and the salvation of souls, not for any private ends of our own.”⁵⁸ In other words, Baxter would have Christians serve for the glory of God and the good of others. Likewise, Packer identifies two motives for evangelism: “The first is love to God and concern for His glory; the second is love to

⁵⁶ Beougher, *Overcoming Walls to Witnessing*, 16.

⁵⁷ Dever, *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism*, 24.

⁵⁸ Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2005), 111.

man and concern for his welfare.”⁵⁹ Said differently, Christians who regularly engage in personal evangelism have both strong love for Jesus and compassion for others.⁶⁰ Tice concludes that evangelism is the result of recognizing Jesus’ worth, suggesting that evangelism is “about Jesus being treated in a way that recognizes his glory.”⁶¹ Tice accurately understands that the ultimate result of evangelism is not just the salvation of the sinner, but also the worship of God.

Having examined spiritual maturity as a characteristic possessed by faithful evangelists, attention will now be given to the importance of having compassion for the lost. In chapter 2 I emphasized Jesus’ compassion for the lost. Not only did Jesus see the needs of the people, He focused on meeting their needs, be they physical or spiritual. In Luke 15, Jesus tells three parables about lostness revealing His heart for the plight of the lost. In both the parable of the lost sheep and the lost coin, Jesus highlights the search and rescue operation for what has been lost. In both cases, attention is given to the joy that fills heaven when the lost are found when sinners repent (vv. 6-7, 9-10). In the Parable of the Prodigal Son, readers are led to see God’s heart for the lost through the compassionate and joyful response of the Prodigal’s father.

As one considers the realities of hell and the eternal fate of those who remain opposed to Jesus, it is hard to imagine that a genuine follower of Jesus Christ could remain apathetic, indifferent to the plight of the lost. Jesus describes hell as a place of eternal punishment in an eternal fire (Matt 25:21, 26). In Luke 13:28, Jesus says that in hell there will be “weeping and gnashing of teeth.” The NT pictures hell as a place of intense pain and agony apart from the presence of God. Beougher suggests that if a person properly

⁵⁹ Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 73.

⁶⁰ I address compassion for others next.

⁶¹ Tice and Laferton, *Honest Evangelism*, 26.

understands what it means to love one's neighbor as oneself, then evangelism will be near to one's heart: "If we truly believe in the reality of heaven and hell, we cannot say we truly love someone if we refuse to share the gospel with them."⁶² Donald Whitney suggests that to truly love others is not simply to focus on temporal and physical needs:

Increased growth in Christian maturity is revealed by a heartfelt compassion toward people, not a perfunctory, merely external response. There is no Christlikeness in throwing money at a physical need or in dutifully reading a few Bible verses to an unbeliever and apathetically sending him on his way to hell.⁶³

Like Paul, who felt great sorrow and grief in his heart toward his unbelieving kinsmen (Rom 9:2), all believers ought to be concerned for those apart from faith in Christ.

Furthermore, Spurgeon argues that one's love for the lost should be evident, and that without a "real desire for the good" of others, fruitfulness will be fleeting.⁶⁴

True concern for the lost ought to result in a sense of urgency on the part of the evangelist. The importance of the mission is heightened when one recognizes that time is short (Jas 4:14). No individual is promised tomorrow. According to the author of Hebrews, ultimate judgment follows death, so each person is responsible now to repent and believe the gospel (Heb 9:27). In light of the shortness of time, Baxter claims that laboring for the conversion of the unconverted is of primary importance:

It is so sad a case to see men in a state of damnation, wherein, if they should die, they are lost forever, that methinks we should not be able to let them alone, either in public or private, whatever other work we have to do. . . . Who is able to talk of controversies, or of nice unnecessary points, or even of truths of a lower degree of necessity, how excellent soever, while he seeth a company of ignorant, carnal, miserable sinners before his eyes, who must be changed or damned?⁶⁵

⁶² Beougher, *Overcoming Walls to Witnessing*, 31.

⁶³ Whitney, *Ten Questions*, 73.

⁶⁴ Spurgeon, *The Soul Winner*, 55-56.

⁶⁵ Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor*, 95.

Genuine compassion, along with a profound sense of urgency, characterizes those who faithfully engage in personal evangelism. Spurgeon says,

We win hearts for Jesus by love, by sympathy with their sorrow, by anxiety lest they should perish, by pleading with God for them with all our hearts that they should not be left to die unsaved, by pleading with them for God that, for their own sake, they would seek mercy and find grace. Yes, sirs, there is a spiritual wooing and winning of hearts for the Lord Jesus; and if you would learn the way, you must ask God to give you a tender and sympathizing soul. I believe that much of the secret of soul-winning lies in having bowels of compassion, in having spirits that can be touched with the feeling of human infirmities.⁶⁶

Understanding the horrors of hell, the shortness of time, and a desire to be like Christ in His concern for the lost and hurting make for evangelistic fervency supported by prayer.

The third characteristic of a faithful evangelist is a commitment to praying for evangelistic efforts. Throughout the NT, various recorded prayers, as well as different requests for prayer, emphasize the importance of prayer when it comes to evangelism and salvation.⁶⁷ In Romans 10:1, Paul, the great evangelist and church planter, states that his heart's desire and prayer is that his unbelieving countrymen may be saved. He prays for his fellow Jews who are still seeking righteousness according to the Law and thus remain in this sin. He prays because he understands that unless God opens their eyes to the reality of who Jesus is, they will remain in their sin.

Prayer is necessary because of the fallen condition of man. Those who are dead in their sin have no spiritual life and in their own power are unable to respond to spiritual stimuli. Paul says, "The natural person does not accept the things of the spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor 2:14). Apart from the work of the Holy Spirit, no sinner will embrace

⁶⁶ Spurgeon, *The Soul Winner*, 188-89.

⁶⁷ For example, see Matt 9:35-38; Acts 4:23-31; Eph 6:18-20; Col 4:3-4; and 2 Thess 3:1. Among other things, Scripture encourages prayer for harvest workers as the fields are ripe for harvest, for evangelistic boldness, wisdom, and opportunity, and that the Word of the Lord would speed ahead and be honored.

the gospel. Thus, it is imperative that evangelism is accompanied by prayer. If God will not work, then there will be no gospel fruitfulness. Joel Beeke points to the fruitfulness of the Puritans, suggesting that they

saturated all their evangelistic efforts in prayer . . . [and that] they were great preachers only because they were also great petitioners who wrestled with God for divine blessing . . . knowing that if they ceased to watch and pray constantly they would be courting spiritual disaster.⁶⁸

While spiritual disaster may take many forms, a fruitless ministry due to lack of prayer is certainly one of them. To this point, Spurgeon writes, “If you do not pray over what you have sown, God’s sovereignty may possibly determine to give a blessing, but you have no right to expect it, and if it comes it will bring no comfort to your own heart.”⁶⁹ Prayer is important because ultimately salvation is the work of God through the power of the Holy Spirit. In their own power, Christians are unable to bring about salvation.⁷⁰ Reid notes, “Our ability to talk about Jesus matters, but it has far less importance than our dependence on the gospel’s power and the greatest evangelist, the Holy Spirit. Nothing activates these like believing prayer.”⁷¹

Not only are sinners apart from faith in Christ spiritually dead, they are also enslaved, blinded, and deceived by “the god of this world” (Eph 2:1-3; 2 Cor 4:3-4).

Charles Bridges rightly identifies the spiritual battle involved with evangelism:

Indeed an entrance upon the great work without the spirit of prayer, would be to “go a” most fearful “warfare at our own charges.” . . . We could scarcely expect, that

⁶⁸ Joel R. Beeke, *Puritan Evangelism: A Biblical Approach* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2007), 75-76.

⁶⁹ C. H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1954), 47.

⁷⁰ Saving faith depends on the power of God and not the wisdom of man (1 Cor 2:1-5).

⁷¹ Reid, *Sharing Jesus without Freaking Out*, 63.

“the devouring lion” would quietly submit to have his prey wrested from his teeth; or that “the strong man armed” would resign his spoils without a severe conflict.⁷²

In other words, the nature of the battle necessitates divine power appropriated through prayer (2 Cor 10:3-6). Spurgeon writes, “The soul-winner must be a master of the art of prayer. You cannot bring souls to God if you go not to God yourself. You must get your battle-axe, and your weapons of war, from the armoury of sacred communion with Christ.”⁷³ Faithful evangelists recognize their impotence in such spiritual matters and have learned to call upon the Lord in all matters related to evangelism. Finally, Brian Borgman and Rob Ventura point to the necessity of prayer in preaching and gospel proclamation in light of spiritual warfare. They suggest that one must ask God for the unction and anointing of the Holy Spirit because fruitful gospel proclamation and preaching “depends on the power of the Spirit to make the sword of the Spirit effective in delivering sinners from the dominion of darkness.”⁷⁴ Hence, Christians must not underestimate the importance of prayer as it relates to evangelistic efforts.

Not only do faithful evangelists possess spiritual maturity and compassion for the lost, they prioritize prayer and are confident in God’s sovereignty and goodness. Previously, it was noted that even the apostle Paul struggled with fear and uncertainty at times (Acts 18:9-10). Jesus encourages Paul to continue speaking, assuring him that He has many people in this city (v. 10). In other words, Jesus is telling Paul that he can be confident that his ministry will be fruitful because God had elected people in Corinth to faith, appointing them to eternal life (Acts 13:48). The doctrine of election is contained

⁷² Charles Bridges, *The Christian Ministry: An Inquiry into the Causes of Its Inefficiency* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1997), 62, 84.

⁷³ Spurgeon, *The Soul Winner*, 195.

⁷⁴ Brian Borgman and Rob Ventura, *Spiritual Warfare: A Biblical and Balanced Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2014), 98. The authors note, “The way the Bible tells us to have the unction of the Spirit is to ask for it” (Luke 11:13).

throughout the pages of the NT.⁷⁵ In fact, if it was not for God's supernatural intervention in regeneration, causing one to be born again (John 3:3; 1 Pet 1:3), then sinners would be without hope, condemned before God. Paul understood God's electing love and grace well, writing about it extensively (Eph 1:3-14). Dever contends that a proper understanding of the doctrine of God's sovereignty will lead to a greater joy and confidence in personal evangelism.⁷⁶

Faithful evangelists are encouraged and motivated by God's sovereignty because the fact that God is sovereign allows for fruitful evangelism. As noted, in his fallen condition, man has no ability or will to respond to the gospel. Packer summarizes the plight of evangelism apart from God's intervention: "There are two obstacles in the way of successful evangelism: man's natural and irresistible impulse to oppose God, and . . . Satan's assiduity in shepherding man in the ways of unbelief and disobedience."⁷⁷ Apart from God's sovereignty and goodness, these obstacles would remain insurmountable. However, in the face of God's omnipotent grace, these obstacles crumble. Packer declares that a proper understanding of God's sovereignty will lead Christians to be bold witnesses, patient evangelists, and prayer warriors.⁷⁸

Conclusion

While the call to evangelize is given to every Christian, not all Christians carry out their responsibility faithfully. Fear, ignorance, lack of discipline, incorrect theological beliefs, and sinful rebellion are obstacles that must be overcome. While such barriers can be addressed, engaging in personal evangelism is never completely without risk—the NT

⁷⁵ See Matt 24:22, Luke 18:7, Rom 8:33, Eph 1:4, Col 3:12, 2 Thess 2:13-14, 1 Tim 5:21, 2 Tim 2:10, 1 Pet 1:1, 2 Pet 1:10.

⁷⁶ Dever, *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism*, 105.

⁷⁷ Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 108.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 118-22.

makes this clear. Faithful evangelists have addressed these obstacles and possess spiritual maturity and compassion for the lost. Furthermore, they are faithful to pray over their evangelistic efforts and are motivated and encouraged by a proper understanding of God's sovereignty.

CHAPTER 4

MINISTRY PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

After addressing the biblical and theological basis for engaging in personal evangelism, this project gave attention to identifying common barriers to engaging in personal evangelism and identifying common characteristics of those who are faithful to engage in personal evangelism. The purpose of this chapter is to summarize the implementation of the ministry project designed to equip members of Trinity Baptist Church to engage in personal evangelism. This chapter focuses on curriculum, class formation, survey dissemination, and a related preaching series.

Curriculum

Having spent a great deal of time contemplating the topic of evangelism, I had little difficulty determining the necessary elements to develop an evangelism training curriculum. Several aspects from both chapters 2 and 3 of this paper were included in the curriculum to make it a well-rounded and comprehensive training piece. Working titles and outlines for each session in the six-week curriculum were developed in December 2017. In December I also came up with the title for the curriculum: “Proclaiming Christ: A Primer on Personal Evangelism.”¹ Once the working titles and outlines for each of the sessions were completed, I began writing each session in January 2018.

Session 1, titled “Who Does God Expect to Engage in Personal Evangelism,” reinforces the truth that God expects all Christians to engage in personal evangelism.

¹ Appendix 2 contains the curriculum. The title of the curriculum is consistent with Trinity Baptist Church’s mission statement: “Trinity Baptist Church exists to proclaim Christ and make disciples of those who claim Christ, all of the glory of Christ.”

The guiding principle for the session is that faithful evangelists recognize that glorifying God includes submitting to him in all areas of life, including personal evangelism.

Session 2, titled “Evangelistic Motivation,” helps believers understand the importance of love, compassion, and heavenly rewards when it comes to personal evangelism. The overarching principle for this session is that faithful evangelists have proper motivations when it comes to personal evangelism.

Session 3, titled “Overcoming Barriers,” assists believers in overcoming common barriers to engaging in personal evangelism. The principle that guides this session states that faithful evangelists must address fear and a lack of discipline when it comes to personal evangelism.

Session 4, titled “Know the Gospel,” is designed to equip believers with a knowledge of the gospel message and is driven by the principle that faithful evangelists must understand the essential truths of the gospel.

Session 5, titled “Communicate the Gospel,” focuses on helping believers learn how to transition to gospel-centered conversations and effectively communicate the gospel message. The guiding principle of session 5 is that faithful evangelists are good listeners and can adequately transition everyday conversations to gospel-centered conversations.

Session 6, titled “Empowered Personal Evangelism,” emphasizes the necessity of prayer and dependence on the Holy Spirit when engaging in personal evangelism. The session’s principle is that faithful evangelists recognize the importance of walking with the Spirit and prayerful dependence on God as they seek to live as witnesses for Jesus.

In sessions 4 and 5, I utilized Southern Seminary’s “Experiencing God’s Grace” tract and the North American Mission Board’s “3 Circles: Life Conversation Guide” tract.²

² The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, “Experiencing God’s Grace” tract (Louisville: The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014); North American

As such, it was necessary to order several of these tracts to distribute to class participants. These resources were ordered in early January and arrived prior to the first class.

All sessions were written by January 21, 2018. At that point, I created learner guides for each session in the curriculum and sent the curriculum to an expert panel for review using the evaluation rubric.³ The expert panel consisted of two staff members at our church and two people outside our church, one of whom was my doctoral supervisor.

The first person on my expert panel was my doctoral supervisor who currently serves as a professor New Testament Interpretation at Southern Seminary and as Senior Pastor of a large Southern Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky. He asked to review the curriculum prior to my sending it to anyone else. For this I was grateful, as obtaining his approval of the curriculum gave me confidence as I proceeded.

The second person on my expert panel was a longtime spiritual mentor of mine. He graduated from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary with a Master of Arts in 1985. During his forty plus years of vocational ministry, he has served three churches in various roles including youth, education, missions, discipleship, and administration. He currently serves as the Local Disciple-Making Pastor at a large church in Gastonia, North Carolina, where he oversees the development of curriculum for their growth groups each week.

The third person who reviewed the curriculum graduated from Southern Seminary in 2015 with a Master of Divinity degree. He has served as Discipleship Pastor at Trinity Baptist Church since November 2013. As Discipleship Pastor, he oversees the Sunday School Ministry and Small Groups Ministry. As the minister who oversees the

Mission Board, “3 Circles: Life Conversation Guide” tract (Alpharetta, GA: North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 2014).

³ See appendix 3. Each member of the panel gave the curriculum at least sufficient marks when reviewing the material. See table 1.

Sunday morning Bible study time, his input was essential. Including him in the process made it easier to implement the curriculum to all the adult Bible study classes following the initial training class.⁴

The fourth person who served on the expert panel also serves on staff at Trinity Baptist Church as the Missions Associate. He is involved with the planning, implementing, and coordinating of the local, national, and international missional initiatives. Prior to serving in this capacity, he served thirty-seven years in public education. He earned a Bachelor of Arts in Mathematics from Wayland University, a Master of Education from Texas Tech University, and through additional graduate work attained a Texas Superintendent's Certificate from West Texas A & M University. Immediately prior to joining the ministry staff of Trinity Baptist Church, he served as the Personnel Director for Amarillo Incorporated School District.

The members of the expert panel gave the curriculum high marks and their insights proved helpful.⁵ Based on their input, I used additional Scripture, revised some illustrations, and made some necessary grammatical and spelling edits. After the necessary changes were completed, copies were made, and the curriculum was bound and made ready for distribution.

In the evaluation of the curriculum, one reviewer questioned the order of the sessions. Specifically, he wanted to know why I chose to wait until session 4 to discuss the gospel's content. While this is a valid question, my answer revolved around the fact that for members of Trinity Baptist Church, knowledge of the gospel is not the primary issue that keeps them from engaging in personal evangelism. Table 1 gives evidence of

⁴ All of Trinity Baptist Church's adult Bible study classes will have gone through the training curriculum by year end 2018.

⁵ Each individual on the panel gave at least a sufficient mark in each category on the rubric.

the class participants' perceived knowledge of the gospel as reflected in the pre-training survey.

Table 1. Pre-training survey participant responses concerning knowledge of the gospel

Survey Question (31 Responses)		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Q1	I understand the nature of the gospel.	0	0	1	3	15	12
Q2	I understand the gospel well enough to communicate it clearly to the lost.	0	0	2	11	15	3

Even though most of the participants claimed to know the gospel, and to know it well enough to communicate it to the lost, the majority do not regularly engage in personal evangelism. Table 2 summarizes participant responses on this topic.

Table 2. Pre-training survey participant responses concerning faithfulness to engage in personal evangelism

Survey Question (31 Responses)		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Q3	I regularly engage in personal evangelism	3	10	12	6	0	0

While the pre-training survey does indicate that a few class participants question whether the responsibility of evangelism belongs to them, the pre-training survey also suggests that what keeps most people from engaging in personal evangelism is not a question of whether they believe that God has called them to share the gospel. Most participants understand that God has commissioned them to proclaim Christ, as table 3 indicates.

Table 3. Pre-training survey participant responses concerning the responsibility of evangelism

Survey Question (31 Responses)		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Q6	Scripture places the responsibility for personal evangelism on me.	0	1	2	8	9	11
Q18	At times, I do not engage in personal evangelism because I am not sure that God wants me to.	13	10	4	1	3	0

The reason I sequenced the curriculum the way I did was to address early on what I suspected to be the most common barriers and hindrances to engaging in personal evangelism. By reinforcing the fact that the One who possesses all authority has clearly commissioned His followers to engage in personal evangelism in session 1, I was able to reference this key fact when grappling with the barriers. Table 4 gives insight into common barriers to engaging in personal evangelism.

Table 4. Pre-training survey participant responses concerning barrier to engaging in personal evangelism

Survey Question (31 Responses)		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Q4	I set aside time throughout my week to engage in personal evangelism.	8	14	6	3	0	0
Q10	The fear of rejection keeps me from engaging in personal evangelism.	1	2	5	10	8	5
Q17	At times, I do not engage in personal evangelism because I am afraid of being seen as weird.	2	5	4	11	6	3
Q29	I am afraid that people will ask questions that I do not know how to answer when engaging in personal evangelism.	0	3	4	10	11	3

Based on these responses, it is clear that a lack of discipline, the fear of man, and the fear of being unable to answer related questions are all barriers to engaging in personal evangelism. These barriers are addressed in session 3 of the curriculum.

Class Formation

On any given week, 325–350 adults attend an adult Sunday school class at Trinity Baptist Church. Based on this data, the goal was set to train 30–35 people with the evangelism curriculum (roughly 10 percent of the average adult Sunday school attendance). Desiring to be as strategic as possible in selecting participants, during one of the weekly staff meetings in January, I sought input from other staff members on possible candidates to participate in the evangelism training class. While the hope was to represent the age

demographics at Trinity Baptist Church in the makeup of the class, I determined not to include retired people.

After identifying several potential candidates to be involved with the equipping class, personal phone calls were made to potential class members during the last two weeks of January to secure participation. During these calls, the purpose of the class was explained, the requirements of the class were identified, and the duration of the class was discussed. It was also emphasized to every person that it was necessary to attend at least five of the six classes. In the end, all but one couple that I spoke with agreed to participate in the class (this couple knew they were going to be traveling and could not commit to attending five sessions). Additionally, one other couple at the church heard about the class through some of their friends and asked if they could participate.

In all, 35 people agreed to participate in the evangelism class. The breakdown of the class was as follows: 2 couples in their twenties; 5 couples in their thirties; 3 couples in their forties; 5 couples in their fifties; 1 couple in their sixties; an eighteen-year-old daughter of one of the couples; and a married couple consisting of a man in his early sixties and a woman in her late forties. The couple who declined participation were in their forties. The couple who requested to be part of the class were in their fifties.

Pre-Training Survey

In taking the class, participants agreed to complete both a pre-training survey and a post-training survey associated with their evangelistic beliefs and practices. While the survey was developed during a research methodology class, it was necessary to submit forms to an Ethics Committee at Southern Seminary prior to conducting the research and implementing the project. Notification that approval had been granted by the Ethics Committee was emailed to me on January 24, 2018.

During the time that the class was being formed, I created an online survey utilizing Google documents. Once the class was formed and I had received approval to

begin my research, on February 2, 2018, I sent an invitation link to each participant to complete the pre-training survey. Participants were encouraged to complete the survey individually as soon as possible and to remember their unique PIN. After the first week, only about half of the class had completed the survey. Considering this, an email reminder was sent encouraging people to complete the survey. On February 15, 2018, 29 people had completed the pre-training survey, which meant that not everyone would complete the pre-training survey before the start of the class (which began February 18, 2018). Another email reminder was sent out. Ultimately, it was not until after the completion of the second class (February 25) that everyone completed the pre-training survey.

Implementing the Evangelism Training Class

The six-week evangelism training class began on February 18, and ended on March 25. The primary reason this timeframe was chosen was because of the Easter holiday. My hope was to build evangelistic momentum moving toward Easter on April 1.

On February 1, after the class roster was finalized, an introductory letter was sent to each participant, reminding them of the purpose of the class and the requirements associated with being involved with the class. By this time, the classroom to be utilized had been determined, so this information was communicated as well.

Prior to the first week of the class, I decided to video the class meetings, thus enabling anyone who missed a session to view it on his or her own time. One of the participants in the class was also a technology volunteer, so he offered to make sure each session was recorded and then uploaded to a website from which participants could access the session they missed. Hence, each week on Monday or Tuesday, I emailed a link to the recording of the latest session so that those who were absent could watch it.

The class met from 9:45 a.m. to 10:45 a.m. each Sunday morning for six weeks. Six round tables seating up to eight people were spread throughout the classroom, making for a casual atmosphere. The round tables served to enhance group discussion opportunities

built into each session. While class participants were encouraged to sit at different tables throughout the six weeks, several remained at the same table week after week. While the church provided coffee for the class participants, class members volunteered to bring snacks each week.

On the first week of class, the curriculum notebooks (learner guides) were handed out. Writing utensils were provided each week. As class participants arrived, they felt the freedom to mingle and converse. Generally, after a brief time of fellowship, I began to address the class around 9:50 a.m. I often began the class by relaying any church-wide announcements, giving instructions for the morning, reminding people to complete their surveys, or passing out needed materials.

My goal was to begin teaching by 9:55 a.m. and finish teaching by 10:40 a.m. each week.⁶ I utilized a white board to emphasize teaching points and to capture class ideas and input. Most sessions allowed for opportunities for class participants to interact with each other by reading and discussing Scripture and brainstorming answers to questions that I posed throughout the class. Each session ended with ten to fifteen minutes of group time at the tables.

The end of group time for session 1 focused on prayer. Class participants were encouraged to confess their struggles to be faithful to Christ's calling on their lives to be His witnesses and to ask God to increase their passion for personal evangelism.

As part of session 2, I asked class members to jot down the names of three to five people that they knew to be apart from faith in Jesus Christ. In the closing group time, I encouraged them to share the names of the individuals they listed and to pray for them. The group members also prayed that God would motivate them to engage these people with the gospel.

⁶ Sessions 4 and 5 ended earlier to give the class participants opportunity to rehearse the gospel message and practice evangelistic conversations.

Session 3 was devoted to identifying and overcoming barriers that keep believers from engaging in personal evangelism. In the closing group time, participants were encouraged to discuss the barriers that seem most prevalent in their lives and note some action steps for overcoming those barriers. I also encouraged them to consider the three to five names that they listed in the last session and to brainstorm ways they could connect with and invest in these people for the sake of the gospel.

Session 4 focused on knowing the content of the gospel message. As stated, I utilized Southern Seminary's *Experiencing God's Grace* tract to give class members a comprehensive understanding of the gospel. The closing group time focused on two things. First, class participants were encouraged to review the GRACE outline contained in the tract. At most of the tables, couples vocalized what each letter stood for and shared the pertinent information. Second, they were encouraged to continue praying for the people that they had identified as unbelievers in session 2. Finally, as the class ended, I encouraged people to download the "3 Circles: Life Conversation Guide" app in preparation for the next session.

While I chose not to make engaging in and reporting on personal evangelism encounters a specific aspect of the class, I did provide opportunities for role-playing and practicing evangelistic conversations. As class members were given time to rehearse the content of the gospel in the previous session, the closing group time of session 5 allowed class participants the opportunity to practice using the "3 Circles" tool. Class members were also encouraged to pray specifically that God would provide an opportunity to utilize this tool with one of the people that they had identified and prayed for in previous sessions.

The closing group time for the final session allowed for questions and comments. While I had not planned for this, a few people shared experiences of utilizing the tool and engaging people in evangelism. I used the closing minutes of the class to thank them for their participation and to give final instructions concerning the post-training survey.

Based on several comments from the post-training survey, the group times were much appreciated. Many people found encouragement in learning they were not alone in their struggle with personal evangelism. Several commented on how creating a list of names to pray for in anticipation of engaging them with the gospel was helpful. Numerous class participants suggested that the tools I introduced them to (the tracts and the device app) were incredibly helpful.

Post-Training Survey

At the conclusion of the final class on March 25, 2018, class members were informed that they would receive an email with a link to retake the survey. Participants were given clear instructions to use the same PIN and to complete every section on the post-training survey, including the short answer questions. On March 28, 2018, each participant was sent an email with the link to retake the survey. Reminders to complete the post-training survey were sent via email and text message on April 2, 2018, and April 9, 2018.

Processing Surveys

About one month after the class finished, I began to process the completed surveys. During this time, I realized that some of the surveys were unusable for various reasons. A few people failed to complete either the pre-training survey or the post-training survey. One person completed the post-training survey twice but failed to complete the pre-training survey. Another PIN had three surveys associated with it instead of two.⁷ On May 1, 2018, a final list of 31 out of a possible 35 usable surveys was identified.

⁷ Instructions for taking the survey were disseminated both verbally and in written form. Because the surveys were anonymous, it was difficult to follow up with individuals to encourage them to complete the surveys. I did learn that one person used the same PIN as his wife. Several people forgot their PIN and asked me to provide a list of the PINs. Two people claimed that though they had taken the pre-training survey, none of the PINs belonged to them.

Proclaiming Christ Preaching Series

In conjunction with the evangelism training class, though not officially part of this doctoral project, I preached a sermon series dealing with different aspects of evangelism. The preaching series, which I titled “Proclaiming Christ,” began on February 11, 2018, and concluded on March 25, 2018. This series developed out of Trinity Baptist Church’s 2018 vision to be a church that “proclaims Christ and makes disciples who are actively investing and inviting people to Trinity Baptist Church for the sake of the gospel.” As with the evangelism class, the timing of the preaching series was driven by the Easter holiday. The goal was to encourage members to engage in personal evangelism and to be intentional about inviting people to Trinity Baptist Church, especially leading up to Easter Sunday. Through the sermon series, truths contained in the evangelism training curriculum were reinforced, often during the same week the curriculum was being taught.

During the first week of the “Proclaiming Christ” series (February 11), I preached on the Great Commission from Matthew 28:16-20. The sermon was divided into three main headings: “The Authority of the Great Commission,” “The Power of the Great Commission,” and “The Process of the Great Commission.” Special attention was given to one’s responsibility to submit to Jesus’ authority in all things. This sermon helped set the stage for the first session in the evangelism training curriculum, which focused on one’s servant identity in Christ and the responsibility to submit to Jesus’ authority.

The second sermon in the series was titled “Keys to Faithfully Sharing the Gospel.” From Acts 2:14-21, I noted the way in which Peter connected the gospel to current events, focused on Jesus’ life, death, resurrection, and exaltation, and identified the proper response to the work of Jesus. This message connected to the curriculum by addressing the content of the gospel and clarifying the proper response to Jesus’ authority.

The third sermon in the series was developed from Acts 3-4. With the title “Sharing the Gospel in the Face of Opposition,” I declared that Christians should expect opposition to the gospel, must be bold in the face of such opposition, and are called to

obey God no matter the consequences. Along with identifying some common areas of opposition in the context, this sermon reinforced Jesus' authority and highlighted the need for evangelistic efforts to be bathed in prayer. This third sermon in the preaching series was preached during the second week of the evangelism training curriculum (which focused on proper motivations for evangelism). A connection point was made concerning the fear of God and evangelistic faithfulness.

During the fourth week of the sermon series, I preached a message entitled "The Providential Care of the Sovereign God" from Acts 5:12-42. Through this text, I connected God's providence in the ministry of mercy, the defeat of His enemies, and the building of His kingdom. As it pertains to evangelism, I dealt with the common question concerning the problem of evil, the place of social ministries, the need for compassion, and how God's sovereignty and providential care ought to encourage evangelistic efforts. A clear connection between this sermon and the third session of the evangelism curriculum revolved around overcoming the barrier that the fear of man presents to engaging in personal evangelism.

The next sermon in the series, "Ready and Willing," was developed from Acts 8:26-40. From the text, I noted the need to be sensitive to God's prompting, ready to answer questions, and watch and pray for the Holy Spirit to work. While I mentioned the concept of "divine appointments," rather than encouraging people to be looking for them, I charged the people to "walk with the Spirit" (as Philip did) and make the most of the opportunities they encountered. As session 4 in the evangelism training curriculum focused on knowing the gospel message, the connection with the sermon revolved around explaining Jesus from Scripture (as Philip did).

The sixth sermon in the series examined the transformative power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. In studying Saul's conversion in Acts 9:1-19, I focused on how the gospel both confronts sinners and changes sinners. I emphasized that God does not save individuals to sit back and do nothing. Instead, he has called, commissioned, and

empowered believers to engage others with the gospel and make disciples. On the day that I preached this sermon, session 5 of the evangelism curriculum was taught. This session concentrated on communicating the gospel using the “3 Circles: Life Conversation Guide” tract. The tract emphasizes how Christ restores sinners to God’s design and provides an answer for the brokenness that sinners experience.

The final sermon was entitled “Behind the Curtain of Evangelism and Missions.” From Acts 13:1-12, I noted that faithful evangelists are committed to worshipping the Lord, concerned with personal obedience, confident in God’s Word, and compassionate for the lost. The clear connection with the last session of the evangelism curriculum, which I titled “Empowered Personal Evangelism,” had to do with the presence and ministry of the Holy Spirit. Just as Paul and Barnabas were obedient to God’s calling on their lives to go on the missionary journey, Christians must realize the importance of obedience to God and personal character when seeking to engage others in evangelism. Additionally, I emphasized the necessity of walking with the Holy Spirit and prayerful dependence on God in order to live faithfully as a witness for Jesus.

Conclusion

While evangelism is to be a priority of every believer, too often it is a neglected spiritual discipline. While there are any number of reasons for such neglect, none are acceptable to God. Further, pastors are responsible to equip the saints for the work of ministry (Eph 4:12). This project served as a tool to equip TBC members for the work of personal evangelism. To the extent that this project was successful, God will be glorified as His people faithfully proclaim Christ. Additionally, Lord willing, many people will place their faith in Jesus and God’s kingdom will expand.

CHAPTER 5

MINISTRY PROJECT EVALUATION

The final chapter of this work serves as my evaluation of this ministry project. This chapter includes an evaluation of the project's purpose, goals, strengths, and weaknesses. Attention is given to how the project might be modified for maximum effectiveness. Finally, this chapter includes my theological and personal reflections on both the project specifically and on the difficult topic of evangelistic faithfulness.

Evaluation of the Project Purpose

As stated in the opening chapter of this work, the purpose of this project was to equip members of Trinity Baptist Church in Amarillo, Texas, for personal evangelism. This goal is consistent with the New Testament mandate to carry out the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20) and to live as Jesus' witnesses (Acts 1:8). While the Great Commission is more comprehensive than evangelizing the lost, it certainly includes evangelism.

In addition to being consistent with Scripture, this goal supports the mission of Trinity Baptist Church—to proclaim Christ and make disciples of those who claim Christ, all for the glory of Christ. This statement is derived from Paul's letter to the church at Colossae. Paul writes, "Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone complete in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me" (Col 1:28-29). While evangelism is not the totality of what Paul means when he states that they proclaim Christ, personal evangelism was undeniably a component of their proclamation. Paul's declaration that he toils according to the Spirit's power means that proclaiming Christ through personal evangelism is a reasonable aspiration for all Christians.

In light of the mandate from Scripture and the example of Paul's ministry, the goal of equipping church members for personal evangelism is valid. Furthermore, broadly understood, such equipping needs to address not only the content of the gospel, but also the barriers that must be overcome in order to faithfully engage in personal evangelism, both of which were addressed in the evangelism curriculum.

Evaluation of the Project Goals

In keeping with the purpose of the project, the goals upon which the project was built were both relevant and helpful. To accomplish its stated purpose, this project focused on executing three related goals: (1) assess the current practices of and hindrances to engaging in personal evangelism among select members of TBC; (2) develop an evangelism training curriculum to equip select members to engage in personal evangelism; (3) increase confidence and knowledge concerning personal evangelism among select members at TBC through a six-week training curriculum.

Goal 1

To assess the current practices of and hindrances to engaging in personal evangelism among select member of TBC, a Pre-Project Personal Evangelism Survey was administered electronically to the 35 class participants.¹ Objectives under this goal were to identify practices that lead to evangelistic faithfulness and to identify the most common hindrances to engaging in personal evangelism. While I attempted to give clear verbal and written instruction concerning how to complete the survey, in the end, I was only able to use survey responses from 31 participants.

As I reviewed the pre-training surveys, I hoped to find a correlation between practices such as fasting for the salvation of the lost, keeping a list of lost people to pray

¹ See appendix 1.

for, and intentionally setting aside time each week to engage in personal evangelism with statement three: “I regularly engage in personal evangelism.”² However, there does not appear to be a correlation. First, 25 out of 31 people disagreed with statement 3 in the pre-training survey. Of the 6 people who indicated that they somewhat agreed with the statement, their answers to the other questions were unpredictable. Those who did indicate that they set aside time for evangelism, kept a list of lost people to pray for, or had people in their lives who held them accountable to engage in personal evangelism did not necessarily indicate agreement with statement 3.

On the other hand, the pre-training survey was helpful in identifying the hindrances to engaging in personal evangelism. As noted in chapter four, it is not a lack of knowledge of the gospel hinders evangelism at TBC. For the most part, participants indicated that the lack of discipline, fear of man, and fear of being unable to answer questions were prevalent obstacles.

Goal 2

The second goal concerned the development of a six-week curriculum designed to equip select members of TBC to engage in personal evangelism. This goal was considered successful when a panel of four experts reviewed the material and scored it at the sufficient level according to the categories on a rubric.³ For the most part, the reviewers gave the curriculum high marks. While few changes were made based on their review, I

² Specifically, I was looking for a correlation between the following statements and regularly engaging in personal evangelism: I set aside time throughout my week to engage in personal evangelism; I regularly contemplate the horrors of hell and the fate of the lost; I pray for opportunity to witness to unbelievers; I have a list of lost people that I know and pray for their salvation regularly; I have people in my life who hold me accountable to engage in personal evangelism; I practice fasting for the salvation of the lost.

³See appendix 3.

was encouraged to add more Scripture, modify a few illustrations, and make some necessary grammatical adjustments.

Utilizing the research in chapters 2 and 3, the curriculum began by addressing Jesus' authority and the responsibility of all Christians to engage in personal evangelism. Additionally, the curriculum dealt with barriers to engaging in personal evangelism and identified motivations to engage in evangelism. Sessions 4 and 5 focused on the content of the gospel and the communication of the gospel. The last session touched on the concept of lifestyle evangelism, the necessity of prayer, the sovereignty of God, and the power of the Holy Spirit.

The curriculum provided time for small group discussion and opportunities to practice evangelistic conversations. Furthermore, within their small groups, class members were encouraged to identify the people for whom they were praying and planning on sharing the gospel.

In the Post-Project Personal Evangelism Survey, participants were asked to complete four short-answer questions. The first short answer question asked participants to explain how the evangelism training was helpful in equipping them to engage in personal evangelism. Two responses stood out as being most common. First, many participants said that the introduction to the two tracts (*Experiencing God's Grace* and *3 Circles: Life Conversation Guide*) was beneficial as it provided a clear outline to remember and communicate the gospel message.⁴ Along these same lines, several commented on how they felt more comfortable being able to transition everyday conversations to gospel conversations. Another common response to the first short answer question focused on the responsibility to evangelize. Many respondents suggested that

⁴ The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, "Experiencing God's Grace" tract (Louisville: The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014); North American Mission Board, "3 Circles: Life Conversation Guide" tract (Alpharetta, GA: North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 2014).

they were reminded of the importance of engaging in personal evangelism, even connecting it to faithful Christian living.

The second short answer question in the post-training survey asked participants to explain how the evangelism training class was helpful in motivating them to engage in personal evangelism. While several responses focused on the topic of personal responsibility, others mentioned the place of compassion for the lost and the fact that believers have been called, empowered, and commissioned for this very task.

The third short answer question in the post-training survey asked class members to identify specific aspects of the evangelism training class that stood out as especially helpful or unhelpful. While several people suggested that all the sessions were beneficial, the most common responses concerned the evangelism tracts and the downloadable 3 *Circles* app. Another common response focused on the small group times built in throughout each session and the opportunity to rehearse gospel conversations with each other.

The final post-training survey question asked participants if they intend to make any changes concerning their participation in person evangelism as a result of the evangelism training class. To begin, all respondents indicated that they do plan to make changes. Some of them said that they plan to pray more diligently for both the salvation of the lost and for opportunities to proclaim Christ. Others said they will make personal evangelism more of a priority in their lives. A few indicated that the class has already motivated them to be more faithful, even serving to prepare them for specific opportunities that arose during the six-week class.

Goal 3

The project's third goal was to increase confidence and knowledge concerning personal evangelism among select members of TBC through a six-week curriculum. The measure for this goal included a post-training survey, and the goal was considered

successfully met when the *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-training survey scores.

As stated, I was only able to use the matching surveys of 31 class participants because some individuals failed to complete both the pre- and post-training survey. To run the statistical analysis, I inverted the responses to several questions based on the way the question was asked in the survey.⁵ After running the data analysis, I determined that the evangelism training class did help to increase knowledge and confidence concerning personal evangelism among select members of TBC (see table 5). Since the absolute value of the *t* stat (-7.637333275) is larger than the *t* critical two tail value (2.042272456), then it can be stated that the teaching intervention (the evangelism training class) made a difference and since the *p* value (0.0000000161589) is less than *p*=.05, I can say that the difference was not by chance.

Table 5. T-test: Paired two sample for means

	Pre-Test total	Post-Test total
Mean	155.3548387	168.2903
Variance	258.9032258	223.9462
Observations	31	31
Pearson Correlation	0.817970978	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Df	30	
<i>t</i> Stat	-7.637333275	
P(T<=t) one-tail	8.07949E-09	
<i>t</i> Critical one-tail	1.697260887	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.000000016159	
<i>t</i> Critical two-tail	2.042272456	

⁵ Whenever a survey question was asked in such a way that the desired response would have fallen on the negative side of the Likert scale (numbers 1, 2, or 3), I inverted the response in the Excel spreadsheet. If the participant marked a 6, I changed it to a 1. If the participant marked a 5, I changed it to a 2. If the participant marked a 4, I changed it to a 3. If the participant marked a 3, I changed it to a 4. If the participant marked a 2, I changed it to a 5. If the participant marked a 1, I changed it to a 6. The questions to which the answers were inverted were survey questions numbers 12, 15-18, and 20-28.

Strengths of the Project

Perhaps the greatest strength of the project was that it addressed an area of Christian spirituality that is often neglected by professing Christians—personal evangelism. Faithful followers of Jesus have been called, empowered, and commissioned to serve as witnesses of Jesus Christ. However, as evidenced in the survey, most Christians do not regularly engage in proclaiming Christ. The pastor’s role is to equip the saints for the work of ministry (Eph 4:12), of which evangelism is essential. Whether or not an individual applies the training in a way that leads to greater faithfulness in the area of personal evangelism, I am confident that class members were trained for this task, as 31 participants indicated that they disagreed with the following statement: “I feel unequipped to engage in personal evangelism because I have never been taught how to share my faith with an unbeliever.”⁶ According to survey results, the class was also helpful in creating individual curiosity about the spiritual condition of others, in helping people to think about and desire to engage others in personal evangelism more often.⁷

A second strength of the project was the analysis of the survey data. While a minister may have certain assumptions concerning both the spiritual practices of church members as well as growth areas for church members, to see raw data from an anonymous survey can be eye-opening. Such information will be helpful for future planning in discipleship classes, sermon series, and church-wide Sunday school emphases. I have already begun conversations with TBC’s ministry staff to implement the evangelism curriculum utilized in this project on a church-wide level. Beyond that, according to the survey, the fear of man is a common obstacle that must be overcome in order to become a more faithful evangelist.⁸ Due to the fact that Christians fear rejection, ostracization, and

⁶ See appendix 4, question 28.

⁷ See appendix 4, questions 14, 22, and 40.

⁸ See appendix 4, questions 10 and 17.

simply looking weird with evangelism, perhaps a class on Christian identity and security would be appropriate. Related to this, a significant number of participants indicated that they are afraid that people will ask them questions that they do not know how to answer in an evangelistic encounter.⁹ While the evangelism training curriculum was not designed to address specific questions that may be asked during an evangelistic conversation, it would be wise to offer classes that specifically deal with some of the more difficult questions that non-believers may pose.¹⁰ Additionally, based on some of the responses, classes that give overviews of other religions and cultures would be helpful for members of TBC.¹¹

Weaknesses of the Project

Having noted some strengths of the project, it is now time to identify some weaknesses. To begin, the subject of evangelism can be difficult to teach and difficult to receive teaching on. Because many Christians do not regularly engage in evangelism—which they know they ought to do—a sense of guilt can become overwhelming. Question 19 in the survey stated, “Sometimes I feel guilty for not engaging in personal evangelism.” In both the pre- and post-training surveys only 1 person indicated disagreement with this statement.¹² However, following the evangelism training class, a greater number of people indicated that they strongly agreed with this statement. While the class was successful in helping to equip people to engage in personal evangelism, perhaps an unintended consequence of this class was that it left some people struggling with a sense of guilt over

⁹ See appendix 4, question 29.

¹⁰ These questions may revolve around science, morality, evil, freedom, etc.

¹¹ See appendix 4, questions 13, 23, and 25.

¹² See appendix 4, question 19.

their lack of faithfulness when it comes to evangelism. I address this further in the next section of this chapter.

Another weakness pertains to the curriculum itself. While it received high marks from the expert panel who reviewed it, I wish I could have spent more time on the role of the Holy Spirit and the importance of prayer. Survey questions 30 and 31 concern prayer for evangelistic efforts and prayer for the lost.¹³ While the movement in the post-training survey was positive for both questions, I would have liked to see a greater number of class members indicate stronger agreement. One potential for addressing this weakness would be to add another session to the curriculum addressing these concerns more fully.¹⁴

A third weakness of the project revolved around the survey itself.¹⁵ In terms of content, a few of the questions may have been difficult for participants to decipher. For instance, question 21 stated, “I do not engage in personal evangelism because I am introverted.”¹⁶ Participants may have had difficulty answering the question depending on whether they focused on the whether they engage in personal evangelism or whether they are introverted. Since the surveys were taken anonymously, there is no way to know for certain if people struggled with understanding the questions.¹⁷ On a related note, the fact that these surveys were disseminated electronically and taken anonymously made it

¹³ See appendix 4.

¹⁴ As easy as this sounds, six weeks seems like an appropriate length for an evangelism curriculum. Adding length to the curriculum may have other unintended consequences.

¹⁵ I address surveys again in the next section of this chapter. The post-training survey was identical to the pre-training survey with the addition of four short-answer questions.

¹⁶ See appendix 4.

¹⁷ Questions 27 and 28 may also have been confusing as they are borderline compound questions. In question 27, instead of wording the question: “I feel unequipped to engage in personal evangelism because I have not see it modeled,” I should have worded the question: “I have not seen personal evangelism modeled.” Question 28 should have read, “I have never been taught how to share my faith with an unbeliever.”

difficult to know who still needed to complete surveys. While I regularly reminded class members to complete both the pre- and post-training survey and to use unique four-digit personal identification numbers, I was still only able to use 31 of a possible 35 pairs of completed surveys.

What I Would Do Differently

Considering the weaknesses, I would do a few things differently if I were to implement this curriculum again. First, as it pertains to the topic of guilt, I would be more careful about balancing faithful living with God's grace. While I want people to understand their responsibility to engage in personal evangelism as servants of Jesus, my goal was certainly not to burden anyone with unnecessary guilt.¹⁸ While Holy Spirit wrought conviction is desirable, guilt is not a healthy, long-term motivator for change (nor is excessive guilt healthy for that matter). Therefore, it would have been helpful to regularly remind participants that one's ability to live as a faithful personal evangelist comes from God, not from oneself. Beyond that, it would be beneficial to focus more on the joy that comes from living in obedience to God and participating in this all-important endeavor.

As for the survey dissemination, its anonymity, and the unknowns concerning whether class members fully understood what I was asking in each question, I have a few thoughts. First, even in light of the weaknesses associated with an anonymous survey, this approach allowed the respondents the safety to answer honestly. While I experienced some frustration as to the slow pace that the surveys were completed, doing it electronically

¹⁸ About a month after the evangelism training class for finished, a man who had taken the class approached me after a worship service. He told me he was feeling overwhelmed with life, was confused, and perhaps even a bit depressed. While we were talking, he speculated on several different things that could be causing him the angst he was experiencing. One of the things he mentioned was that he had not applied what he had learned from the class to his daily life. In other words, he was not sharing the gospel with the frequency that he would like to. While there could be several reasons why this man was experiencing these issues, I assured him that God is gracious and that if he truly did want to grow in the area of evangelism, to make it a matter of prayer.

saved time in the long run. That said, if I were to do this again, I would likely incentivize individuals to complete their surveys in a both a timely manner and according to the clear instructions that were given.

As it pertains to the survey questions themselves, if I were to redo this project, I would secure help in writing survey questions that were pertinent and precise. While my survey tool was sufficient, I am not convinced that each question was worded most effectively, that I needed to ask all the questions that I did, or that I did not leave out a few questions that I should have asked. For instance, as I noted, question 19 states, “Sometimes I feel guilty for not engaging in personal evangelism.” Considering my previous comments on guilt, this statement should have focused on conviction rather than guilt: “At times I sense the Holy Spirit’s conviction because I am not faithful in personal evangelism.”

Second, I am not sure if all of questions were overly helpful. Question 12 states, “Most of the people I spend time with are Christians.”¹⁹ This question seems extraneous because even if a respondent strongly agrees with this statement, it does not necessarily indicate that the person is unfaithful when it comes to personal evangelism. On the other hand, question 13 is more relevant: “I have several relationships with people who do not go to church.” While it is likely more relevant, it should have focused on having relationships with people who do not claim to be Christian. Finally, while the curriculum focused on Jesus’ authority and emphasized the servant identity of the Christian, the survey addressed this topic only indirectly.²⁰ Perhaps the following survey question would have been appropriate: “As a servant of God, I am responsible to do what He has commissioned me to do.”

¹⁹ See appendix 4.

²⁰ See questions 4, 6, 11, 18, 22, and 3.

Theological Reflections

As I have reflected upon the topic of personal evangelism, and on this project specifically, one thing that stands out is the essentiality of understanding and communicating the gospel message accurately. Over the past 50 to 100 years, authors like Mark Dever, J. I. Packer, Will Metzger, John Piper, Alvin Reid, and many others have focused on helping the church clarify the gospel. Such authors and theologians are correct in imploring Christians to get it right as salvation hangs in the balance. Unfortunately, the church has not been immune to the influence of a world that focuses on efficiency, pragmatism, and results. I have heard well-meaning church leaders water down the gospel, perhaps in an effort to increase baptisms. I have been on mission trips with pastors and evangelists where the concept of repentance was altogether absent from the gospel message. I have experienced churches practice mass evangelism tactics through various children's ministries. While ultimately only God knows one's heart, if an individual does not believe the true gospel, then that person is not saved. Theologically speaking, while communicating the gospel correctly may not lead to a large number of baptisms, it is the Christian's responsibility. It is essential for Christians to understand the gospel accurately.

A second thing that stands out to me is the seemingly pervasive inconsistency between theological beliefs and individual practices. Interestingly, a person can believe all the right things about the gospel, the fate of the lost sinner, and exclusivity of salvation through faith in Jesus, and remain uninvolved with personal evangelism. As necessary as it is to understand the gospel and have correct theology, neither of these things necessarily lead to evangelistic faithfulness.

The same dichotomy exists concerning Jesus' authority. Theologically speaking, people may claim to believe that Jesus possesses all authority and even admit that they are Jesus' servants. It may even be that in most areas of life such confessions bear themselves out practically. However, these confessions are often challenged when it comes to embracing one's role as an ambassador for Christ and fulfilling the Great Commission.

This is not to say that such people are being intentionally and overtly rebellious. However, to live indifferent to God's commission on one's life is no small thing, and it is not simply because of one's personality make-up.

Based on my reading and research for writing chapter 3, fear of man is a main reason people fail to engage in personal evangelism. Whether it is fear of looking weird in front of others, fear of not being able to answer questions, fear of being rejected, or fear of persecution (whatever it may be), to some degree, these issues all revolve around the fear of man. When the potential (or imagined) responses of others dictate one's faithfulness to God, idolatry is clear—more value has been placed on looking good in man's eyes than in God's eyes. Whether the specific idol is comfort, approval, or something else, the individual has begun to worship something (or someone) else. While this conclusion will be unpopular, it needs to be communicated when teaching on evangelism.

Theologically speaking, when highlighting God's purpose to conform believers to the image of His Son (Rom 8:29), it is important to note that this includes engaging people with the good news. The priorities of Jesus ought to be the priorities of the disciple. By the power of the Holy Spirit, growth in Christlikeness will include compassion for the lost and the discipline to carve out time to engage others with the love of God—which includes personal evangelism.

Finally, the topic of personal evangelism is incomplete apart from teaching on the role of the Holy Spirit and prayer. Scripture teaches that the natural man cannot accept nor understand the things of God (1 Cor 2:14). In his sin, man is unable to embrace the gospel and humble Himself before God. Considering this, and in light of the reality of spiritual warfare, prayer for the lost and for evangelistic efforts is essential.

Personal Reflections

Personal evangelism is not optional for servants of Jesus. Jesus has called, commissioned, and empowered his followers for this very purpose. And while this is true, for many (perhaps most) Christians, it is not easy. I have thought to myself on various occasions throughout this process that I am unqualified to teach on personal evangelism, let alone write a curriculum on it. While I am not afraid to share the gospel, I have yet to experience much fruitfulness. That said, this process has challenged me in ways that I trust God is using to refine me more into the image of Christ.

My experience (which is likely common) does not include parents who modeled a heart for personal evangelism. They were faithfully involved with their church, read Scripture, attended Bible studies, and prayed regularly. Family devotions were a part of our family's life. Evangelism was not. Talking about Jesus with unbelievers was not. The churches I grew up in did a wonderful job of preaching the gospel and promoting the gospel within its own doors; however, evangelism was mostly reserved for mission trips. The outreach ministries of the church focused mainly on following up with Sunday morning visitors and ministering to people in need. While such ministry is necessary, it is not evangelism.

While evangelism is to be a priority of the church, I am becoming more convinced that rather than developing an outreach ministry, efforts should be focused on equipping church members to engage in personal evangelism in their own spheres of influence. Because churches will likely continue to be marginalized and suffer a loss of influence in today's ever-changing culture, individual Christians must embrace their responsibility to proclaim Christ and live with a missionary mindset, as God designed. Not only should churches give more attention to this generally, I am convinced that parents need to model, teach, and discuss evangelism with their children. Furthermore, families need to spend time praying for and serving lost people together. What a difference it would make if this became the norm in Christian households. Imagine the difference it would

make if children grew up seeing their parents engaging people with the gospel on a regular basis. This is what I want for my family.

Finally, I am convicted that too often when I have taught on evangelism, I have not done so with a gracious heart. I genuinely believe that most people would like to be more faithful and consistent in this area, but their struggle with fear and business is real. In the future, I want to do a better job of balancing the call to evangelize and the need for God's grace. I want to be more effective in balancing the responsibility to evangelize with the joy of evangelizing.

Conclusion

While the goals of this project were met, the effectiveness of this project has yet to be determined. Those who participated were kind and gracious in their review of the class. Ultimately, my hope is that the people who participated in the training will become more competent, confident, and consistent in proclaiming Christ and engaging in personal evangelism. This will ultimately determine whether the class was a success or not. God is glorified when his children obey and live according to His will (John 17:4). Whether or not Trinity Baptist Church experiences an increase in baptism and membership, may the church accomplish the work that God has called, commissioned, and empowered it to do.

APPENDIX 1

PRE- AND POST-PROJECT PERSONAL EVANGELISM SURVEY

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to assess the current practices of and barriers to engaging in personal evangelism of the participant. This research is being conducted by Nate Magloughlin for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer questions before the project and you will answer the same questions at the conclusion of the project. Any information you provide will be held confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

I agree to participate: _____

4-digit Personal ID# _____ (please remember this ID# as you will use it again in the Post-Project Personal Evangelism Survey)

I do not agree to participate: _____

Section I

The first section of the Pre-Project Personal Evangelism Survey will obtain some demographic information about the individuals taking this survey.

Directions: Please answer the following questions in the space provided.

1. What is your current age? _____
2. How long have you been a Christian? _____
3. Are you male or female? _____
4. Are you currently married? _____
5. Do you have any children age 18 or younger living in the home? _____

Section II

Directions: Please respond to the statements using the following scale:

SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, DS = disagree somewhat,

AS = agree somewhat, A = agree, SA = strongly agree

No.	Statement	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
1.	I understand the nature of the gospel.						
2.	I understand the gospel well enough to communicate it clearly to the lost.						
3.	I regularly engage in personal evangelism.						
4.	I set aside time throughout my week to engage in personal evangelism.						
5.	I am able to transition every day conversations to gospel conversations when speaking with lost people						
6.	Scripture places the responsibility for personal evangelism on me.						
7.	Those apart from faith in Jesus will suffer eternally in hell.						
8.	I regularly contemplate the horrors of hell and the fate of the lost.						
9.	The eternal fate of the lost motivates me to engage in personal evangelism regularly.						
10.	The fear of rejection keeps me from engaging in personal evangelism.						
11.	An unwillingness to engage in personal evangelism is sinful.						
12.	Most of the people I spend time with are Christians.						
13.	I have several relationships with people who do not go to church.						
14.	When I interact with people in the community, I often wonder if they are Christians or not.						
15.	At times, I make judgements about whether someone would want to hear the gospel.						
16.	I do not engage in personal evangelism because I believe that God will save who He wants to save anyway.						
17.	At times I do not engage in personal evangelism because I am afraid of being seen as weird.						
18.	At times I do not engage in personal evangelism because I am not sure God wants me to.						
19.	Sometimes I feel guilty for not engaging in personal evangelism.						

20.	I do not have time to engage in personal evangelism.						
21.	I do not engage in personal evangelism because I am introverted.						
22.	I rarely think about engaging in personal evangelism.						
23.	It is difficult for me to interact with people who I perceive are much different from me.						
24.	Certain people are beyond the reach of God's grace.						
25.	I find it difficult to engage in personal evangelism with people from other nationalities.						
26.	I feel unqualified to engage in personal evangelism because of persistent sin in my life.						
27.	I feel unequipped to engage in personal evangelism because I have not seen it modeled.						
28.	I feel unequipped to engage in personal evangelism because I have never been taught how to share my faith with an unbeliever.						
29.	I am afraid that people will ask questions that I do not know how to answer when engaging in personal evangelism.						
30.	I pray for opportunities to witness to unbelievers.						
31.	I have a list of lost people that I know and pray for their salvation regularly.						
32.	I regularly meditate on the fact that God has saved me from eternal hell.						
33.	I have led someone to faith in Jesus through personal evangelism.						
34.	I trusted in Jesus as a result of someone sharing the gospel with me outside of the church building.						
35.	I have people in my life who hold me accountable to engage in personal evangelism.						
36.	I practice fasting for the salvation of the lost.						
37.	I read and meditate on God's Word several times a week.						
38.	I would rather give money to missions than be involved with personal evangelism.						
39.	I regularly talk with others about Jesus outside of the church building.						
40.	I want to engage in personal evangelism more consistently.						

Section III¹

Directions: Answer the following questions using no more than 400 words for each answer.

41. Please explain how the series (sermons and small group meetings) was helpful in equipping you to engage in personal evangelism.

42. Please explain how the series (sermon series and small group meetings) was helpful in motivating you to engage in personal evangelism

43. Did any specific aspects of the series (sermon series and small group meetings) stand out as especially helpful? Unhelpful?

44. Do you intend to make any changes concerning your participation in personal evangelism as a result of the series?

¹ Section 3 was to be completed with the post-project survey.

APPENDIX 2

EVANGELISM TRAINING CURRICULUM

Leader Guides for Proclaiming Christ: A Primer on Personal Evangelism

Session 1: Who Does God Expect to Engage in Personal Evangelism?

Goal: Session 1 is designed to reinforce the truth that God expects all Christians to engage in personal evangelism.

Principle: Faithful evangelists recognize that glorifying God includes submitting to Him in all areas of our lives, including personal evangelism.

Introduction

Divide the class into small groups and ask them to brainstorm the main responsibilities associated with the following jobs: Elementary School Teacher; Football Coach; Financial Planner; CEO of Large Corporation; Restaurant Waiter/Waitress.

After a few minutes, have the groups share some of their answers with the entire class.

Say to the class: Each of these jobs have several associated responsibilities. For instance, a waiter or waitress at a restaurant has a variety of responsibilities including public relations, receiving and delivering food and drink orders, and receiving payments. All of these functions are essential to excelling as a waiter. Being able to take large food and drink orders without having to write anything down may be impressive, but if the waiter fails to refill your drinks while you partake of the food, you will not be satisfied with the service.

In our study today, we are going to see that as followers of Jesus we have been both commissioned and empowered to engage in personal evangelism.

Pray for the Session.

Identity and Responsibilities

As Christians, we have several responsibilities associated with following Jesus. While the word “responsibilities” may cause alarm for some, it is evident that the New Testament places certain expectations and duties on those who profess faith in Christ. To be clear, we are not talking about the way in which one is saved. We are saved by grace through faith alone (**Eph 2:8-9**). However, those who have experienced God’s grace in salvation are called to follow Him fully.

Ask the class: What are some expectations or duties that Scripture places on followers of Jesus? (Answers will likely include things like reading the Bible, prayer, fellowship,

witnessing, loving one's neighbor, fleeing from sin, confessing sin and repenting of sin, etc.)

Say to the class: While seeking God's glory in all things (**1 Cor 10:31**) is to be the clear priority of the Christian, to seek God's glory can be something of a nebulous concept. Therefore, it can be helpful to think about glorifying God in terms of joyful submission to God's will. Like Jesus who lived to fulfill the will of the Father (**John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38; 14:31; Matt 26:39**), we too glorify God when we do what He calls us to do (**Read John 17:4**).

Living in submission to God's will is consistent with our servant identity in Christ. While Scripture refers to those who are in Christ as "friends" (**John 15:15**), "children of God" (**John 1:12; Gal 3:26**) and "more than conquerors" (**Rom 8:37**) among other things, based on the teachings of Jesus and the Apostles, Christians need to view themselves as God's servants.

Small Groups Discussion: Break the class up into small groups and ask them to read the following texts and to be ready to summarize how the text points to the Christian's identity as a servant: **Matt 21:28-32; 25:14-30; Mark 10:35-45; Luke 19:11-27; John 15:20; 1 Cor 4:1-5; 1 Peter 4:7-11.**

Say to the class: The NT writers regularly identified themselves as servants or slaves of Jesus. And while the biblical writers were at times specifically referring to themselves when identifying as servants of Christ (**1 Cor 4:1-5**), their intention was not to exclude others from such an identification.

Jesus is the risen and exalted Lord (**Phil 2:9-11**). We are His followers—fellow heirs (**Rom 8:17**), yet servants of Christ. As servants, we are called to be faithful. We would be wise to heed Jesus' warnings contained in the parables that we read previously. While genuine followers of Christ are not at risk of losing their salvation, rewards for faithful Christian service are at stake.

According to **1 Cor 4:1-5** and **1 Pet 4:7-11**, we ought to see ourselves as stewards of the mysteries of Christ and the grace of God. In Biblical times the steward was the chief household slave. He was over all the other servants, but he was still a slave. The steward was entrusted by the owner of the house to manage his affairs in his absence. The steward did not own the stuff, but simply took care of the master's stuff.

Illustrate: A member of our church owns a large cattle ranch. In ranching language, the steward is similar to the "Camp Man" who is like a manager. The "Camp Man" often runs the affairs of the ranch on behalf of the owner of the ranch to ensure that the ranch functions properly (cows are fed, fields are tended to, cowboys are paid, etc.). This is how we should see ourselves.

The term "mysteries of Christ" (**1 Cor 4:1**) certainly includes the message of the gospel. As servants of Christ, we are called to be faithful stewards of the message of the gospel and the gifts of the Spirit (**1 Peter 4:10**). We should take special note that Paul states that it is required of stewards that they be found faithful (**1 Cor 4:2**).

The Great Commission, the Church, and the Individual Christian

Ask the Class: How many of you work for a company that has a mission statement? Can you recite it? What is a mission statement and why are they important?

Say to the Class: Mission statements are important because they serve to clarify purpose. Mission statements define priorities and help to establish values.

Prior to His ascension to the right hand of the Father, Jesus gathered His disciples and gave the Church its mission. **Read Matthew 28:16-20.**

These well-known words of Jesus serve as the mission statement of the Church. The Church has been commissioned by Jesus to make disciples, which includes going (evangelizing), baptizing, and teaching. In light of who Jesus is and what He accomplished in His life, death and resurrection, He has been given the name that is above every name (**Phil 2:9-11**) and has been given all authority. He has authoritatively commissioned His followers to go and make disciples.

The task of making disciples is essentially about preaching the gospel to the lost and teaching converts to follow (obey and esteem) Jesus. The Church, which is made of up people who have placed their faith in Jesus, is to focus its attention on making disciples. Thus, an essential role of each individual Christian is to focus on reproducing oneself by proclaiming Christ and teaching the whole counsel of God to those who believe the gospel.¹

Just prior to His ascension, Jesus tells His followers that the Holy Spirit will come upon them to empower them in their task to make disciples. **Read Acts 1:8.**

From this, we can conclude that everyone who has received the Holy Spirit (all Christians) have been empowered to be Jesus' witnesses.² Considering Jesus' commissioning and empowering of his followers, we should conclude that one aspect of being a faithful Christian is engaging in personal evangelism as witnesses for Jesus.

The Apostle Peter confirms this in his first epistle when declaring that the church is to proclaim the excellencies of the God who saved them. **Read 1 Peter 2:8-9.**

In chapter three, Peter instructs believers to be ready always be ready to explain why you have hope in Christ. **Read 1 Peter 3:15.**

While this is not a specific reference to evangelism per se, the instruction is given to those who are following Christ and it clearly revolves around the message of the gospel.

Finally, the Apostle Paul states that God has entrusted believers with the ministry of reconciliation. He wants believers to see themselves as ambassadors for Christ who implore others to be reconciled to God. **Read 2 Corinthians 5:17-21.**

In vv.17-18, Paul states that if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation—which is all from God. His use of “anyone” is nonspecific and general. Thus, while in the immediate context Paul may be referring specifically to himself and his associates when he writes “God gave us the ministry of reconciliation” (v.18), he is not excluding all believers in general. All Christians have been commissioned and empowered to proclaim Christ and to engage in personal evangelism.

¹ David L. Turner, *Matthew*, The Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 68-69.

² Alvin Reid, *Introduction to Evangelism* (Nashville: B & H, 1998), 43-44.

Excuses, Excuses

Ask the Class: Suppose I asked every church member to raise their hands if they engaged in personal evangelism in the past week. How many people do you think would raise their hands? How about the past month?

How about you? Would you be able to raise your hand? You do not have to answer that question, but it is worth thinking about.

Say to the Class: Pastor and evangelist Greg Laurie notes statistics that indicate that nearly 95% of professing Christians have never led someone to Christ.³ In a 2013 Barna Research Study entitled “Is Evangelism Going Out of Style,” while 73% of born again Christians indicated that they feel personally responsible to share the gospel, only 53% said that they had share the gospel with an unbeliever at least once in the past year.⁴

Ask the Class: In light of Jesus’ clear commission, why do you think it is that people who claim to be Christians can be so nonchalant when it comes to personal evangelism? (Likely answers will probably include: fear, lack of knowledge, lack of opportunity, etc.)

Say to the Class: While there are a variety of reasons, at the end of the day, they are little more than excuses. If God has clearly called us to engage in personal evangelism, and we are unwilling to do so, we need to see this is as sinful rebellion. It is sin to not engage in personal evangelism. **Read James 4:17.**

Ask the Class: Why is it that we are so quick to label unfaithfulness in personal evangelism as something other than sin?

Say to the Class: Growing Christians hate sin and love righteousness. If an alcoholic, or a liar, or a gossip, or a pornography addict came to you for help, among the first things that you would do is encourage repentance.

Friends, the same is true with the professing Christians who are in rebellion when it comes to engaging in personal evangelism. Failing to proclaim Christ in everyday life necessitates repentance. We need to seek God’s grace and prepare ourselves for what Jesus has commissioned and empowered us to do.

Conclusion

I am confident that in the end of all things, your desire is to hear the Master say to you, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” Engaging in personal evangelism is not the responsibility of a special class of Christians, it is the responsibility of all Christians.

As we close this morning, please get back into your groups and pray for each other. Thank God for the opportunities you have had to engage in personal evangelism and confess to him your struggle to be consistent. Ask Him to increase your passion for personal evangelism – your passion for His glory and your compassion on the lost.

³ Greg Laurie, *Tell Someone: You Can Share the Good News* (Nashville: B & H, 2016), 10.

⁴ Barna Group, “Is Evangelism Going Out of Style? December 17, 2013, accessed January 3, 2018, <https://www.barna.com/research/is-evangelism-going-out-of-style/>.

Session 2: Evangelistic Motivations

Goal: Session 2 is designed to help believers understand the importance of love, compassion, and heavenly rewards when it comes to personal evangelism.

Principle: Faithful evangelists have proper motivations when it comes to personal evangelism.

Introduction

Say to the Class: According to Wikipedia, motivation “is the reason for people’s actions, desires, and needs. A motive is what prompts the person to act in a certain way, or at least develop an inclination for specific behavior.”⁵

Divide into class into small groups and ask the groups to brainstorm possible motivating factors in the following areas: School; Athletics; Job / Career; Parenting.

After a few minutes, have the groups share some of their answers with the entire class.

Say to the Class: As you know, different people are motivated by different things. Often, motivation revolves around personal improvement or personal gain. Consider the exemplary student who is motivated to study for her exams because she is pursuing college scholarships. At other times, motivation revolves around one’s desire to serve and love others. For instance, a husband may work long hours to provide for his family.

In our study today, we are going to consider various motivations for engaging in personal evangelism.

Pray for the Session.

Improper Motivations

Say to the Class: While people may be motivated by various things, not all motivation is good and proper. For instance, a criminal may be motivated to practice certain techniques or skills for nefarious reasons. A person may be motivated to make money in order to support an illegal or immoral habit. A woman may be motivated to exercise because she is consumed with her physical appearance.

When it comes to motivation, it is necessary to understand the end goal in determining if a motivation is proper or not.

Ask the Class: Invite someone in the class to read **Phil 1:12-18**.

Say to the Class: As you know, the Apostle Paul was in chains as he wrote this letter. Even still, Paul rejoiced in the fact that the gospel was advancing as he faithfully proclaimed the gospel. In **vv.15-18**, Paul admits that while not every gospel proclamation is motivated properly, he still rejoices that Christ is proclaimed.

⁵ Wikipedia, “Motivation,” accessed January 10, 2018, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Motivation>.

Ask the Class: What motivations for proclaiming Christ (both proper and improper) does Paul note in these verses?

- vv.15-16 – good will, love
- vv.15, 17 – rivalry, envy, to cause affliction

Ask the Class: What are some other examples of improper motivations for engaging in personal evangelism? (Allow for a few people to respond, but be sure to note the following examples.)

- To make a name for oneself / build reputation.
- Attempting to earn God’s love or favor.

Say to the Class: Along with Paul, we ought to rejoice every time the gospel is communicated. However, along with those who proclaimed Christ out of love and good will, we too ought to be properly motivated when engaging in personal evangelism.

Proper Motivations

Say to the Class: In our first session together, we focused on our responsibility, as those who have been commissioned by Jesus and empowered by the Holy Spirit, to engage in personal evangelism. We connected such evangelistic faithfulness to glorifying God, which is to be the clear priority of the Christian life.

As servants of the Sovereign God who possesses all authority, our posture before Him is to be one of reverence and awe. **In 2 Corinthians 5:11**, Paul writes, “Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others.”

Because Paul understood the fear of the Lord, he lived to proclaim Christ to the lost. A proper motivation for engaging in personal evangelism is the fear of the Lord.

Paul is not talking about a fear that causes us to be terrified by God. In fact, the Apostle John writes reminds us that those who are in Christ should be confident because God is love, and that perfect love casts out fear (**1 John 4:15-19**). The fear that Paul writes of is associated with recognizing God’s majesty and glory.

Illustration: In Luke 5, Jesus commandeers Peter’s fishing boat as He teaches by the shore of the Sea of Galilee. After he finished teaching, Jesus instructed Peter to “put out into the deep and let down your nets for catch” (v.4). While he initially protests, ultimately Peter obeys. His obedience resulted in catching so many fish that their nets began to break. Do you remember Peter’s response to Jesus? **Read Luke 5:8.**

In that moment, Peter understood that there was something amazing about Jesus. He bowed before Him in reverence and awe. And it wasn’t just that he bowed before him at the seashore. Peter lived his life in the fear of the Lord and for the glory of God.

Read Isaiah 6:1-8. Upon seeing a vision of the glorious and sovereign God, Isaiah humbles himself. His response reveals the proper fear (reverence and awe) that we ought to experience before God—a fear that leads to willing service for God’s glory.

Say to the Class: Describe someone you know who models a life lived in the fear of the Lord for the glory of God.

Ask the Class: How might your life be different if you lived in the fear of the Lord?

A second motivation to engage in personal evangelism is love.

After connecting the fear of the Lord to his desire to proclaim Christ and seeking to persuade others, in **2 Cor 5:14**, Paul writes, “the love of Christ controls us.” In light of the context, it is clear that Paul is talking about his mission as an ambassador for Christ. In other words, because of Christ’s love for him and his love for Christ, he regularly engages in personal evangelism. In that sense, Christ’s love impels him to gospel ministry.⁶

Ask the Class: What are some things that you do in life for others (family, friends, etc.) simply for the sake of love? Have you ever considered that your faithfulness to engage in personal evangelism is connected to your love for Jesus?

Say to the Class: Another aspect of love to consider when it comes to engaging in personal evangelism is that of compassion for the lost.

Read Matthew 9:35-38. Jesus had compassion on the people because he recognized their plight. He understood their hopelessness and brokenness because of sin—both their own sin and the sin of others.

Ask the Class: What does Jesus’ compassion for the lost lead to?

Say to the Class: Jesus compassion for the lost led to His calling the people to pray for harvest workers. Out of compassion for the plight of the lost, Jesus encourages evangelism, suggesting that the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.

Group Exercise: Read and Summarize the following verses: **Matt 13:40-42, 50; Mark 9:42-48; Luke 13:27-28; Luke 16:19-26.**

Question: Based on God’s Word, describe hell. How would you characterize the plight of the lost, those apart from faith in Christ?

Say to the Class: As followers of Christ, God is at work making us more like Christ (**Rom 8:28-29**). If Jesus experienced compassion for the lost, then we can be sure that the Holy Spirit desires to produce such compassion in us as well.

Ask the Class: Encourage class members to write down the names of 3-5 people who do not know Jesus Christ. Consider their future. Ask God to give you compassion for their plight.

Say to the Class: As you finish writing down those names, I want to transition to a fourth motivation for engaging in personal evangelism.

A motivation to engage in personal evangelism is rewards for Christian faithfulness.

In various places in Scripture, the authors refer to or allude to rewards for Christian faithfulness. For instance, in both the Parable of the Talents and the Ten Minas (**Matt**

⁶ Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1997), 286-89.

25:14-30; Luke 19:12-27), the Master rewards the good and faithful servants for their faithfulness. In **Matt 10:40-42**, Jesus suggests that rewards will be given to those who serve others in love and righteousness.

While one might argue that to be motivated by the potential of receiving rewards is selfish, we need to recognize that Jesus encouraged his disheartened disciples with the hope of future rewards for faithfulness. **Read Mark 10:23-31.**

Elsewhere, Jesus instructed his disciples to store up for themselves treasures in heaven. **Read Matt 6:19-21.** While the term reward is not used, perhaps the treasures that are stored up in heaven are associated with reward.

While Scripture doesn't specify the specific nature of the rewards, many have associate rewards with ruling responsibilities. And while heaven will be a joyful experience for all Christians, it is clear that rewards add to one's experience in heaven.

We should also note that Paul seems to suggest that Christians can lose rewards for unfaithfulness. **Read 1 Cor 3:10-15.**

Conclusion

In light of these proper motivations for engaging in personal evangelism, if we find ourselves lacking evangelistic zeal, we ought to evaluate ourselves in terms of our fear of the Lord, our love for the Lord, and our compassion for the lost. To the extent that we find ourselves lacking, we must repent and ask God to transform us.

Earlier, I asked you to write down the names of 3-5 people who you know to be apart from faith in Christ. As we close, please gather in groups 4-6 people. I would like you to share with one another the names that you wrote down earlier, and then pray that God would increase your compassion for their plight and motivate us to engage them with the gospel. Keep these names close, because we will be coming back to them again.

Session 3: Overcoming Barriers

Goal: Session 3 is designed to assist believers to overcome common barriers to engaging in personal evangelism.

Principle: Faithful evangelists must address fear and a lack of discipline when it comes to personal evangelism.

Pray for the Session

Introduction

Our family recently spent some time in San Antonio, TX. While we were there, we visited Six Flags Fiesta Texas. Now when it comes to roller coasters, not everyone in our family enjoys thrill rides to the same degree. Of my three children, I have a *dare devil*, a *somewhat reluctant, but for the most part, willing participant*, and a *no way it's happening protestor*! I'll let you guess which one is which.

While there could be various reasons to explain why someone would or would not ride a roller coaster (length of line, physical sickness, etc.), most often the culprit is fear. People who have yet to ride through a loop, or zoom down a long, steep hill can be flat out afraid. Oftentimes, when the parent identifies the correct formula to bribe their child into riding, the child will admit that it wasn't as bad as they thought it would be.

Perhaps the same can be said about engaging in evangelism. Fear is a huge barrier to engaging in personal evangelism. However, once a person takes the step of faith and begins to evangelize, often, that person realizes that it wasn't as scary they thought it would be.

Ask the Class: Have the class break up into groups and discuss how fear presents itself as it relates to evangelism. In a few minutes, have the group share their answers.

Overcoming the Barrier of Fear

Say to the Class: It's no surprise that fear is a primary barrier that keeps professing Christians from engaging in personal evangelism. And such fear is not one dimensional. Would be evangelists may become fearful about how someone will receive and respond to their message, about being unable to answer questions they are asked, and about making a fool of oneself.

To some degree, fear is understandable. For instance, in sending out his disciples, Jesus said: "Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves" (**Matt 10:16**). Everyone in their right mind knows that wolves eat sheep. Just prior to His death, Jesus told His followers, "if the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you . . . a servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you" (**John 15:18, 20**).

Scripture warns Christians that they will face opposition, persecution, and tribulation on account of Jesus and the gospel (**1 Pet 1:6-7, 3:13-17, 4:12-19; 2 Tim 3:12; Acts 14:23**). Rico Tice writes: Christians today face a "growing hostility to Christianity," suggesting

that ‘it’s not just apathy we face—it’s antipathy.’⁷ While there may not be physical harm, Tice suggests, “if you are going to talk about Jesus, you are going to get hurt. It is going to sever some relationships.”⁸

Ask the Class: Does anyone have a negative evangelism experience that they would like to share with the class? (If not, share my negative experience on the campus of NC State)

Say to the Class: Perhaps it would help you to know that even the Apostles struggled with fear at times. While ministering in Corinth, (**Acts 18:9-10**), the apostle Paul was battling fear. One night, the Lord Jesus said to Paul in a vision, “do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you.”

Scripture offers several answers to the fear that Christians experience. First, it is important to remember that Jesus promises to be with his followers (Matt 18:18-20). Just as Jesus encouraged Paul with His presence, Jesus wants us to remember that He is with us just the same.

Ask the Class: When your children were young, and became scared, what difference did your presence make?

Say to the Class: If the sovereign God of the universe, the One whom we believe possesses all authority, promises to be with us, then that ought to encourage us and help us to overcome our fear.

We should also recall that God has empowered us with His Spirit (Acts 1:8). In **Luke 24:49**, in association with the Spirit’s coming, Jesus encourages his disciples that they will be clothed with “power from on high.” As Christians, it is helpful to remember that God’s Spirit was given in part for the very purpose of empowering us for evangelism. The Holy Spirit gives believers courage and boldness to proclaim Christ (Acts 4), words to speak (Luke 12:12), and remembrance of truth (John 16:13-14).

Furthermore, we would do well to remember that God’s grace is sufficient and that His power is perfected in and through our weakness (2 Cor 12:9). Author and professor Timothy Beougher asserts that fear can be helpful, necessary, and even desirable because it can lead us to confident dependence on God⁹

But the truth is, unless we believe God’s promises and walk by faith, fear will consume us. The importance of seeking and trusting the Lord cannot be understated when it comes to personal evangelism.

Another area of fear as it relates to personal evangelism has to do with being unable to answer the questions that people may ask in response. While this is a real possibility, would be evangelists often make too much of it. If a legitimate question is asked that you do not know the answer to, then humbly tell the person that you don’t know the answer

⁷ Rico Tice with Carl Laferton, *Honest Evangelism: How to Talk about Jesus Even When It’s Tough* (Surrey, England: Good Book, 2015), 15.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Timothy K. Beougher, *Overcoming Walls to Witnessing* (Charlotte, NC: Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, 1993), 11.

but would love to find out and resume the conversation at a later date. This is a much better approach than trying to answer something that you cannot adequately answer. Plus, by asking to resume the conversation later, you have just set up another opportunity to witness for Jesus.

On the other hand, it is important to be prepared to answer questions that people may ask. Peter writes: “In your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Pet 3:15).

Illustration: I can recall times during my middle school and high school years when I would sink down into my desk just hoping that the teacher wouldn’t call on me to answer. I wasn’t prepared. And while this seems unbelievable, I remember a time in college when the professor called on a student to provide an answer to a question, and it just so happened that the student had dozed off. I recall him making some dumb comment like “eye-lid check” as he was becoming aware of what was going on. As you can imagine, the professor was not amused.

As followers of Christ, we are responsible to ready ourselves for such times. We are called to think about why we believe what we believe. Because some people may genuinely struggle with questions like “How could a loving God send anyone to hell,” or “How could God allow so much suffering in the world,” we ought to be familiar with how to answer those questions.

Ask the Class: How might one go about learning how to answer these questions?

Say to the Class: We should also recognize (and be ready to answer) objections that are meant to divert gospel conversations. These objections (sometimes posed as questions) include: “Don’t all religions lead to the same place?” and “Why are there so many hypocrites in the church?” Friends, there are clear answers to these questions and we should be prepared to speak to them.

The Fear of Man

Say to the Class: Perhaps the biggest hinderance / barrier to engaging in personal evangelism is the fear of man. Too often, fear of what other people think of us influences / controls our actions, words, and even purchases.

Ask the Class: How do you see the fear of man at play in life?

Say to the Class: When our view of God is too small, we are prone to view man too big. When we forget that God is sovereign and that His opinion matters most, we are susceptible to seeking the approval of man. Paul addressed this issue in Galatians. He wrote: “For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ” (Gal 1:10).

When we live as if trying to please man (others), we will struggle with personal evangelism because we are essentially enslaved to the opinions of others. Essentially, in such times, we are rejecting God’s authority over us, and allowing our fear of others to excuse our disobedience to God. We need to see this as idolatry. We are valuing ourselves, our comfort, our reputation, or our image above obedience to and love for God. Such idolatry is dangerous because we are seeking our value and finding our identity in something or someone other than God. Author Rico Tice suggest that “if we know why we should witness and we’re still not willing to witness, then it’s because our

hearts are somewhere else. It's because actually what we most want is a comfortable life, or a good reputation with friends and colleagues, or a nice settled existence with our family, and so on."¹⁰ The fear of man is idolatry and requires repentance.

Living in the fear of man is all too common for Christians. Author Edward Welch suggests that the antidote to the fear of man is to learn the fear of the Lord. He suggests that we can grow in the fear of the Lord by reading and meditating on God's Word in order to understand God's character more fully.¹¹

Overcoming the Barrier of a Lack of Discipline

Illustration: One of my children has a terrible habit of always leaving the food item that he most dislikes for last at any given meal. It's the same story every time—and he finds himself sitting at the table much longer than he needs to be there.

Of course, we all have a tendency to procrastinate when it comes to things that we do not enjoy doing. Whether it's mowing the lawn, emptying the dishwasher, or cleaning the bathrooms, most of us would prefer for someone else to take care of it.

Say to the Class: Because evangelism seems difficult and threatening, many of us “put it off until later,” which often leads to “putting it out of our minds completely.” It's not uncommon to hear a professing Christian claim that they lack opportunities to share the gospel with others. While this may be true, a lack of time is often due to a lack of effort and planning. Christians who are intentional to discipline themselves in the area of personal evangelism find time in their busy schedules to interact with the lost.

In his letter to the Colossians, Paul writes: “Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of your time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person” (**Col 4:5-6**). Paul implies that we will have interactions with non-believers. The question is, will we discipline ourselves to engage them with the gospel.

As believers, we must guard against the temptation to isolate ourselves from the world and surround ourselves with only people who have the same values and beliefs as us. Christians can be guilty of wanting to protect themselves (or their children) from the evil influences of the world. While on the surface, this may seem legitimate (or even praiseworthy), taken to an extreme, such a strategy results in isolation from lost people and disobedience to God's call on our lives to proclaim Christ.

Given this tendency toward self-protection and selfishness, we must consider and create opportunities for personal evangelism. We would be wise to assess our current relationships and give thought and prayer to how begin to invest in non-believers. Jesus calls us to go into all the world; we should consider “our world” to include our family, neighbors, co-workers, friends, etc.

Ask the Class: What are some ways that we can invest in relationships with non-believers? (meals, common interests, service projects, social gatherings, book clubs, etc.)

¹⁰ Tice with Laferton, *Honest Evangelism*, 15.

¹¹ Edward T. Welch, *When People Are Big and God Is Small: Overcoming Peer Pressure, Codependency, and the Fear of Man* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1997), 23.

Conclusion

As we conclude today's lesson, please get back into groups. Confess to one another the barriers to personal evangelism that you struggle with most. Indicate what you intend to do in order to move towards being a faithful witness for Jesus Christ. Write these things down and commit them to prayer.

Next, look at your list of names of unbelievers with whom you have relationship and consider how you can connect with and invest in them in the next few weeks with the hopes of sharing the gospel. Share with each other your ideas and pray for one another that God would help you to believe His promises and walk by faith.

Session 4: Know the Gospel

Goal: Session 4 is designed to equip believers with the knowledge of the gospel message.

Principle: Faithful evangelists must understand the essential truths of the gospel.

Pray for Session

Introduction

We've spent a lot of time talking about the gospel and personal evangelism thus far. However, one thing that we have not done is clearly define what we mean by the gospel and personal evangelism.

Ask the Class: I'd like for you to break up into your groups and take a few moments to come up with a definition for both gospel and personal evangelism. (After a few minutes, ask the class to share their answers.)

The Gospel and Personal Evangelism

Say to the Class: Jesus declares that "the gospel must first be proclaimed to all the nations" (Mark 13:10). The Greek term translated *gospel* (euangelion) means good news or good tidings. To proclaim the gospel is to proclaim good news.

Of course, it's not just any good news that is to be proclaimed. If you are a fan of the (Super Bowl winner), you may have proclaimed this news to a few people. And while this may be good news (for some people), this isn't what Jesus had in mind.

The good news that Scripture refers to is that guilty sinners can find forgiveness of sin and reconciliation with God through faith in Jesus Christ. The good news is that by God's grace alone, those who are condemned to eternal death because of their rebellion against God are given eternal life through trusting in the atoning work of Jesus Christ.

One of the ways that the gospel is proclaimed is through personal evangelism. Will McRaney Jr., defines personal evangelism as involving "the effective communication of the essential gospel message with the view towards seeing people supernaturally become followers and imitators of Christ."¹²

As we have seen, each person indwelt by the Holy Spirit has been commissioned by Jesus to engage in personal evangelism. Because personal evangelism is the responsibility of all Christians, it is important that we know the gospel message and the truths that we must communicate in order to be faithful evangelists.

Ask the Class: What are the essential truths that must be communicated to faithfully proclaim the gospel in order that someone might believe and be saved? (Have class members raise hands.)

Say to the Class: Thank you for your input. We know that the Bible is God's Word and that it is true. That said, there are truths in the Bible that don't specifically relate to the

¹² Will McRaney, Jr., *The Art of Personal Evangelism: Sharing Jesus in a Changing Culture* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2003), 43-44.

gospel message, and thus don't have to be believed prior to salvation. For instance, while it is true the Holy Spirit enables a person to understand and embrace spiritual truth, a person doesn't have to affirm this in order to believe the gospel and be saved. While it is true that Mary conceived while still a virgin, salvation doesn't depend on one's affirmation of this truth. (Consider the fact that most children may not even know what sex is, let alone what a virgin is.)

While communicating the gospel message faithfully doesn't require exhaustive knowledge of Scripture, it is important to have a basic understanding of the main themes of Scripture. The Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Ministry of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary has produced a gospel tract using the term "GRACE" as an acrostic to help us to better understand the grand narrative of Scripture and to more effectively communicate the essential truths of the gospel message.¹³

The Letter "G" in GRACE Stands for God.

Scripture teaches that God is holy, unique, and without rival. He is independent and exists eternally in perfect fellowship within the Godhead—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The Holy God is:

- The creator – **Gen 1:1; Neh 9:6**
- The sovereign ruler – **Ps 135:6; Isa 46:9-10**
- Perfect in every way – **Ps 18:30; 1 John 1:5; Matt 5:48**
- The only true God who is worthy of worship – **Ex 20:1-7; 1 John 17:3; Rev 4:11; Rev 5:12**
- The law giver and just Judge – **Lev 18:4; Ps 82:8; Ecc 12:14, Acts 17:30-31**
- Love – **1 John 4:16**

While God created everything, He created humans in His own image and desires fellowship with us (**Gen 1:27**). As our loving Creator, we are responsible to love, worship, and obey Him (**Matt 4:10; 22:37-38**).

The "R" in GRACE Stands for Rebellion.

At some point after God created Adam and Eve (the first man and woman), they rebelled against the Creator. The devil (a created being who opposes God) appeared to the woman in the form of a serpent in order to tempt her to disbelieve and disobey God (**Gen 3**). Even though God had warned Adam and Eve that their disobedience would result in death (**Gen 2:17**), they believed the lies of the serpent and brought ruin on themselves and on creation. Through Adam and Eve's rebellion against God, sin entered the human race (**Rom 5:12**).

While the death that God promised would result in eventual physical death, Adam and Eve experienced an immediate spiritual death. Whereas once they enjoyed fellowship with God, they were now separated from God (**Isa 59:2**). And this is true of the entire human race for the Bible declares that we all have sin and that the wages of sin is death (**Rom 3:23; 6:23; Eph 2:1-3; 1 John 1:8**).

¹³ *Experiencing God's Grace* (Louisville: The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014). The following information is adapted from this gospel tract.

One day, we will all stand in judgment before God to give an account of our deeds. We will answer for our rebellion against Him (**Heb 9:27**). Ultimately, the righteous judge will cast all the unrighteous sinners into eternal hell (**Matt 25:31, 46**).

The “A” in GRACE stands for Atonement.

The word atonement means “to repair a broken relationship.” God, because of His great love for His creation, sent his Son Jesus into the world so that sinners may be reconciled to God (**John 3:16**). Reconciliation with God is based on the finished work of Jesus in His perfect life, substitutionary death, and resurrection from the dead.

The Bible teaches that Jesus is fully man and fully God (**John 1:1, 14**), that He lived a perfect life (**Heb 4:15; 1 Pet 2:22**), and that He died on the cross in the place of sinners to pay our sin penalty and to restore us to God (**Rom 5:8; 1 Pet 3:18**).

Through the blood of Jesus, sinners can be forgiven of sin and washed cleaned (**Isa 1:18; John 1:29; Titus 2:14; Heb 1:3 John 1:7; 1 John 2:2**).

In Jesus’ death, an amazing exchange took place: our sins were credited to Jesus; His righteousness is credited to those who follow Him (**2 Cor 5:21**).

Of course, death was not the end of the story for Jesus. On the third day, Jesus arose victoriously from the grave, delivering to death its final blow. Jesus’ resurrection proves that God has accepted His sacrifice on behalf of sinners and that through Him, there is forgiveness of sin.

In the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, God upholds His perfect justice and freely forgives (and justifies) all who place faith in Jesus’ atoning work (**Rom 3:21-26; Rom 5:1**).

The “C” in GRACE Stands for Conversion.

Jesus has made atonement for sin in His finished work. However, all sinners must each receive Jesus as Savior and Lord by a voluntary and intentional act of the will. Conversion involves transformed beliefs and desires. Biblically speaking, conversion depends on saving faith—faith and repentance in Jesus and His finished work.

First of all, the Bible teaches that salvation from God’s wrath is found in no one else but in Jesus (**Acts 4:12; John 14:6**).

Faith is an active trust in Jesus’ atoning life, death, and resurrection. Faith recognizes that our only hope for a restored relationship with God comes not through our own efforts, but through Jesus’ perfection.

Repentance involves turning from sin and turning to obey God. We are called to turn from our sinful desires and practices and turn to God in love and obedience (**Luke 13:3; John 14:15; Acts 17:30; 1 Thes 1:9**).

We need to be clear that salvation is the free gift of God (**Rom 6:23**). We cannot earn salvation, nor do we deserve it. Salvation is because of God’s grace from beginning to end (**Eph 2:8-9**). Such grace comes to those who receive Jesus by faith (**John 1:12; Acts 18:31; Rom 10:9-10**).

The “E” in GRACE Stands for Eternal Life.

Those who place their trust in Jesus are saved from the wrath of God and saved to eternal life. The Bible is clear that all who hear and believe the gospel have eternal life (**John 5:24; 1 John 5:12**). Just prior to raising Lazarus from the dead, Jesus declared “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die” (**John 11:26**).

While we can expect to face trials in this life (**John 16:33; 2 Tim 3:12**), we are promised God’s peace and God’s presence (**John 14:27, Matt 28:20; Heb 13:5**).

In fact, we can be confident that nothing will ever separate us from God’s love for us in Christ (**Rom 8:35, 37-38**), that Jesus will finish the work that He began in us (**Phil 1:6**), and that we will always be with the Lord (**1 Thes 4:16-17**).

And...Finally

If you were using this outline when engaging in personal evangelism, you would need to be ready to answer questions and clarify comments throughout the conversation. Also, you would need to be ready to transition the conversation to find out where the person stands in the sight of God based on the truth of Scripture. This would include asking the person if they are ready to follow God’s ways and believe the gospel by repenting of sin and trusting in Jesus. If so, you would want to help lead the person through a prayer to admit their sin and need for a Savior.

Conclusion

The “Experiencing God’s Grace” tract summarizes the overall message of the gospel and is a great resource to familiarize oneself with the essential truths that need to be communicated in when engaging in personal evangelism. We are making the tract available to you today so that you can familiarize yourself with the material. While this tract can be used when engaging personal evangelism, in our next session, I will recommend another way to communicate the gospel message.

This week, I want to encourage you to review the material that we covered today. Also, in preparation for next week, please also download to your phone the free “3 Circles: Life Conversation Guide” app published by the North American Mission Board. Many are finding this tool and this approach to sharing the gospel to be very helpful.

Finally, continue to pray for the 3-5 people that you listed in Session 2 and ask God to give you an opportunity to share the gospel with them.

Session 5: Communicate the Gospel

Goal: Session 5 is designed to help believers effectively transition to and communicate the gospel message.

Principle: Faithful evangelists are good listeners and can adequately transition to gospel-centered conversations.

Pray for the Session

Introduction

In our previous session together, we learned the essential truths that we need to know in order to communicate the gospel message effectively. If we grasp the material contained in the Experiencing God's Grace tract, we can be confident that we have enough knowledge to accurately communicate the gospel.

However, as we know, knowledge of the essential facts pertaining to the gospel doesn't always result in faithful or effective communication of those facts. In this session, we will learn a simple way to present the gospel using the "3 Circles: Life Conversation Guide."¹⁴ For those of you who were unable to download the app, we've provided some tracts for you this morning.

Ask the Class: How many of you were able to download the "3 Circles: Life Conversation Guide" app? If you were able to explore it, what were your initial thoughts?

Say to the class: While I believe this tool to be helpful, it is not fully comprehensive. For instance, the tool doesn't clarify who God is. For this reason, mastering the information in the "Experiencing God's Grace" tract can help you answer questions that may arise in your conversation.

The 3 Circles

Ask the Class: Let's begin this morning by replicating the diagram of the "3 Circles" tract on the white board.

A bit later, I will walk you through a scenario in which I utilized this tool, but for now, I want to spend a few minutes on transitioning to gospel conversations.

How Do I Transition to the Gospel?

First off, we need to recognize that transitioning everyday conversation to gospel conversations is an important part of engaging in personal evangelism. This is also one of the most intimidating aspects of personal evangelism. I've heard Christians say that if they could just transition the conversation, then they are confident that they could clearly articulate the gospel.

¹⁴ *3 Circles: Life Conversation Guide* (Alpharetta, GA: North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 2014).

Allow me to say that just as there is no one-size-fits-all approach to evangelism, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to transitioning everyday conversations to gospel conversations. That said, your ability to listen and ask good questions will prove helpful.

Noted evangelist Greg Laurie suggests that when it comes to personal evangelism, we must seek to build bridges to others by engaging them in conversation.¹⁵ On a side note, while it is likely that you will be sharing the gospel in the context of existing relationships, we need to be ready to share the gospel with people that we may not know or may not know well.

One way to pursue gospel-centered conversations with people that we may not know well or have limited contact with is to practice what Greg Laurie calls spiritual chumming.¹⁶ I assume that most of you know what it means to chum the water in order to attract fish. Spiritual chumming works the same way. During conversation, a would-be evangelist brings up a spiritual point and then waits to see if there is a response.

For instance, when casually conversing with someone in the community (grocery store, sports event, school function, etc.), mention something about an answered prayer request or God's blessing, or something your church prioritizes. While nothing may come of it, it could be that the response opens the door to a further conversation about spiritual things.

Whatever the circumstances, it is important to communicate care and concern for a person by listening well and asking good questions. When we listen attentively, we are better prepared to discern how best to transition to the gospel. When we listen well, we are better prepared to ask questions that can help us to make such transitions. When we listen well, we are better equipped to discern what people value, are afraid of, and get excited about.

Similarly, when we ask good questions, we communicate genuine interest and gain valuable information about people. We can learn what motivates a person, what is important to a person, and the circumstances of a person's life.

Blessing and Brokenness

Alvin Reid suggests that people communicate regularly around the passion and pain they experience and encourages would-be evangelists to connect such experiences to Jesus.¹⁷ I like to think in terms of blessing and brokenness. Good listeners pick up on the areas of blessing and brokenness in the lives of people. By asking good questions, we can gain insight into the areas of blessing and brokenness others experience. We should connect the blessing and brokenness people experience to Jesus.

For instance, a few months ago, I was communicating with a seriously ill elderly Muslim man whose medical treatment had left his body scarred. One of the scars looked very similar to a cross. Interestingly enough, the scar was located on one of the man's wrists.

¹⁵ Greg Laurie, *Tell Someone: You Can Share the Good News* (Nashville: B & H, 2016), 53.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 57.

¹⁷ Alvin L. Reid, *Sharing Jesus without Freaking Out: Evangelism the Way You Were Born to Do It* (Nashville: B & H, 2017), 47.

After a few minutes hearing about the man's poor health, I asked him about the scar on his wrist, noting that it looked like a cross. I was able to transition the conversation to the fact that ultimately healing comes only through the cross of Christ, and assured him that I would be praying for Him. While I was not able to share the entirety of the gospel message with this man, I was able to point him to Jesus.

More recently, I was engaged in a conversation with a man that I had just recently met. As he shared with me stories of his broken and painful past, much of which is due to his own foolishness, I felt compassion for him. At some point, I asked him, "So when you are all alone at night, what do you think about?" Immediately, he said "failure." He went on to say that there were some bright spots too, but that he regretted a lot of his past. For me this was an opportunity to transition the conversation to the gospel using the "3 Circles: Life Conversation Guide." Let's trace my conversation with this person on the white board.

3 Circles Example

I began by telling him that we all have areas of blessing and brokenness in our lives. While some people experience greater extremes than others, we should expect both in life. Because of what he communicated to me, I focused on brokenness first.

Following the "3 Circles" outline, I mentioned that we live in a broken world, filled with broken lives, broken relationships, and broken systems. I mentioned that brokenness is seen in lives, marriages, suffering, poverty, injustice and death—and then communicated that people naturally try to escape brokenness and pain.

Following the outline, I continued by saying that in contrast to brokenness, we see evidence of design and beauty; that we also experience moments of blessing and hope. I emphasized that the Bible tells us that God originally planned a world that worked perfectly. A world characterized by harmony.

I told him that God made each of us with a purpose—to worship Him and walk with Him—but that life doesn't work when we ignore God and his original design for our lives. Too often, we selfishly insist on doing things our own way. The Bible calls this sin.

I assured him that everyone has a sin problem. That no one is exempt, that we all sin and distort God's original design. The consequence for sin is separation from God in this life and for all of eternity. Sin leads to a place of brokenness, which we see all around us and in our own lives as well. When we recognize that life is not working, we look for ways out, trying different things to make it all work out. Brokenness leads to a place of realizing a need for something greater.

At this point, I clarified that because of our sin problem, we all need a remedy, some good news. Because of His love, God did not leave us in our brokenness. Jesus, God in human flesh came to us and lived perfectly according to God's design. Jesus came to rescue us by doing what we could not do for ourselves. Jesus took our sin and shame to the cross, paying the penalty for our sin by His death. Jesus was then raised from the dead – to provide the only way for us to be rescued and restored to a relationship with God.

I told him that simply hearing this good news is not enough. We must admit our sinful brokenness and stop trusting in ourselves. We don't have the power to escape this brokenness on our own. We need to be rescued and that in order to be rescued, we must ask God to forgive us—turning from sin to trust only in Jesus. This is what it means to

repent and believe. Believing, we receive new life through Jesus and God turns our lives in a new direction.

Finally, I communicated that when God restores our relationship to Him, we begin to discover meaning and purpose in a broken world—we can pursue God’s design in all areas of our lives. I clarified that even when we fail and sin—which we will do—God’s pathway to be restored is always the same, the Good News of Jesus.

As you can see, the last few pages of the outline encourage the evangelist to call for a response. While it is important to call for a response, it is important to dialogue with the person to see what questions they may have about what you shared with them.

My conversation concluded with me clarifying what it means to repent from sin, to follow Jesus, and to connect with a church family. While the individual did not trust in Jesus in that moment, he did thank me for the time and told me that he wanted to get together again.

Conclusion

In our remaining time this morning, I would like for you to break up into groups and have each person practice an evangelistic conversation using the “3 Circles” outline. Reference appropriate Scripture when possible.

After each person has had the opportunity to utilize the “3 Circles” tool, take out the list of people that you identified previously, and pray that God will give you an opportunity to utilize this tool this week with those individuals.

Session 6: Empowered Personal Evangelism

Goal: Session 6 is designed to reinforce several topics related to personal evangelism and to emphasize the necessity of prayer and dependence on the Holy Spirit.

Principle: Faithful evangelists recognize the importance of walking with the Spirit and prayerful dependence on God as they seek to live as witnesses for Jesus.

Pray for the Session

Introduction

Say to the Class: No one appreciates a person with a holier-than-thou attitude. Nothing damages the witness of the church or an individual like self-righteous hypocrisy.

I was recently on a trip outside of the country and we came across a person who would claim to be an evangelist. He was wearing a two-sided sign over his chest that informed people that all sinners were going to hell. He had a megaphone in his hand to make sure that people would hear his message.

When the group I was with walked past him, one of the guys in the group said “hello.” The guy responded with a snarky remark that went something like this: “Hell *is* low. Followers of Jesus will go to heaven. Heaven is hi. So, say hi, not hello.” I can tell you that no one in our group received his comments as helpful or funny. He came across as a self-righteous, misdirected fanatic—and I would be surprised if his approached every proved fruitful.

Character Counts

While we are witnesses for Jesus, we must recognize that we represent Jesus with more than just the words that we say. While we cannot be faithful personal evangelists without verbalizing the gospel, we will not be fruitful evangelists if our lives do not support the truth that we speak. While none of us is perfect, to believe the gospel is to be transformed by the gospel. When professing Christians fail to walk the walk that they talk, this can become a stumbling block for a person to believe the gospel.

Faithful Evangelists are growing Christians who are being transformed into the likeness of Christ as they walk by the Spirit. In **Titus 2:11-12**, the Apostle Paul writes, “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age.” By God’s grace, as we grow in Christlikeness, our lives, attitudes, and priorities will be transformed to be more consistent with Jesus’ life. As we walk by the Spirit, being submissive to God’s Word and sensitive to the Spirit’s direction in our lives, we will be more ready and willing to engage others with the gospel message. Paul alludes to this in **Colossians 4:5-6** when he writes: “Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer each person.”

When Should I Share the Gospel?

Ask the Class: Let’s pretend that you had information that could cure or prevent a deadly disease. You knew that if people would listen to you, then you could save their lives. When would you share this information?

Say to the Class: Spiritually speaking, Christians have been entrusted with the message that, if believed, will save sinners from certain eternal death. When should we share this message?

The Apostle Paul tells us that we should be ready in season and out of season to preach the word and to proclaim Christ (**2 Tim 4:2**). The Apostle Peter tells us to honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being ready to give a reason for the hope that is in us (**1 Pet 3:5**). In other words, we should always be ready and willing to initiate gospel conversations and respond to gospel questions.

In a nutshell, we should share the gospel whenever we have opportunity.

Where Should I Share the Gospel?

Ask the Class: If your job was to sell surfboards, where do you think you would live and spend most of your time? Why?

If surfboards were your business, chances are you wouldn't spend most of your time in the Midwest, the High Plains, or in the Rocky Mountains. People who live in those areas don't have much use for surfboards, at least not on a regular basis. To some extent, then, the need for the product determines how you would go about marketing your product.

Say to the Class: Now, the gospel is certainly not a product that we peddle, and we are certainly not salespeople when it comes to the gospel. Our job is not to "market" the gospel or to employ whatever means necessary to advance our cause.

That said, we need to recognize the universal need for what we are offering to people. Our job is to proclaim the gospel as ambassadors for Christ (**2 Cor 5:21**) wherever we find ourselves because the gospel is both applicable and relevant in every setting we find ourselves because we will always be surrounded by sinners apart from God's grace.

In Acts 1:8, Jesus calls his disciples to be His witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. While Jesus was clearly speaking geographically, there is personal application for us. We ought to consider our spheres of influence and determine how we can witness for Jesus. As we are going (**Matt 28:19**), we should take note of people who need to hear and believe the gospel and be disciplined in Christlikeness. We ought to be perpetually on the lookout for opportunities to share the gospel with neighbors, strangers, friends, family, co-workers, and acquaintances.

In a nutshell, because there is universal need for the gospel, we should proclaim Christ wherever we find ourselves.

With Whom Should I Share the Gospel?

Say to the Class: If our mindset is such that we will engage in personal evangelism whenever and wherever, it follows that we ought to be willing to share the gospel with whomever God brings across our path.

Ask the Class: Consider the people that Jesus interacted. What types of people did Jesus engage with truth?

Say to the Class: Jesus engaged all types of people: Rich and Poor; Educated and Uneducated; High Society and Low Society; Religious and Unreligious. Sometimes Jesus

seemed to seek people out. At other times, people sought Jesus out. Either way, Jesus was intentional in engaging people with truth.

In a nutshell, we should not withhold the gospel but be willing to share it with all people.

Faithfulness or Success?

While we should be ready and willing to engage all people with the gospel, this doesn't mean that all people will be receptive to the gospel. It may be that in attempting to engage others with the gospel, you find that a person is unreceptive or disinterested. Rather than burning a bridge or forcing an uncomfortable or unwanted conversation, remember that your goal is not to force feed information, but to love people. At times, we would do better to close our mouths and wait for a more opportune time.

Our job as witnesses for Jesus is to be faithful to proclaim Christ. We cannot force anyone to believe the gospel, nor can we change a sinner's heart. Therefore, whether a person responds positively to our gospel proclamation is not the measure of faithfulness. While we hope that people will respond to the gospel, ultimately, only God can change the sinner's heart.

The Priority of Prayer

Understanding our impotence in such spiritual matters, faithful evangelists regularly pray for their gospel efforts. They pray for lost people (**Rom 10:1**), and they pray for fruitfulness in their evangelistic efforts. Faithful evangelists recognize the need for God's power in light of man's sinful and fallen condition. Those who are dead in their sin have no spiritual life, and in their own power, are unable to respond to spiritual stimuli. In **1 Cor 2:14**, the Apostle Paul writes, "The natural person [those apart from faith in Christ and without the Holy Spirit] does not accept the things of the spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritual discerned." Unless the Holy Spirit opens the sinner's ears and eyes to receive the gospel and softens the sinner's heart to embrace the Jesus as Lord, he will not believe the gospel and be saved.

Calling out to God in prayer is vital because sinners are both spiritually dead and held captive in their sin. The enemy (Satan) wages a spiritual war, seeking to keep sinners blind to the gospel (**2 Cor 4:3-4**). So then, when it comes to evangelism, the nature of the battle necessitates divine power (**2 Cor 10:3-6**), which is appropriated through prayer. If we are to be faithful (and fruitful) evangelists, it will be because of the work of the Holy Spirit.

Ask the Class: Please break up into your groups and read the following passages: Matt 9:35-38; Acts 4:23-31; Eph 6:18-20; Col 4:3-4; and 2 Thess 3:1. In a few minutes, I will ask you to summarize what you read as it relates to prayer and the gospel.

Say to the Class: In light of the NT's emphasis on prayer as it pertains to evangelism and gospel fruit, we must discipline ourselves to pray for our evangelistic efforts.

God's Sovereignty

When we understand man's desperate condition because of sin, including his inability to embrace the gospel in his own power, we could become discouraged. To say that there is a lot riding on personal evangelism would be an understatement. One's eternal fate depends on what one does with the gospel. That said, we serve a God who is sovereign over

everything, who grants saving faith (**Eph 2:8-9; Acts 11:18**), draws men and women to Jesus for salvation (**John 6:44**), and appoints sinners to eternal life (**Acts 13:48**).

J.I. Packer encourages us to take comfort in the fact that God is sovereign. He reminds us that God's sovereignty overcomes "man's natural and irresistible impulse to oppose God, and . . . Satan's assiduity in shepherding man in the ways of unbelief and disobedience."¹⁸ As we carry out our commission as witnesses for Jesus, we do so in the full authority of the sovereign God, whose plans will not be thwarted and whose word always accomplishes His intended purpose (**Isa 55:11**). We should find comfort and be encouraged that God is sovereign over everything.

Conclusion

As we grow in our ability, confidence, and faithfulness as personal evangelists, we need to remember that one of the main reasons that God commissioned us in this endeavor is because He is a God who desires "all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (**1 Tim 2:4-5**). What great motivation and great encouragement to proclaim Christ, and to share the most important message ever—the word of the cross (**1 Cor 1:18**).

Thank you for your participation in this evangelism class. I pray that God will use it in our lives for His glory.

¹⁸ J. I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1961), 108.

Learner Guides for Proclaiming Christ: A Primer on Personal Evangelism

Session 1: Who Does God Expect to Engage in Personal Evangelism?

Goal: Session 1 is designed to reinforce the truth that God expects all Christians to engage in personal evangelism.

Principle: Faithful evangelists recognize that glorifying God includes submitting to Him in all areas of our lives, including personal evangelism.

Introduction

Small Group Exercise: What are the main responsibilities associated with the following jobs: Coach; School Teacher; Financial Planner; CEO of Large Corporation; Restaurant Waiter/Waitress.

Identity and Responsibilities

- Think about glorifying God in terms of _____ to His will.

Small Group Exercise: Read and summarize the following texts: Matt 21:28-32; 25:14-30; Mark 10:35-45; Luke 19:11-27; John 15:20; 1 Cor 4:1-5; 1 Peter 4:7-11.

- Living in submission to God's will is consistent with our _____ identity in Christ.
- Christians should see themselves as stewards of the _____ of Christ and the _____ of God (1 Cor 4:1-5 and 1 Pet 4:7-11).

The Great Commission, the Church, and the Individual Christian

- Mission statements are important because they serve to _____ purpose.
- Prior to His ascension to the right hand of the Father, Jesus gathered His disciples and gave the _____ its mission (Matthew 28:16-20).
- Considering Jesus' _____ and _____ (Acts 1:8) of his followers, we should conclude that one aspect of being a _____ Christian in engaging in personal evangelism.

Excuses, Excuses

- It is sin to not _____ in personal evangelism (James 4:7).
- Failing to proclaim Christ in everyday life necessitates _____.

Conclusion / Small Group Time

Session 2: Evangelistic Motivations

Goal: Session 2 is designed to help believers understand the importance of love, compassion, and heavenly rewards when it comes to personal evangelism.

Principle: Faithful evangelists have proper motivations when it comes to personal evangelism.

Introduction

Small Group Exercise: What are possible motivating factors in the following areas: School; Athletics; Job; Parenting.

Improper Motivations for Engaging in Personal Evangelism

Proper Motivations for Engaging in Personal Evangelism

1. The _____ of the Lord is a motivation for engaging in personal evangelism (2 Cor 5:11).

- The fear of the Lord is associated with recognizing God's _____ and _____.

Question: How might your life be different if you lived in the fear of the Lord?

2. _____ for God is a motivation for engaging in personal evangelism (2 Cor 5:14).

3. _____ for the lost is a motivation to engage in personal evangelism (Matt 9:35-38).

Group Exercise: Read and summarize the following verses: Matt 13:40-42, 50; Mark 9:42-48; Luke 13:27-28; Luke 16:19-26.

Individual Exercise: Write down the names of 3-5 people you know who are not followers of Jesus Christ.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

4. _____ for Christian _____ are motivations to engage in personal evangelism.

Conclusion / Small Groups

Session 3: Overcoming Barriers

Goal: Session Three is designed to assist believers to overcome common barriers to engaging in personal evangelism.

Principle: Faithful evangelists must address fear and a lack of discipline when it comes to personal evangelism.

Introduction

Group Exercise: Discuss how fear presents itself as it relates to evangelism.

Overcoming the Barrier of Fear

- To some degree, fear is _____ (Matt 10:6; John 15:18, 20).
- Jesus' _____ to be with us calms our fear.
- That we have been _____ with the Holy Spirit calms our fear (Acts 1:8, Luke 24:49).
 - The Spirit gives _____ / _____ (Acts 4).
 - _____ to speak (Luke 12:12)
 - Remembrance of _____ (John 16:13-14)
- Remembering that God's grace is sufficient, and his power is _____ in our weakness calms our fear (2 Cor 12:9).
- We need to be _____ to answer questions that people may ask (1 Pet 3:15).

The Fear of Man

- When we forget that God is sovereign and that His _____ matters most, we are susceptible to seeking the approval of man.
- The fear of man is idolatry and requires _____.

Overcoming the Barrier of a Lack of Discipline

- A lack of time for personal evangelism is often due to a lack of _____ and _____.
- Given our tendency towards self-protection and selfishness, we must _____ and _____ opportunities for personal evangelism.

Group Exercise: What are some ways that we can invest in relationships with non-believers?

Conclusion / Small Groups

Session 4: Know the Gospel

Goal: Session 4 is designed to equip believers with the knowledge of the gospel message.

Principle: Faithful evangelists must understand the essential truths of the gospel.

Introduction

Small Group Exercise: Gather in your small groups and take a few minutes to come up with definitions for both “gospel” and “personal evangelism.”

The Gospel and Personal Evangelism

- Gospel: _____.
- Personal Evangelism: The effective communication of the essential _____ message with the view towards seeing people supernaturally _____ followers and imitators of Christ.”¹

The “G” in GRACE Stands for God.

The “R” in GRACE Stands for Rebellion.

The “A” in GRACE stands for Atonement.

The “C” in GRACE Stands for Conversion.

The “E” in GRACE Stands for Eternal Life.

Conclusion

¹ Will McRaney, Jr., *The Art of Personal Evangelism: Sharing Jesus in a Changing Culture* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2003), 43-44.

Session 5: Communicate the Gospel

Goal: Session Five is designed to help believers to effectively transition to and communicate the gospel message.

Principle: Faithful evangelists are good listeners and can adequately transition to gospel-centered conversations.

Introduction

“3 Circles: Life Conversation Guide.”²

How Do I Transition to the Gospel?

- There is no one-size-fits-all approach to transitioning _____ conversations to gospel conversations.
- Spiritual _____ is a way to transition to gospel conversations.
- Communicate care and concern for people by _____ well and _____ good questions (which aids in our ability to transition conversations to the gospel).

Blessing and Brokenness

- Connect the blessing and brokenness people experience to _____.

3 Circles Example:

- Practice diagraming the “3 Circles”

Conclusion / Small Groups

² The North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, “3 Circles: Life Conversation Guide,” 2014.

Session 6: Empowered Personal Evangelism

Goal: Session Six is designed to reinforce several topics related to personal evangelism and to emphasize the necessity of prayer and dependence on the Holy Spirit.

Principle: Faithful evangelists recognize the importance of walking with the Spirit and prayerful dependence on God as they seek to live as witnesses for Jesus.

Introduction

Character Counts

- While we cannot be faithful personal evangelists without _____ the gospel, we will not be _____ evangelists if our lives do not support the truth that we speak.

When Should I Share the Gospel?

- We should share the gospel _____ we have opportunity (2 Tim 4:2; 1 Pet 3:5).

Where Should I Share the Gospel?

- Because there is universal need for the gospel, we should proclaim Christ _____ we find ourselves.

With Whom Should I Share the Gospel?

- We should not _____ the gospel but be willing to share it with _____ people.

Faithfulness or Success?

- Our job as witnesses for Jesus is to be _____ to proclaim Christ. Only God can _____ a sinner's heart.

The Priority of Prayer

- Faithful evangelists recognize the _____ for God's power in light of man's _____ condition (1 Cor 2:14).

Small Group Exercise: Read and summarize the following passages: Matt 9:35-38; Acts 4:23-31; Eph 6:18-20; Col 4:3-4; and 2 Thess 3:1.

- In light of the NT's emphasis on prayer as it pertains to evangelism and gospel fruit, we must _____ ourselves to _____ for our evangelistic efforts.

God's Sovereignty

- We should find _____ and be _____ in the fact that God is sovereign over everything.

Conclusion

- God's desire that all people be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim 2:4-5) is great _____ and _____ to proclaim Christ.

APPENDIX 3

SMALL GROUP CURRICULUM
EVALUATION RUBRIC

Small Group Curriculum Evaluation Form					
Guide One					
1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The curriculum piece is consistent with Scripture.					
The curriculum piece reinforces knowledge gained from Scripture.					
The curriculum piece encourages participants to adopt, modify, or repent of certain attitudes.					
The curriculum piece encourages participants to adopt, modify, or repent of certain actions.					
The curriculum piece encourages participants to be accountable.					
Overall, the curriculum piece is clearly presented.					

APPENDIX 4

PRE- AND POST-PROJECT PERSONAL
EVANGELISM SURVEY RESULTS

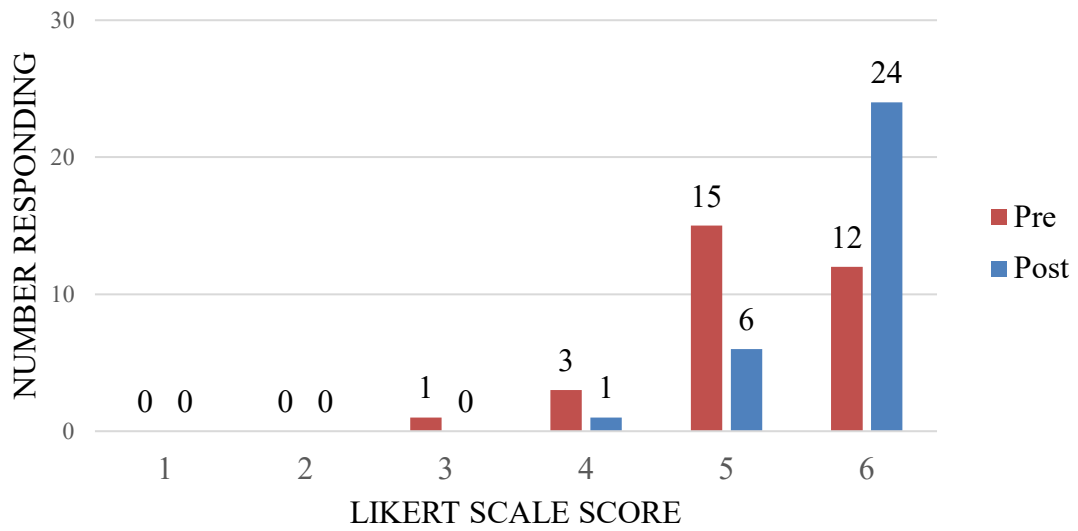


Figure A1. Q1: I understand the nature of the gospel

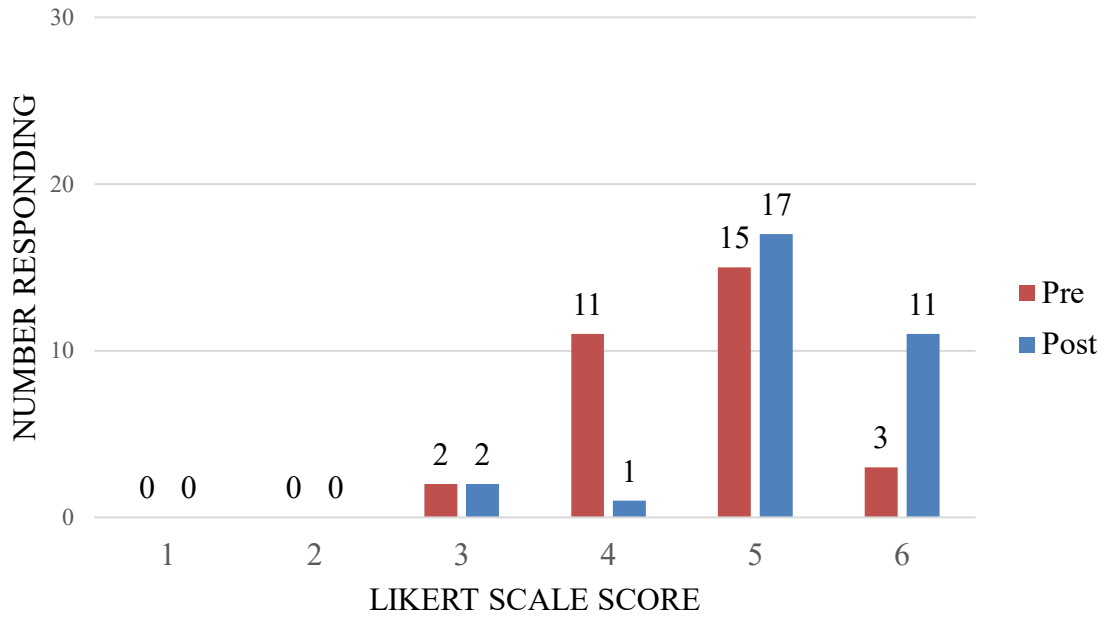


Figure A2. Q2: I understand the gospel well enough to communicate it clearly to the lost

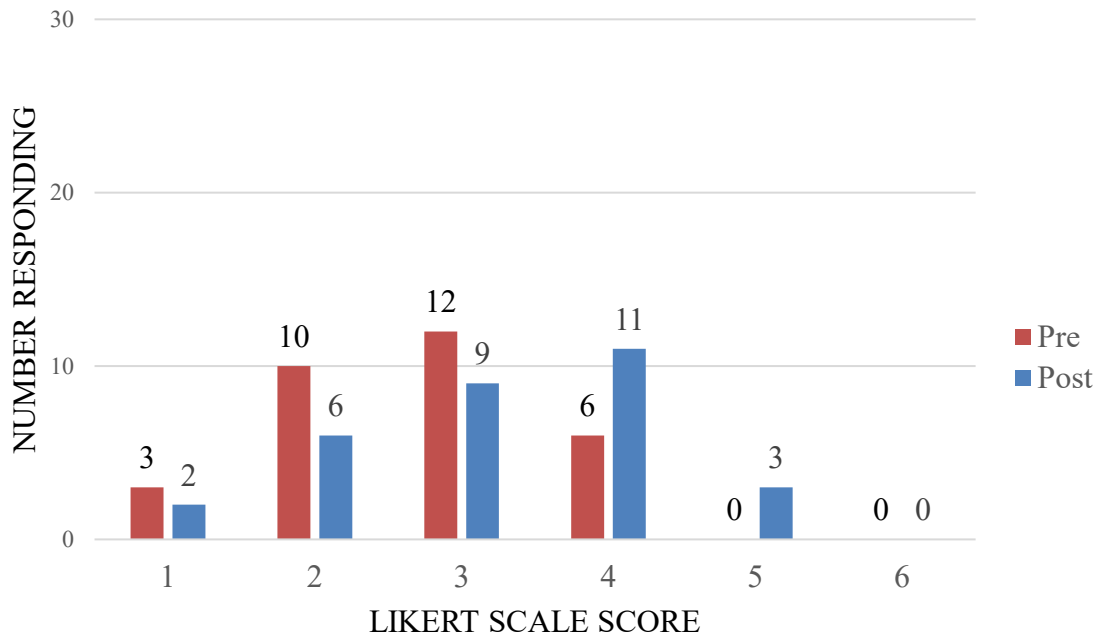


Figure A3. Q3: I regularly engage in personal evangelism

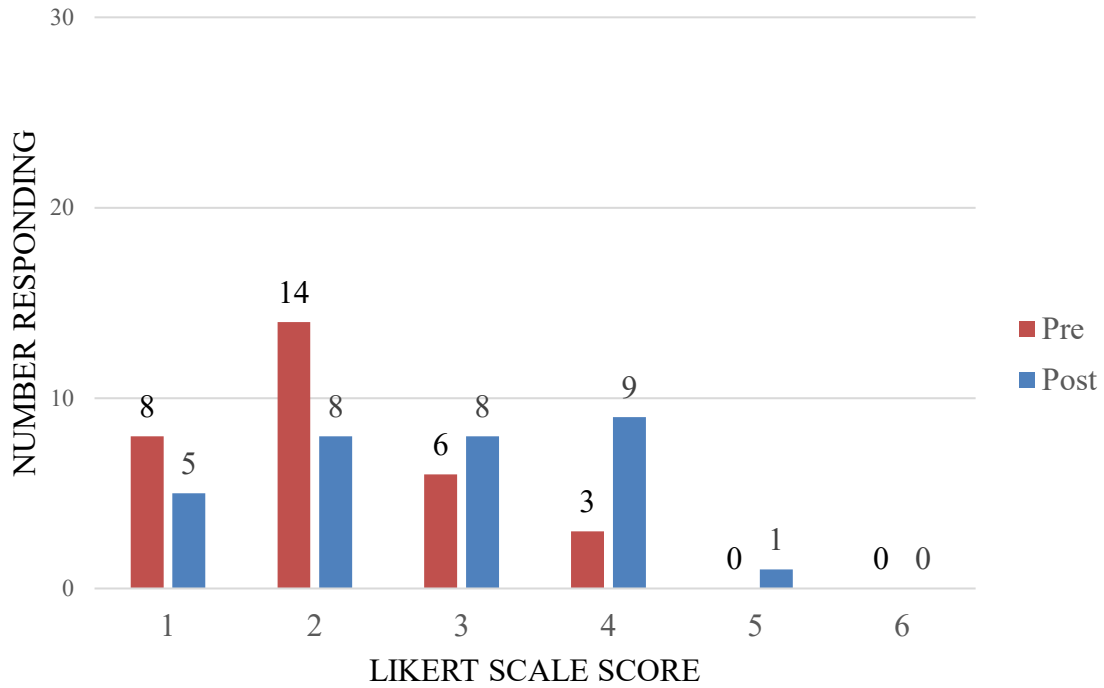


Figure A4. Q4: I set aside time throughout my week to engage in personal evangelism

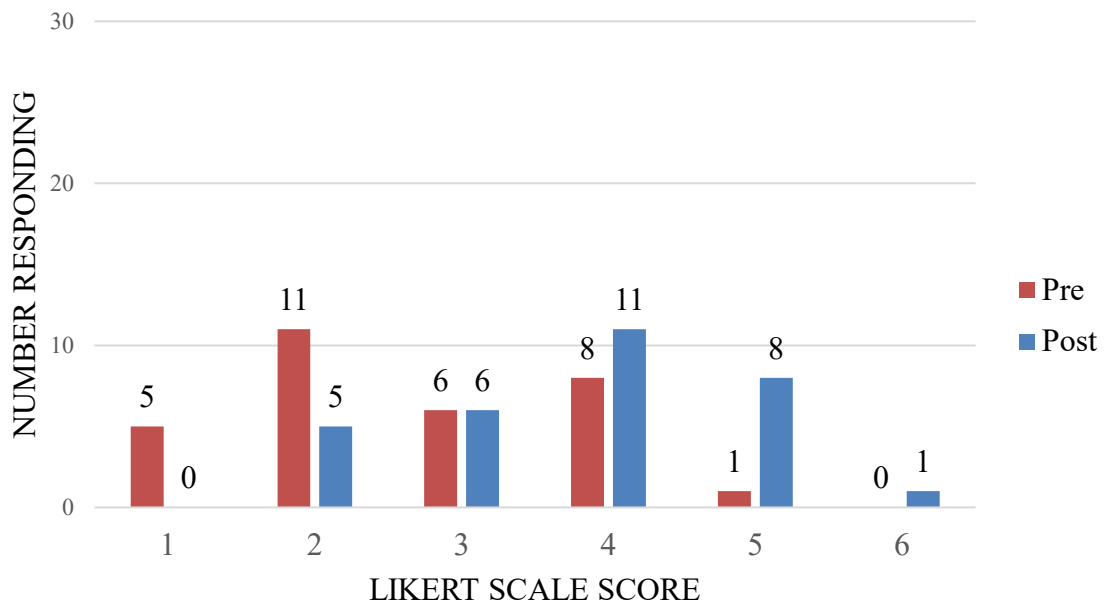


Figure A5. Q5: I am able to transition every day conversations to gospel conversations when speaking with lost people

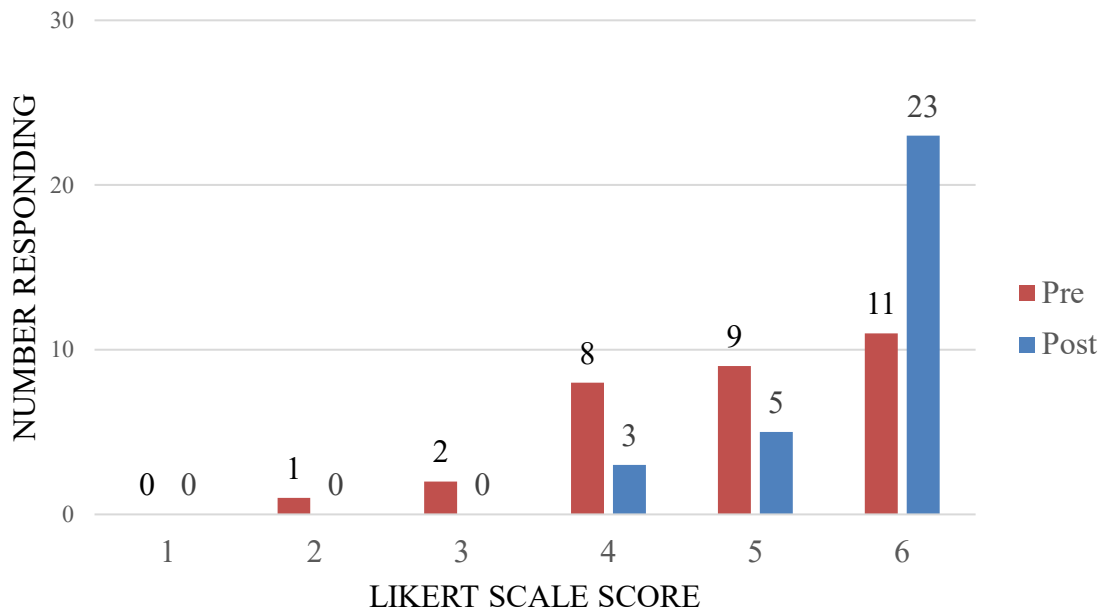


Figure A6. Q6: Scripture places the responsibility for personal evangelism on me

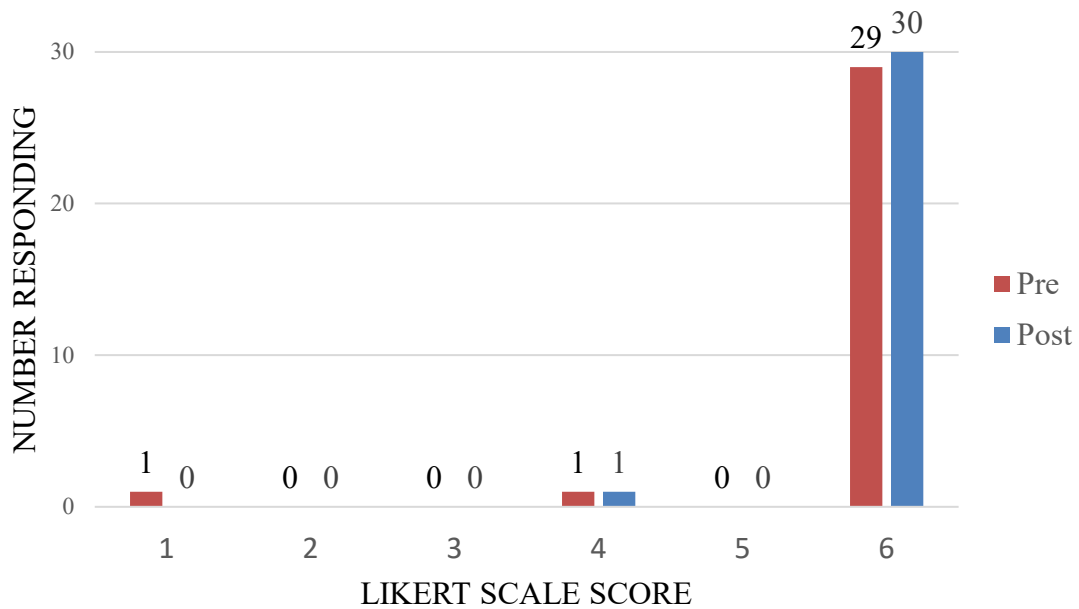


Figure A7. Q7: Those apart from the faith in Jesus will suffer eternally in hell

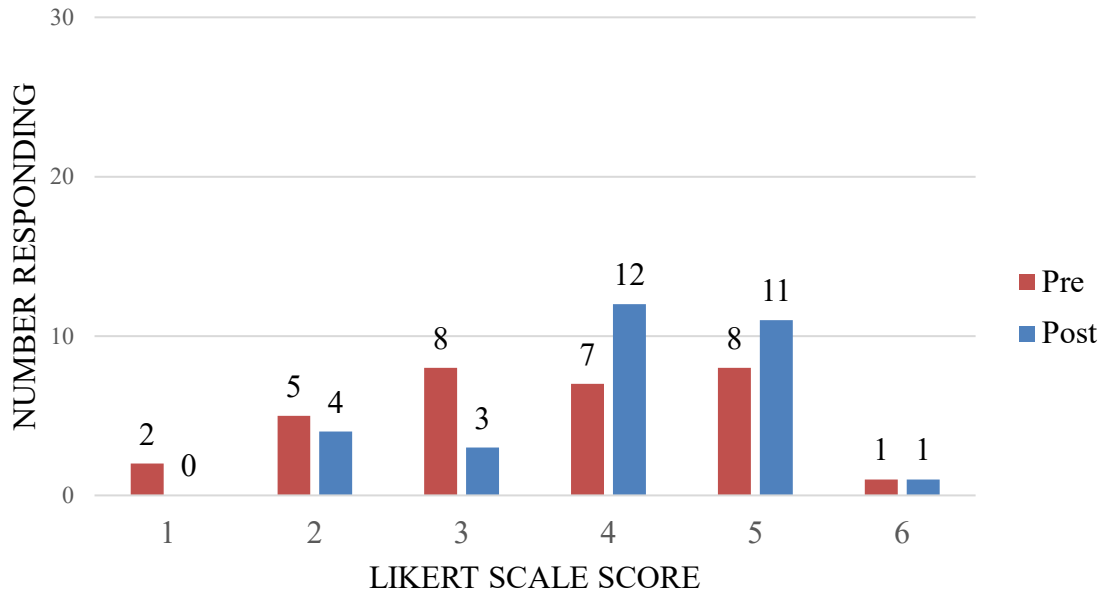


Figure A8. Q8: I regularly contemplate the horrors of hell and the fate of the lost

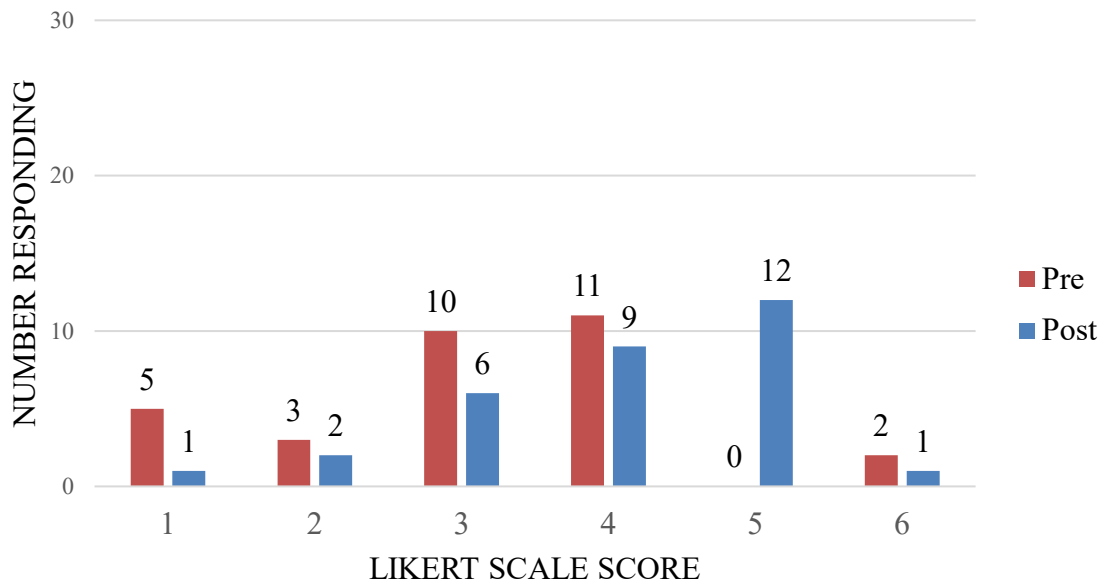


Figure A9. Q9: The eternal fate of the lost motivates me to engage in personal evangelism regularly

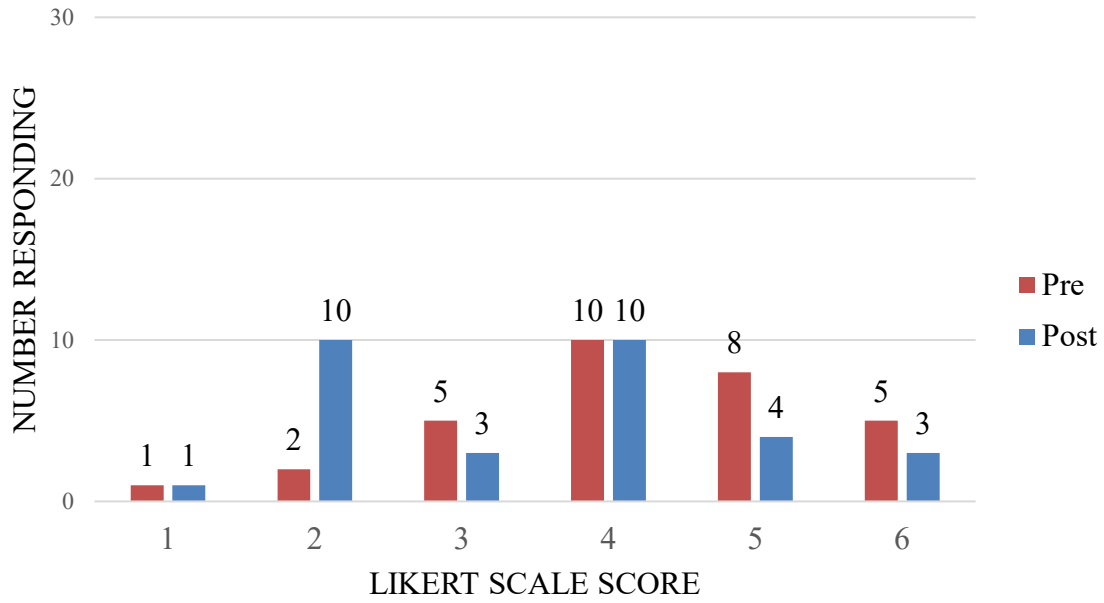


Figure A10. Q10: The fear of rejection keeps me from engaging in personal evangelism

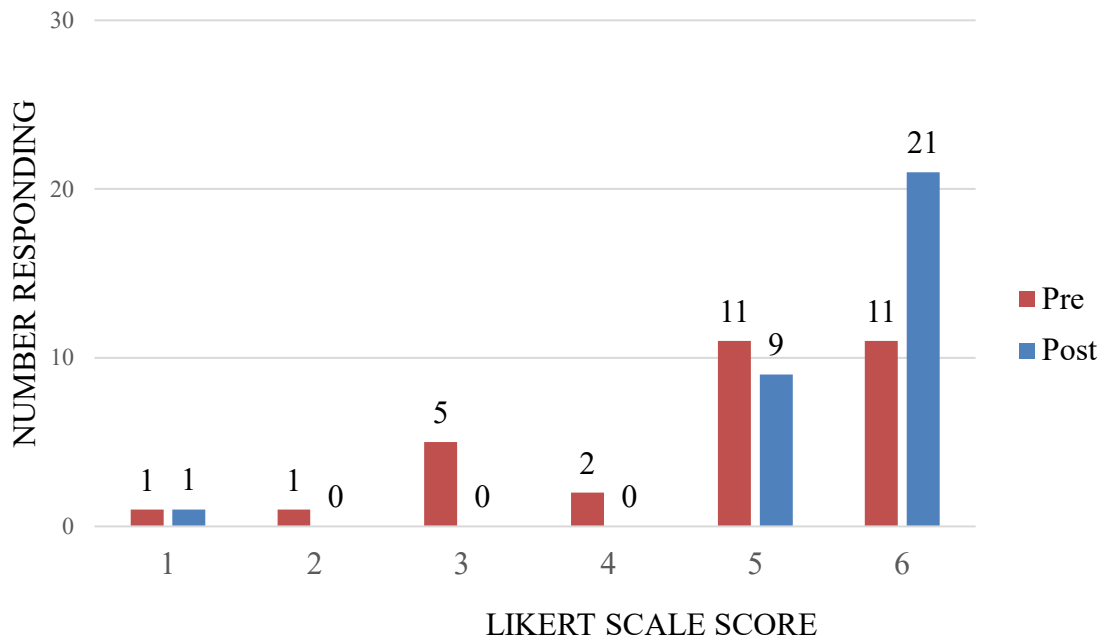


Figure A11. Q11: An unwillingness to engage in personal evangelism is sinful

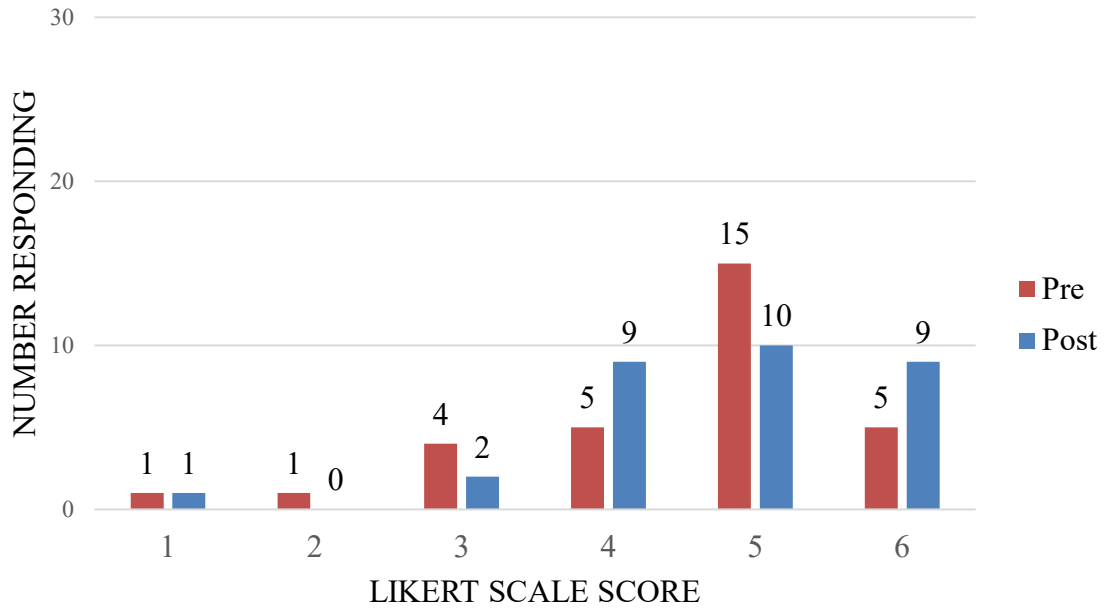


Figure A12. Q12: Most of the people I spend time with are Christians

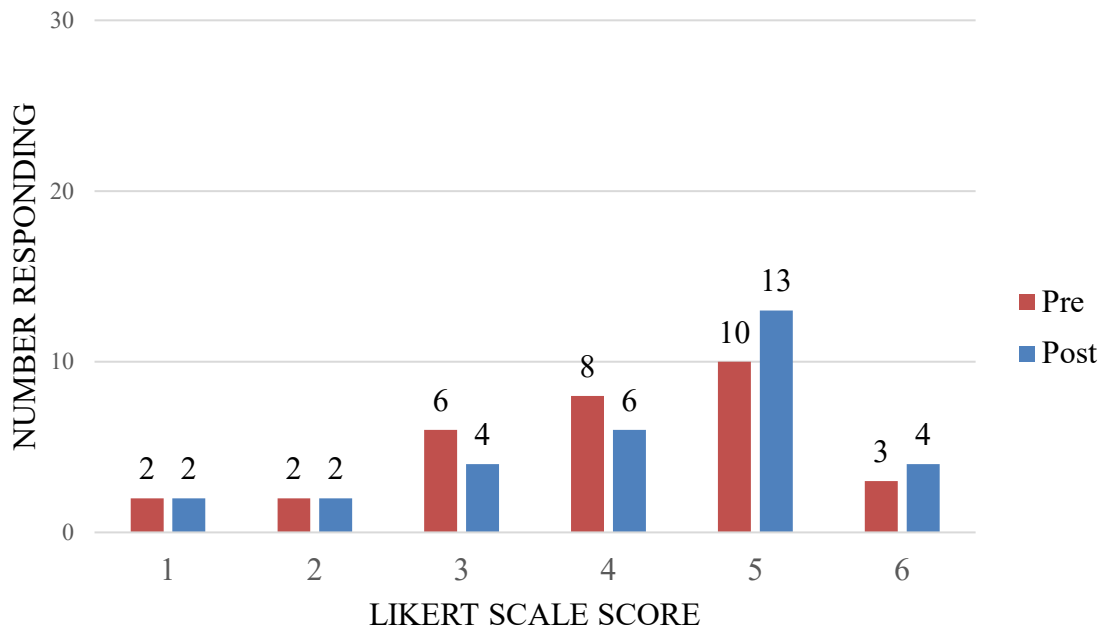


Figure A13. Q13: I have several relationships with people who do not go to church

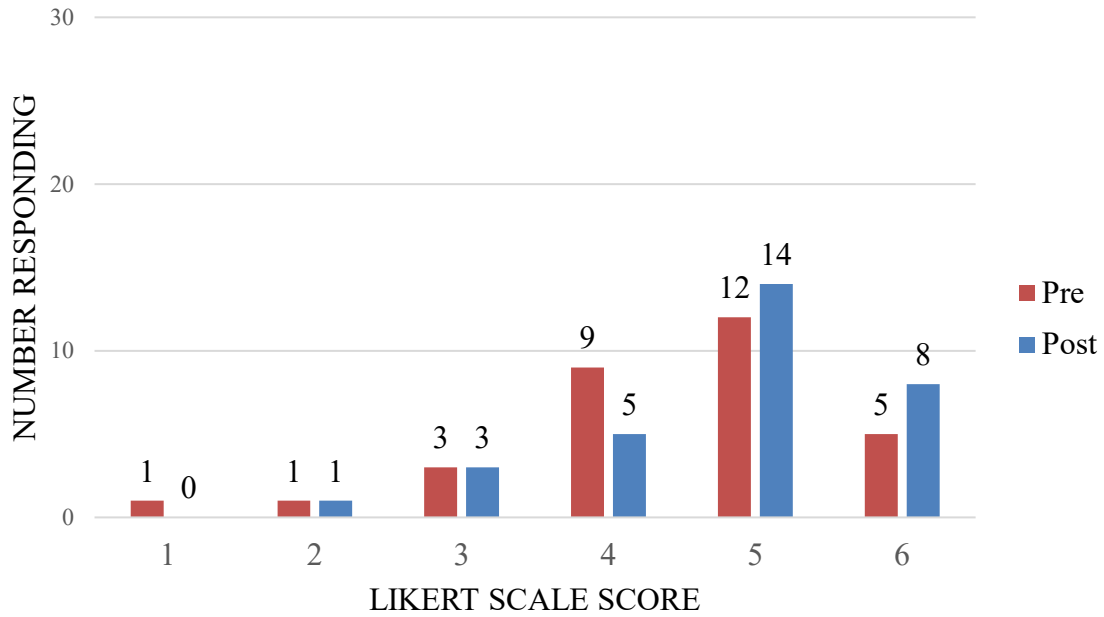


Figure A14. Q14: When I interact with people in the community, I often wonder if they are Christians or not

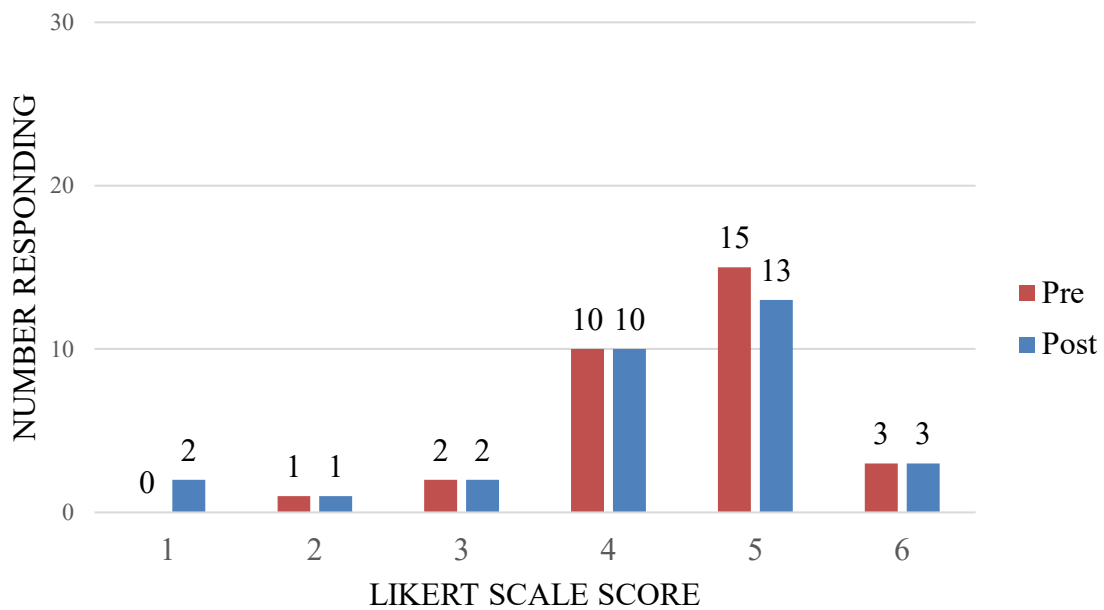


Figure A15. Q15: At times, I make judgements about whether someone would want to hear the gospel

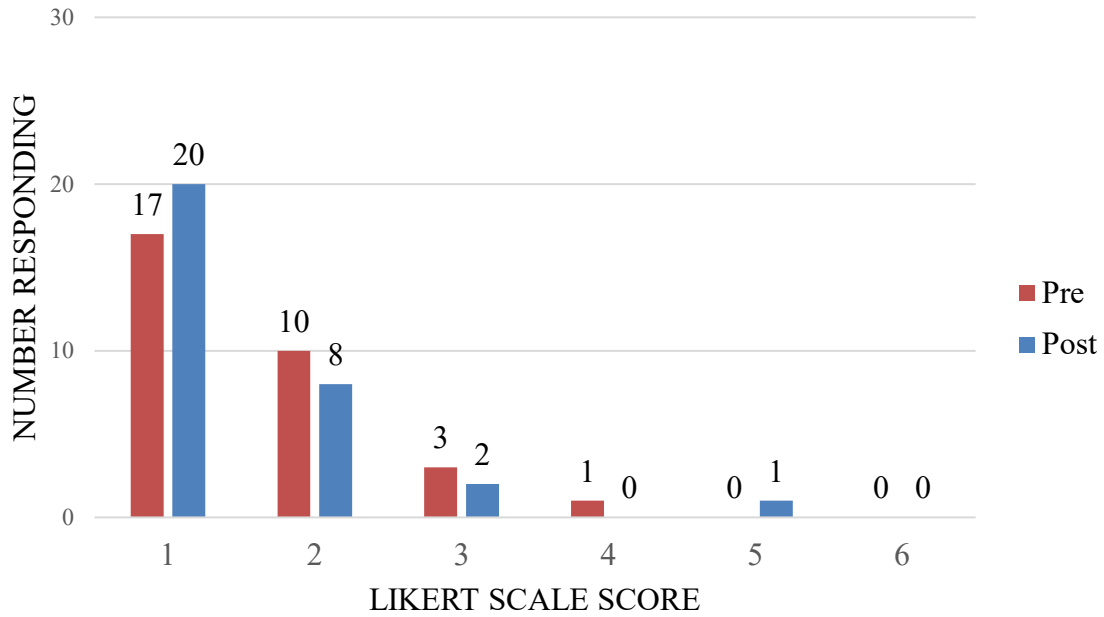


Figure A16. Q16: I do not engage in personal evangelism because I believe that God will save who He wants to save anyway

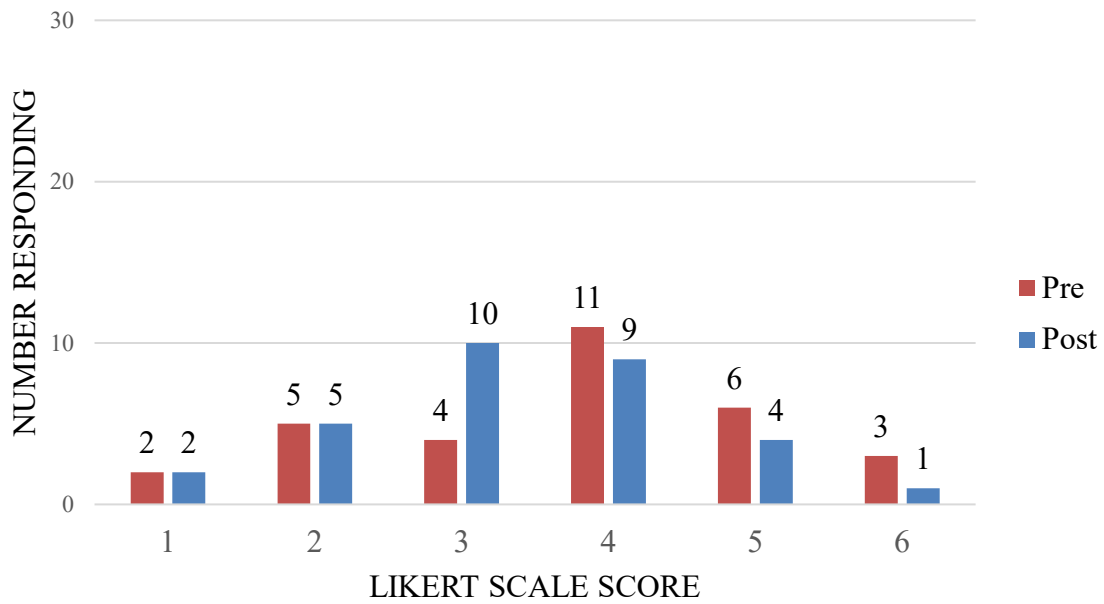


Figure A17. Q17: At times, I do not engage in personal evangelism because I am afraid of being seen as weird

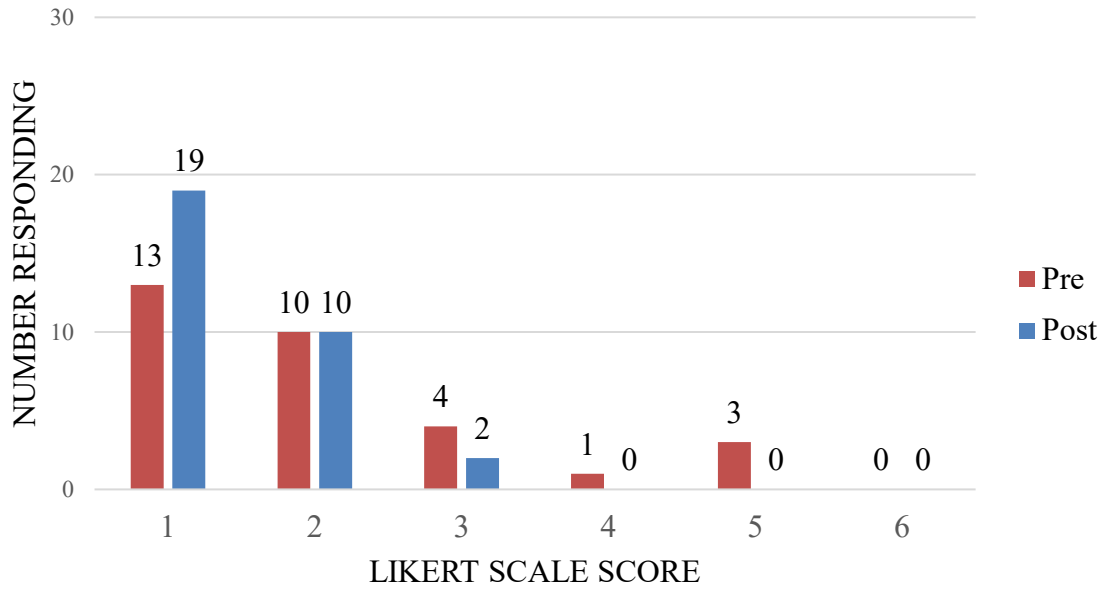


Figure A18. Q18: At times, I do not engage in personal evangelism because I am not sure that God wants me to

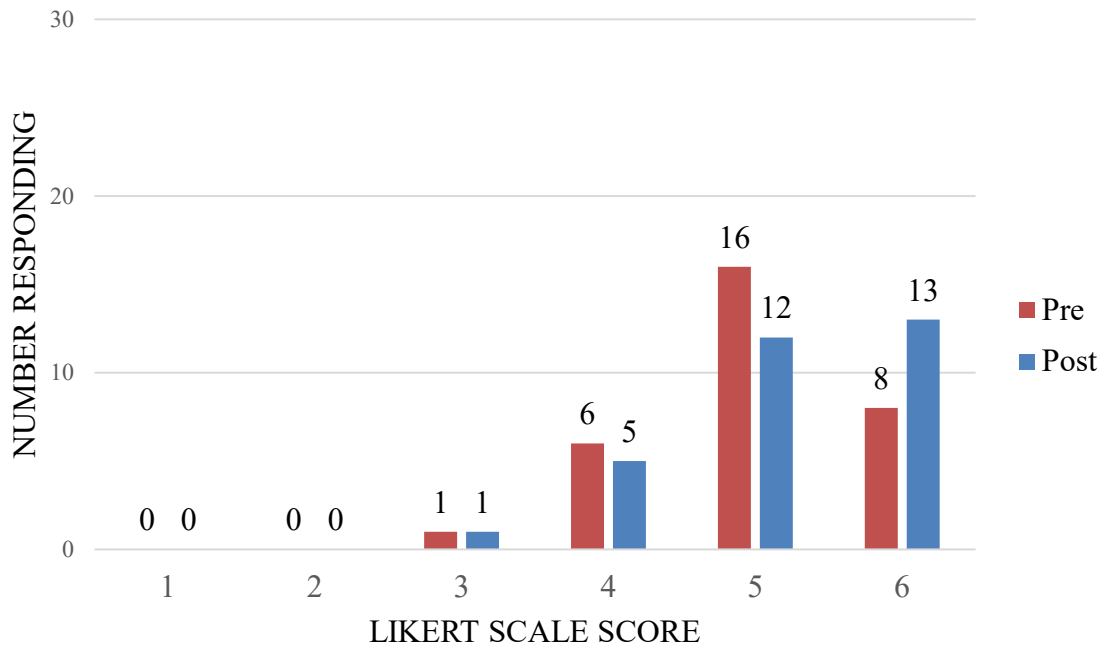


Figure A19. Q19: Sometimes I feel guilty for not engaging in personal evangelism

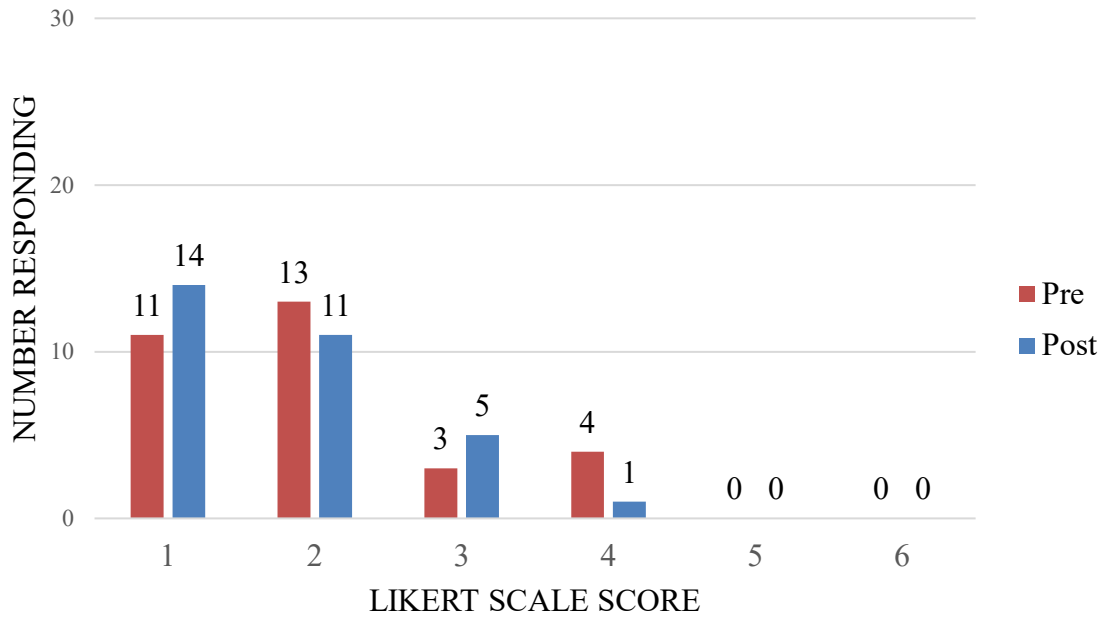


Figure A20. Q20: I do not have time to engage in personal evangelism

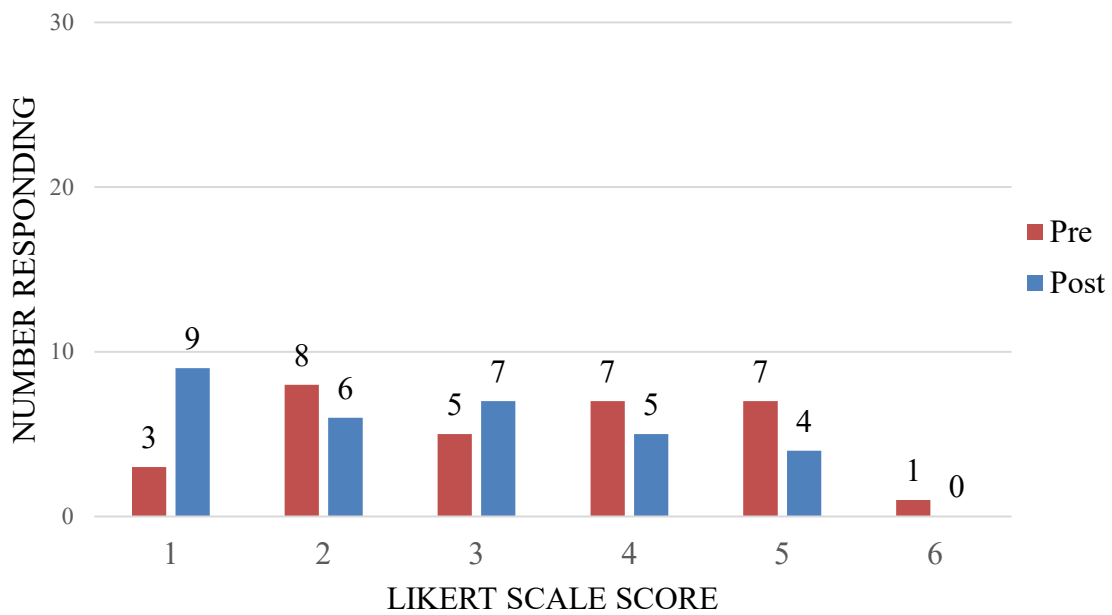


Figure A21. Q21: I do not engage in personal evangelism because I am introverted

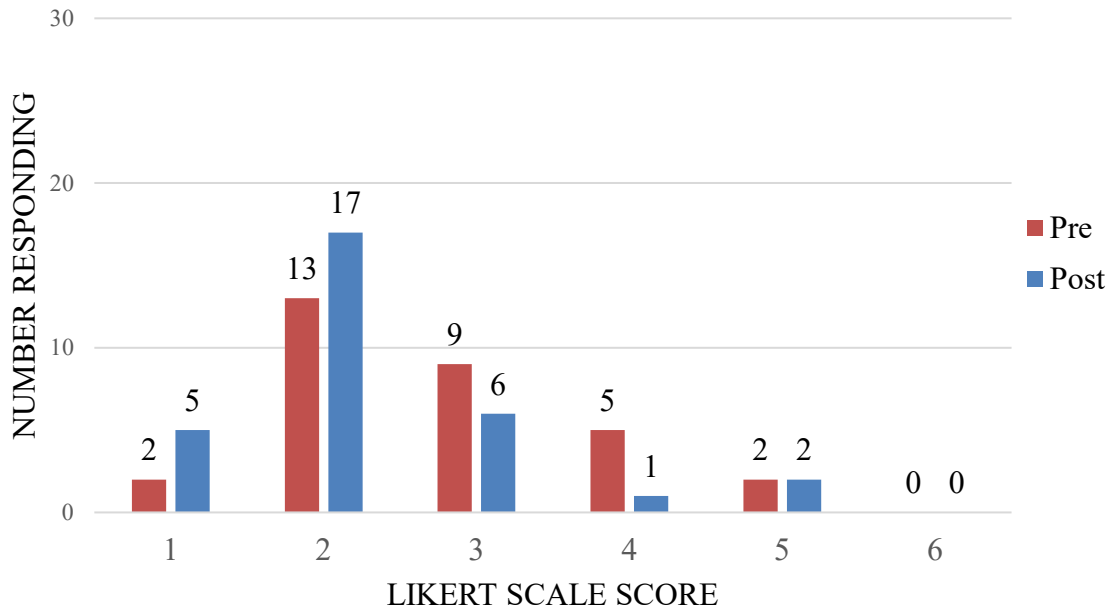


Figure A22. Q22: I rarely think about engaging in personal evangelism

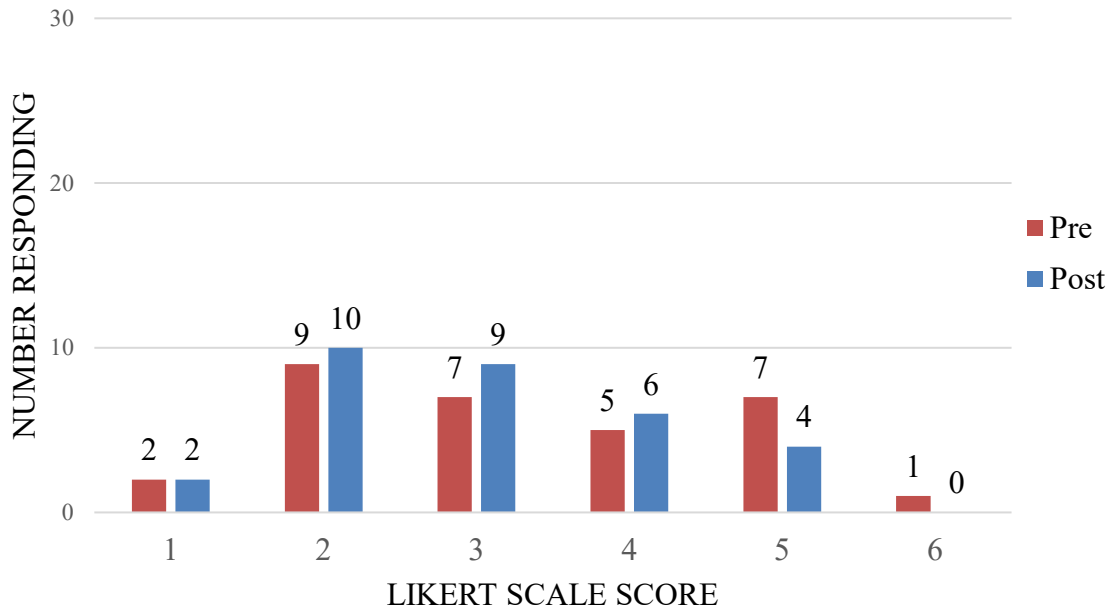


Figure A23. Q23. It is difficult for me to interact with people who I perceive are much different from me

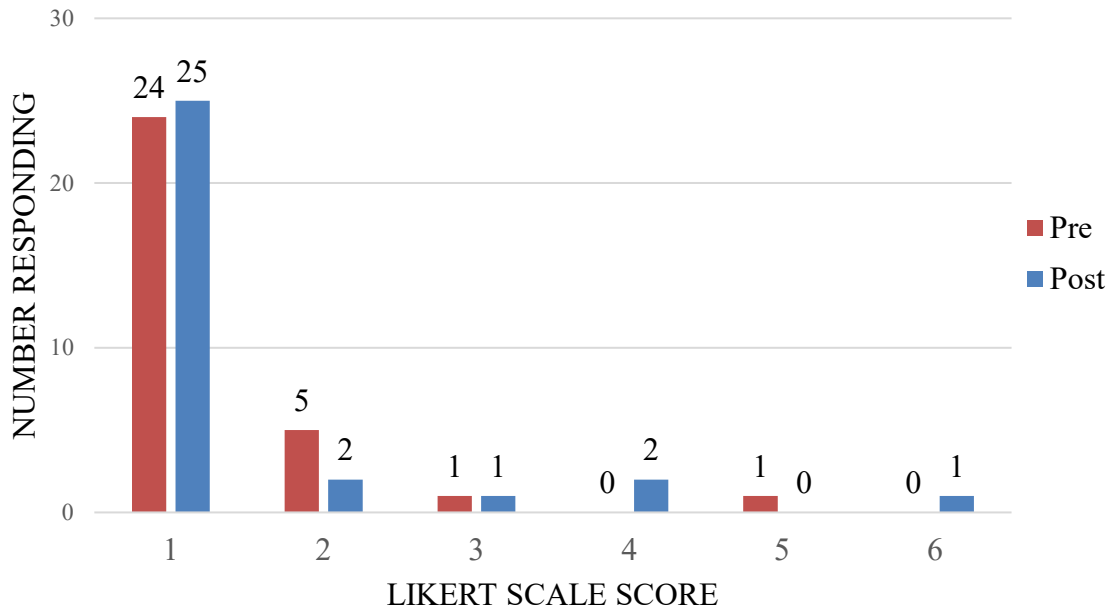


Figure A24. Q24: Certain people are beyond the reach of God's grace

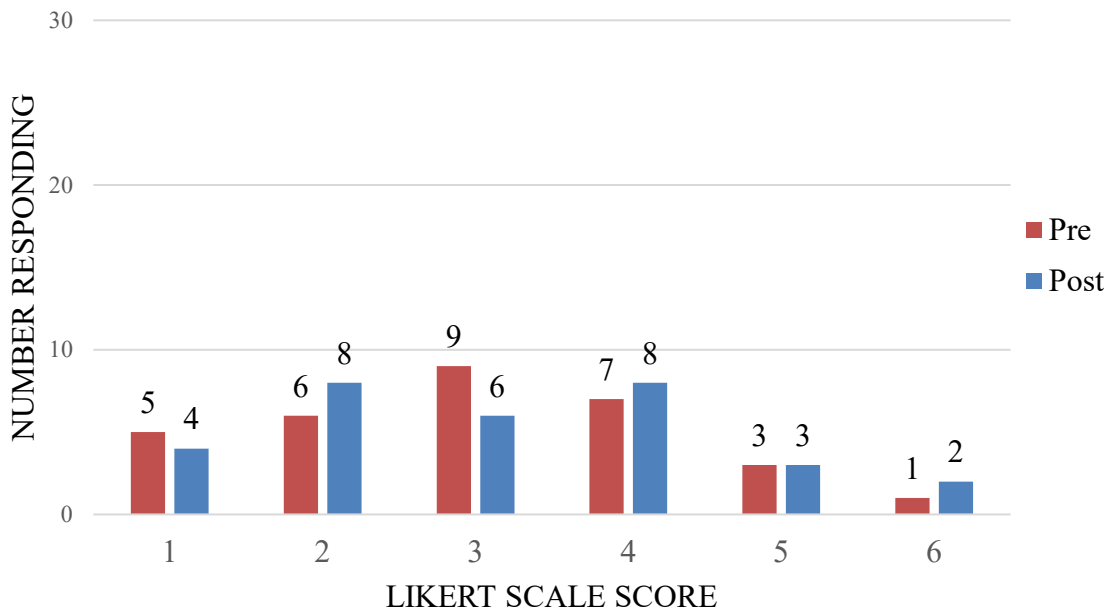


Figure A25. Q25: I find it difficult to engage in personal evangelism with people from other nationalities

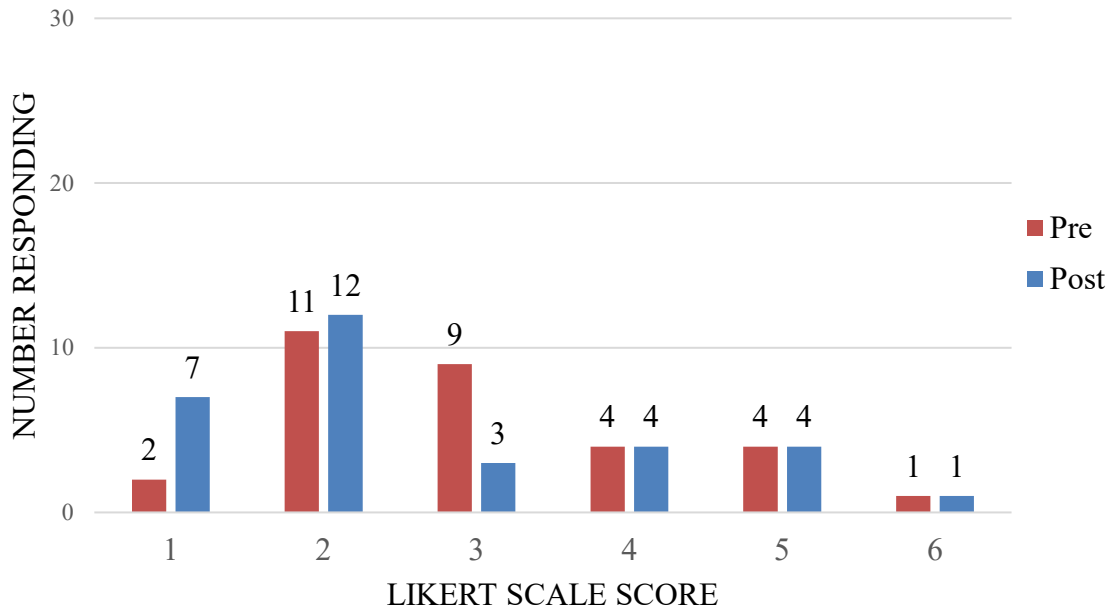


Figure A26. Q26: I feel unqualified to engage in personal evangelism because of persistent sin in my life

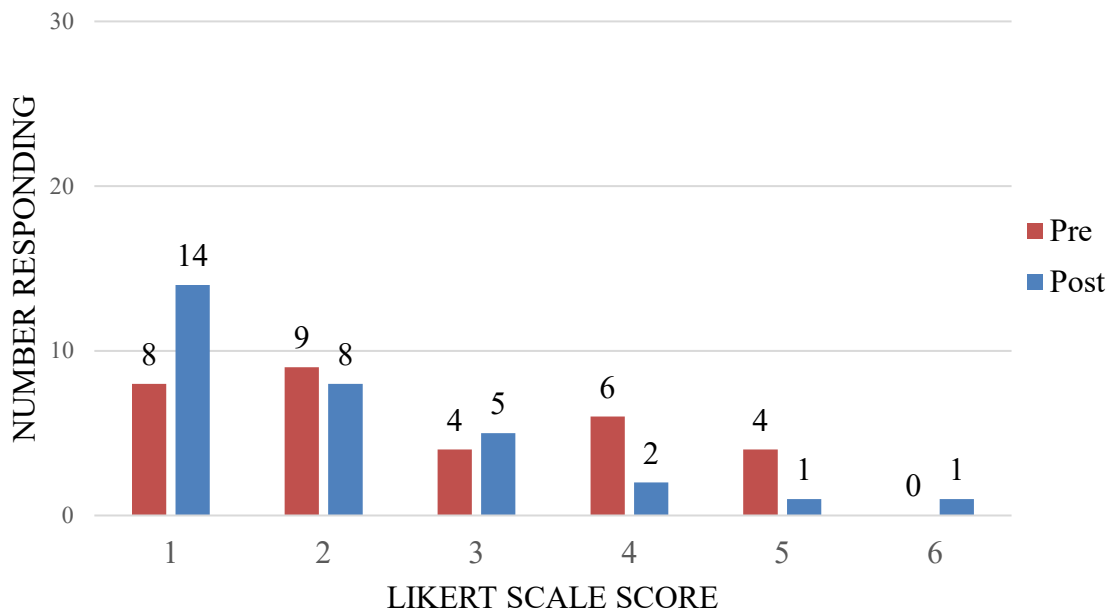


Figure A27. Q27: I feel unequipped to engage in personal evangelism because I have not seen it modeled

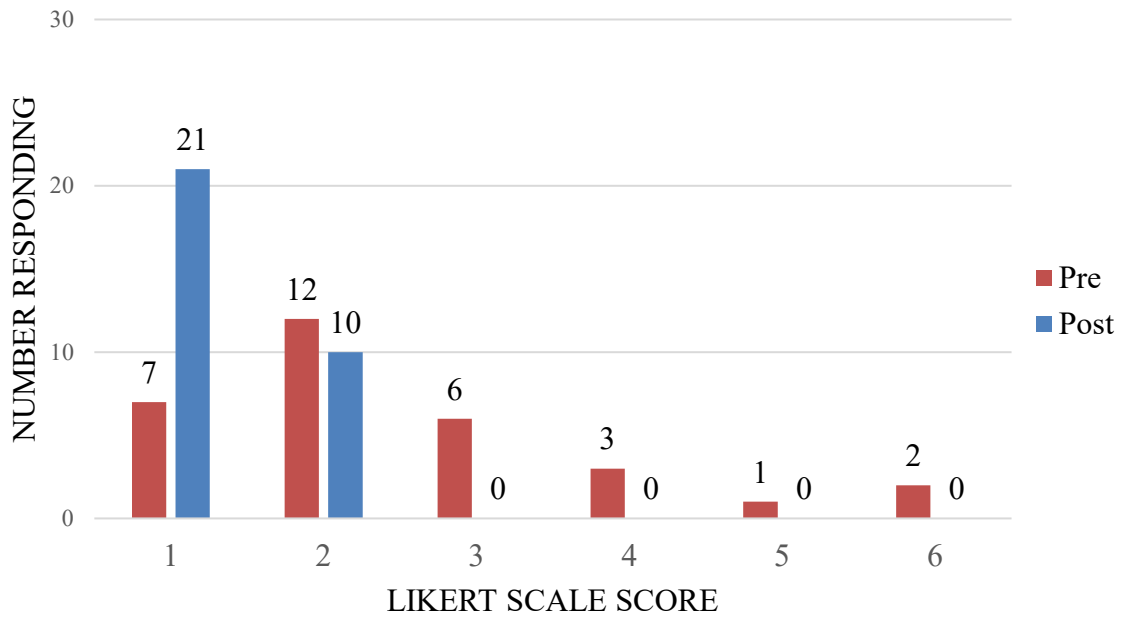


Figure A28. Q28: I feel unequipped to engage in personal evangelism because I have never been taught how to share my faith with an unbeliever

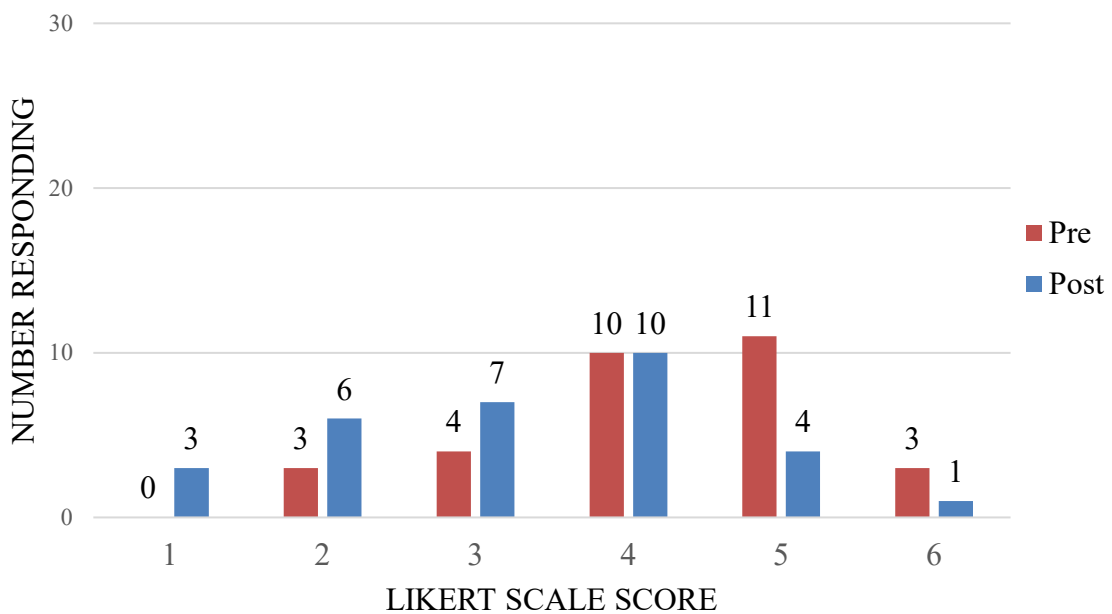


Figure A29. I am afraid that people will ask questions that I do not know how to answer when engaging in personal evangelism

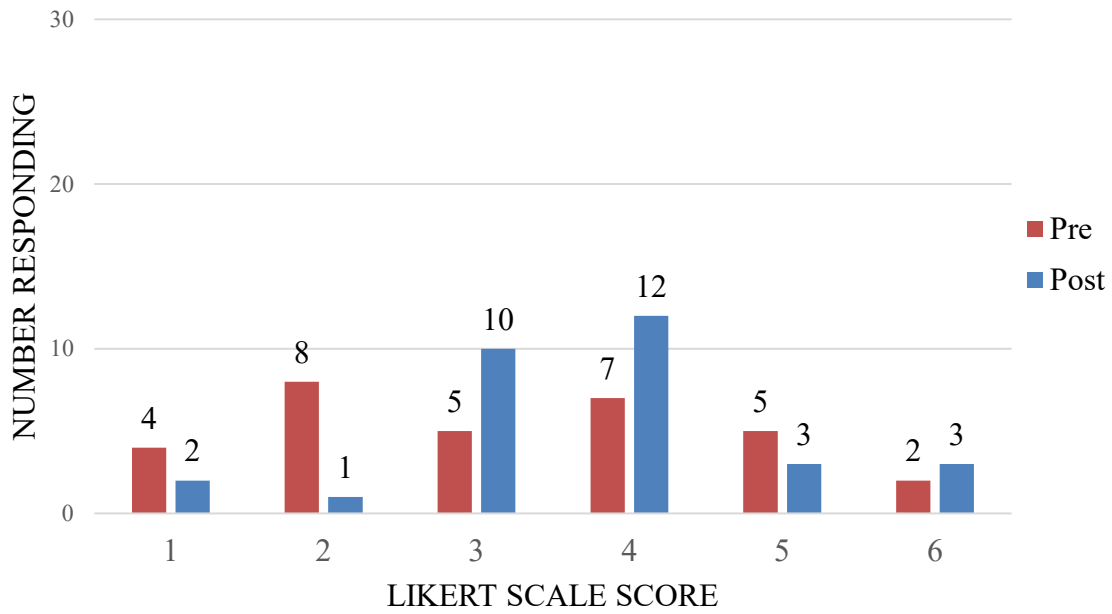


Figure A30. Q30: I pray for opportunities to witness to unbelievers

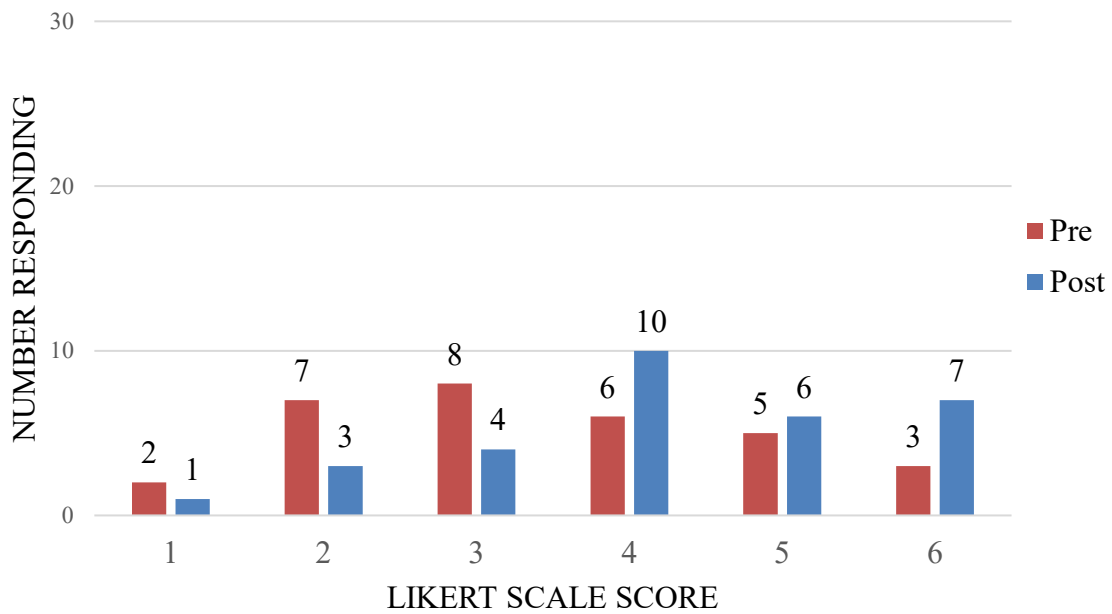


Figure A31. Q31: I have a list of lost people that I know and pray for their salvation regularly

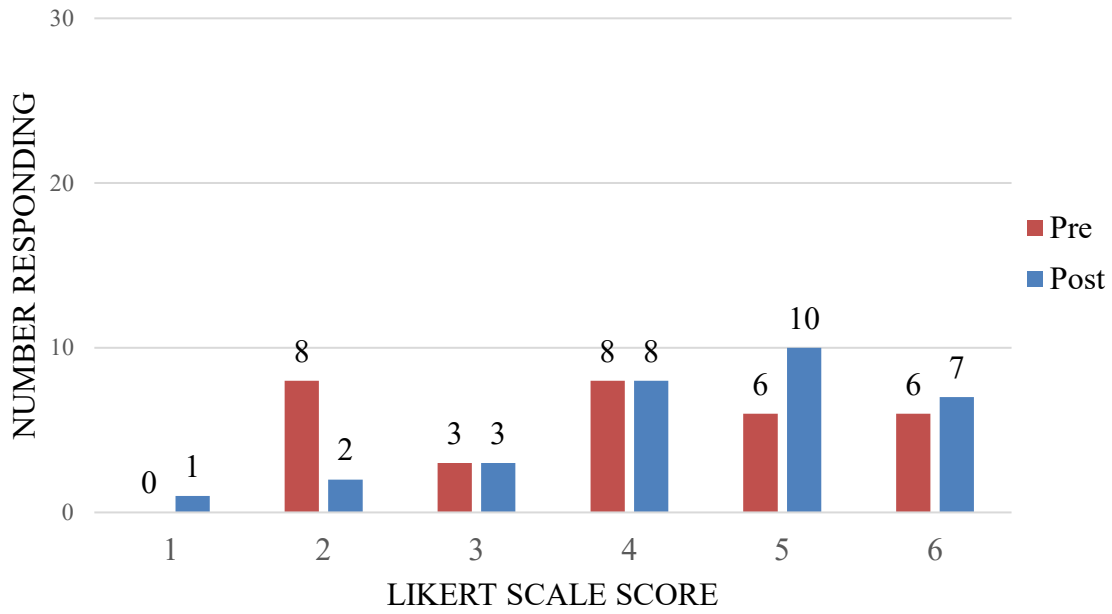


Figure A32. Q32: I regularly meditate on the fact that God has saved me from eternal hell

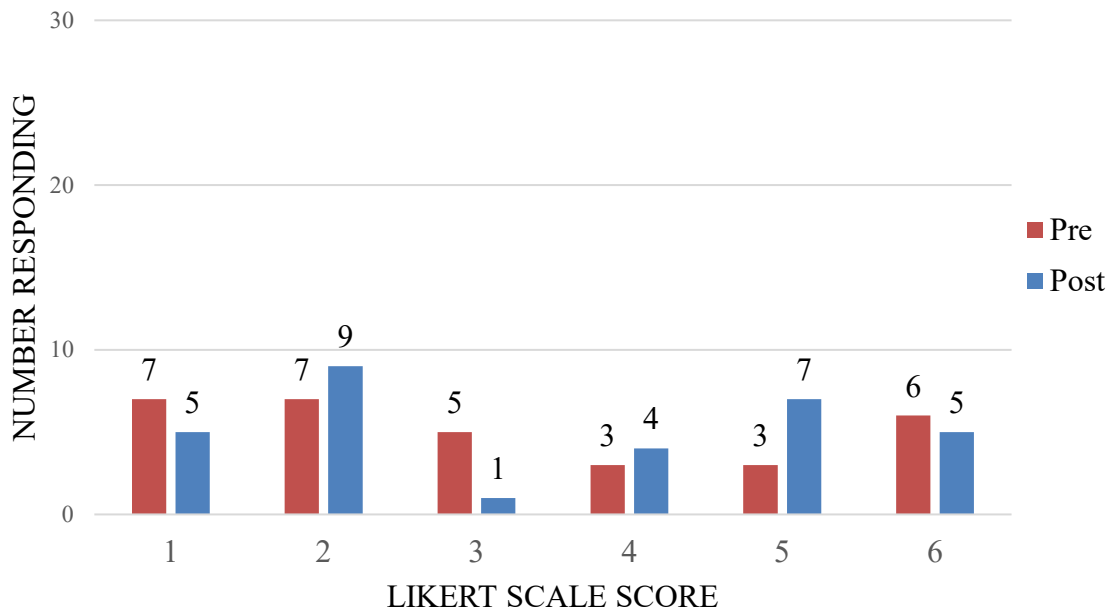


Figure A33. Q33: I have led someone to faith in Jesus through personal evangelism

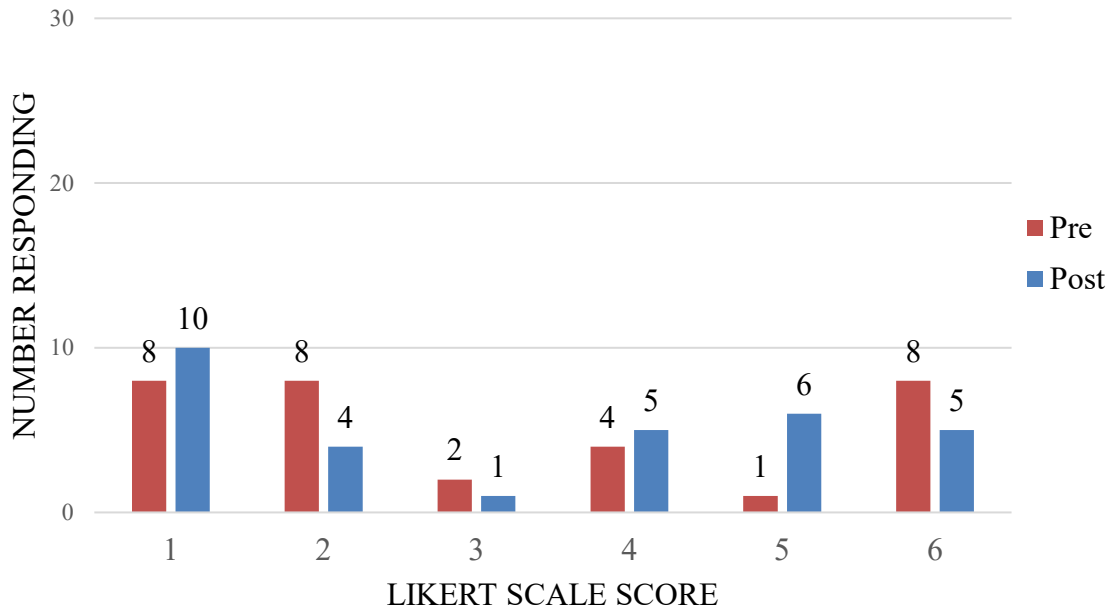


Figure A34. Q34: I trusted in Jesus as a result of someone sharing the gospel with me outside of the church building

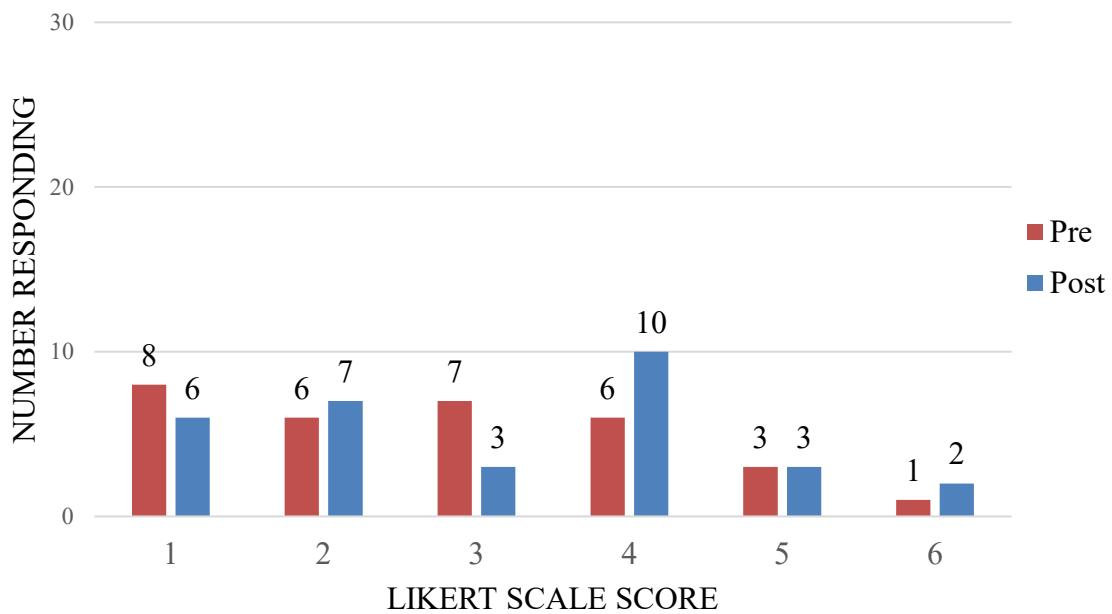


Figure A35. Q35: I have people in my life who hold me accountable to engage in personal evangelism

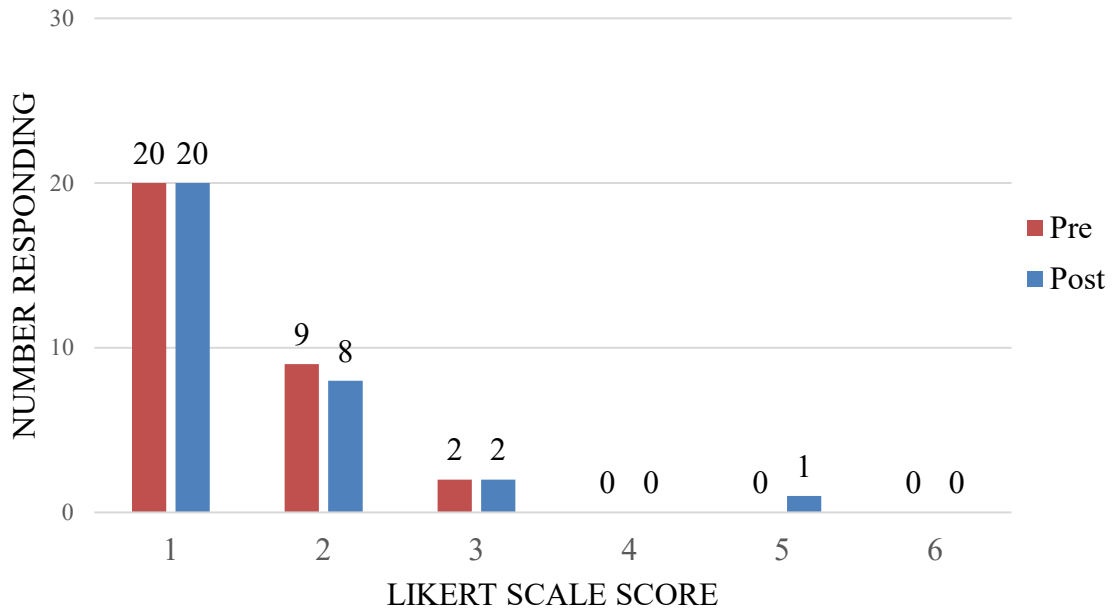


Figure A36. Q36: I practice fasting for the salvation of the lost

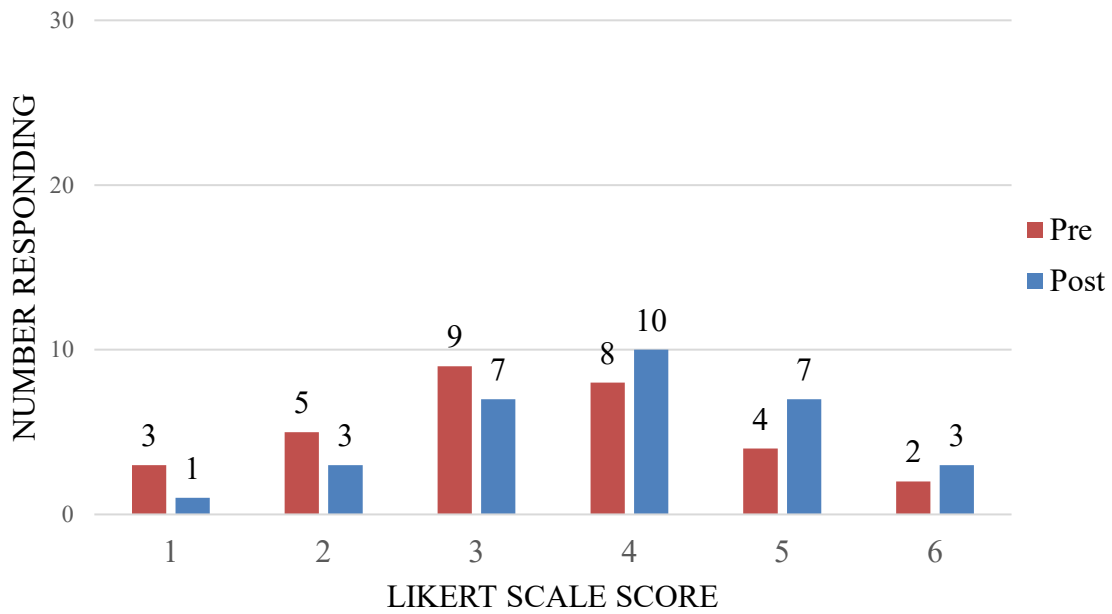


Figure A37. Q37: I read and meditate on God's Word several times a week

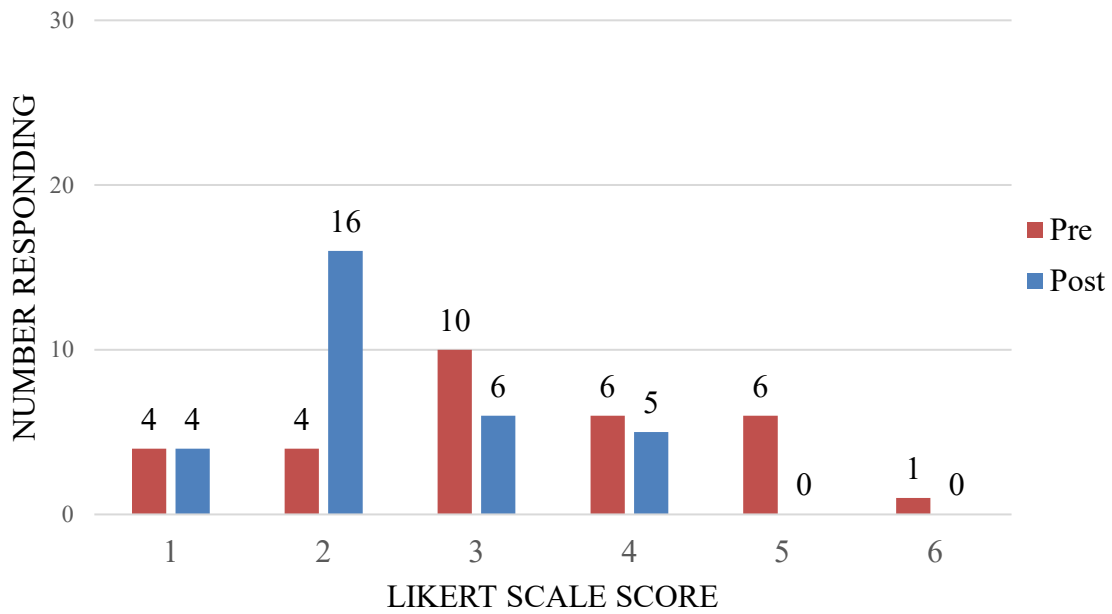


Figure A38. Q38: I would rather give money to missions than be involved with personal evangelism

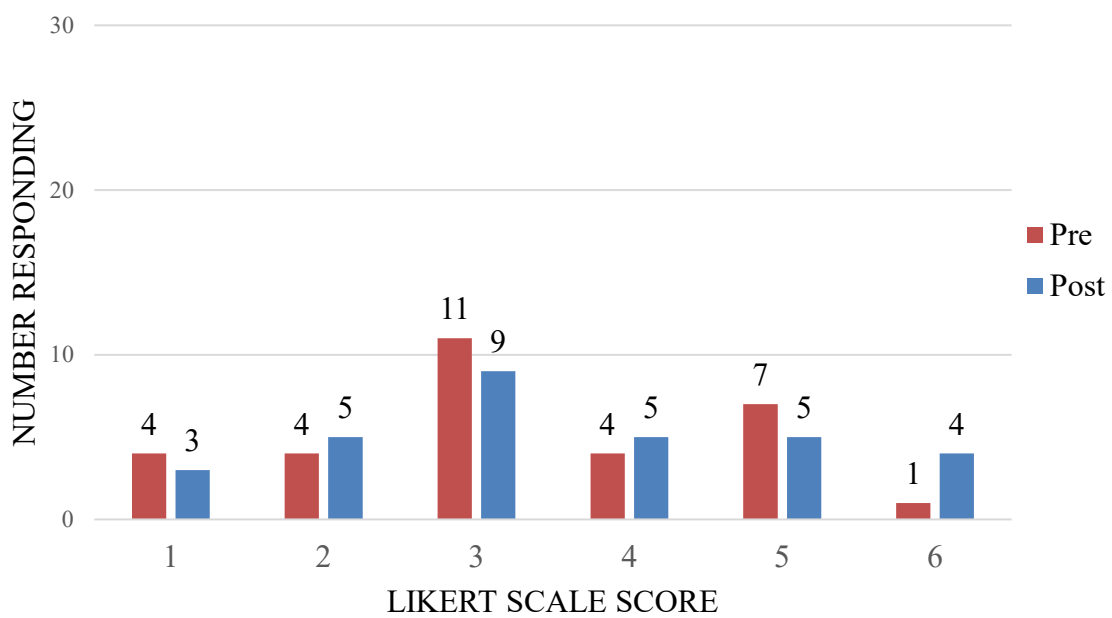


Figure A39. Q39: I regularly talk with others about Jesus outside of the church building

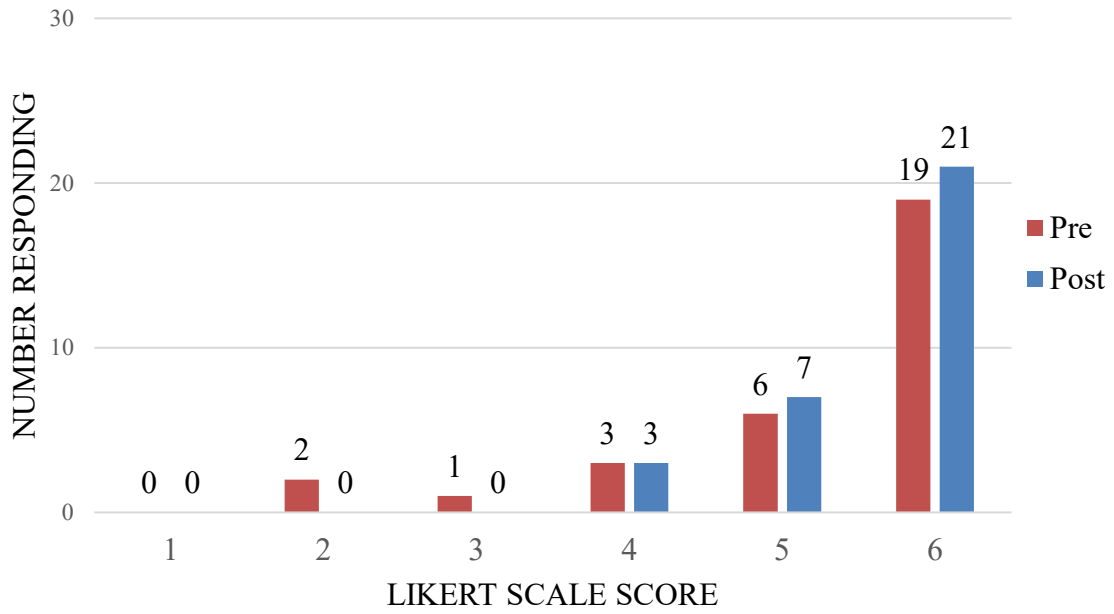


Figure A40. Q40: I want to engage in personal evangelism more consistently

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ABSTRACT

EQUIPPING MEMBERS OF TRINITY BAPTIST CHURCH IN AMARILLO, TEXAS, FOR PERSONAL EVANGELISM

Nathaniel Justin Magloughlin, D.Min.
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. William F. Cook III

This project was designed to equip members of Trinity Baptist Church (TBC) in Amarillo, Texas, for personal evangelism. The equipping process involved assessing current practices of and barriers to engaging in personal evangelism among select members. Utilizing a curriculum designed to equip members to engage in personal evangelism, small group participants were challenged to overcome barriers to personal evangelism and develop characteristics of personal evangelists.

Chapter 1 introduces TBC's ministry context, the rationale, purpose, goals, research methodology, definitions, and delimitations of the project.

Chapter 2 provides the biblical and theological basis for personal evangelism through the exegesis of five New Testament texts: Matthew 9:35-38; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; Romans 10:13-17; and 2 Corinthians 5:16-21.

Chapter 3 addresses common characteristics among those who engage in personal evangelism and common barriers to engaging in personal evangelism.

Chapter 4 details the project.

Chapter 5 offers an overall evaluation of the project, with suggestions for improvement and further development.

VITA

Nathaniel Justin Magloughlin

EDUCATIONAL

B.A., University of North Carolina at Charlotte, 2000
M.Div., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2004

MINISTERIAL

Middle School Pastor, Parkwood Baptist Church, Gastonia, North Carolina
1999-2001
Senior Pastor, West Side Baptist Church, Chester, South Carolina, 2005-2007
Senior Pastor, Trinity Baptist Church, Amarillo, Texas, 2007-