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TRAINING THE LAY LEADERS OF GRACE BAPTIST
CHURCH OF MIDDLETOWN, OHIO, FOR CHRIST-
CENTERED EVANGELISM

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Maximino Fernandez
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TRAINING THE LAY LEADERS OF GRACE BAPTIST
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CENTERED EVANGELISM

Maximino Fernandez

Read and Approved by:

Faculty Supervisor: Timothy K. Beougher

Second Reader: T. J. Betts

Defense Date: March 8, 2022

I dedicate this project to my wife, Catrina, and our children, Josiah and Joanna,
whom the Lord has used for my own Christ-centered sanctification
and for the edification of his church.

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PREFACE

The Lord has given me the privilege of serving the Grace Baptist Church of Middletown, Ohio. Among this wonderful body of saints are those lay leaders who faithfully serve one another each week. It is with gratitude to the Lord and to these lay leaders that I have put together this project in hopes that the church would faithfully fulfill her mission of making disciples of all nations.

In addition, I want to express my deepest gratitude to the professors and staff at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (SBTS) who have caused me to think deeply about the Lord's calling upon my own life as well as the life of our beloved church. Thank you to my faculty supervisor, Dr. Timothy Beougher. In spite of his busy schedule, he chose to take on this project.

To my wife and children who have endured countless nights of watching me read, write, and study—thank you for your patience. Thank you for your understanding. I am forever indebted to you.

Max Fernandez

Middletown, Ohio

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The exemplary, Spirit-filled Christians in the book of Acts appear to have taken the matter of evangelism quite seriously. It seems that nothing could stop the servant leaders of those churches from preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. Whether it was the persecution of Peter and John (Acts 4:1-20) or the execution of Stephen (Acts 7:51-8:2), it is as though the first century church could not help but be witnesses. Just as those early Christians manifested a perseverance in Christ-centered evangelism, the lay leadership at Grace Baptist Church of Middletown, Ohio need a restoration of this evangelistic fervor. Though the history of our church is rich, it has become apparent that we need a return to Christ-centered evangelism.

Context

The context of this ministry project was the Grace Baptist Church (GBC) of Middletown, Ohio. While the primary element addressed was that of Christ-centered evangelism, three contextually relevant factors were considered. GBC is (1) an independent, fundamental Baptist ministry; (2) a programmatically driven ministry; and (3) a Christian education ministry. These three factors directly impact the evangelistic efforts of the GBC membership—efforts that have lost direction over the course of GBC’s history. Consequently, these factors were relevant because they impact evangelism.

When strengths are excessively utilized or emphasized, they can become weaknesses. Such is the case with GBC. Each of these contextual factors were identified because of the direct impact they have on the mission of the church: “To preach the gospel, baptize, and teach to teach.” While it could be said that evangelism is the

particular weakness of the mission, this would be dismissive of the reality that fundamentalism, program-orientation, and Christian education are all relevant factors in the loss of clarity regarding Christ-centered evangelism. The subsequent section will examine each of these strengths and weaknesses and their potential relationship to Christ-centered evangelism.

Historic Fundamentalism

Historic fundamentalism is both a strength and a weakness, but how do fundamental teachings and evangelism correlate with each other? The fundamental teachings are the foundation for the practice of evangelism. These teachings include the following: (1) the virgin birth of Jesus Christ; (2) the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ; (3) the physical and bodily return of Jesus Christ; (4) the divinity of Jesus Christ; and (5) the inerrancy of the Word of God. Evangelism is the necessary outworking of these fundamental realities.

Unfortunately, these wonderful pillars of the faith are not clearly connected to the practice of evangelism—at least not in the minds of the GBC lay leaders. The connection that must be made is that the fundamentals are not merely theoretical, but they are the basis for what is practiced. For example, as a church we believe that Jesus Christ is both the Substitute and Atonement for sinful mankind. If this belief is true, then we must necessarily believe in the implications of this truth; namely, that mankind needs to be evangelized. Thus, a fundamental such as the substitutionary atonement serves as basis for practice. Each one of the fundamentals could be traced to salvific implications for mankind. In this way, the Bible teaches that the basis of an evangelistic church is not good programs but sound fundamental theology.

While GBC has seen wonderful fruit from its fundamental theology in the ministry of global evangelism (i.e., missions), it has not enjoyed the same kind of harvest in local evangelism. This disparity can be traced to a lack of both theological maturity and clarity among the lay leaders. The lack of maturity is related to the theological positions,

and the theological positions are rooted in an immature hermeneutic. The lack of clarity is revealed in the lack of organic evangelism. For the lay leaders, evangelism had become a fruitless activity rather than a conviction rooted in Christocentric theology. A theological shift had taken place.

What kind of a theological shift took place that led to this disparity? Through the process of investigation, it became apparent that there were several theological factors. First, the doctrine of salvation had become anthropocentric as opposed to theocentric. Second, man's approbation became the goal of evangelistic work. Third, the gospel had become merely a destination fix as opposed to the means for life transformation. A detailed analysis of each of these theological factors will reveal that they each may be connected back to one of the five fundamentals. Our evangelistic practices revealed our theological positions. Over time, the theological shift was not able to sustain the membership's will to continue. Those who were once seemingly motivated in evangelism were now sitting on the sidelines, though they were casually helping lead others. The true fervor for God's glory in evangelism was gone. The theological shift from the centrality of God to the centrality of man had accomplished this inevitable outcome. Thus, while historic fundamentalism was a strength, it also became the source of weakness.

Programmatic Model of Ministry

A second major strength and weakness is that GBC is a programmatically driven church. The programs were initiated for the purpose of evangelism and church growth. These programs included Saturday morning door-knocking, Sunday morning bus ministries, and summer Vacation Bible schools. These programs were strengths in that they offered structured ways to organize the church and serve the community. The programs became weaknesses in that they trained people to depend upon organized programs to live out their Christian lives.

Since people became dependent upon programs, organic evangelism became nonexistent in the lives of the people. For example, many of the programs (i.e., bus

ministry, door-knocking, VBS, etc.) revolved around evangelistic efforts. Consequently, evangelism in the daily lives of the believers suffered. People simply were not speaking naturally, freely, or organically to those with whom they were in regular contact. Instead of speaking about Christ organically, church members would wait for an outreach event to be coordinated. The program had become a crutch for not living out the Christian privilege of Christocentric evangelism.

The programmatic crutch revealed a theological shift in a fundamental doctrine. When a church becomes lackluster in evangelism, it can be traced to the fundamental of the gospel of Jesus Christ—in particular, the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The resurrection connection to evangelism is noted by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:34. An expected outcome of believing and maintaining belief in the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ is the moral conviction to use our bodies so that others might know God. At GBC, the gospel of Jesus Christ had primarily become the tool to save people from Hell rather than the good news for ongoing sanctification—a sanctification that involves how the Christian fulfills his or her moral obligation to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, it only became a moral obligation when the church organized programs and events. Thus, a loss in evangelistic fervor and clarity revealed a weakness in doctrinal fidelity and a consequent weakness in doctrinal application.

Costly Ministries: MCS and MCSELC

Lastly, among the strengths and weaknesses of GBC is the Middletown Christian Schools (MCS) and Middletown Christian Schools Early Learning Center (MCSELC) ministries. The MCS and MCSELC ministries are Christian education ministries that extend the reach of the gospel into the local Cincinnati, Ohio area. The Lord has used these ministries in amazing ways. Hundreds of children have been saved, baptized, and disciplined to maturity. In addition, these ministries have produced faithful church members over the course of their existence. In this respect, the MCS ministries are a tremendous strength.

On the other hand, MCS and MCSELC ministries require a tremendous amount of resources. These resources include facilities, personnel, and finances. With the abundant resources also come pressures upon pastoral leadership, which tend to detract from the main purposes of GBC. Dealing with personnel issues, financial pressures, and facility maintenance can cause evangelism to be overlooked. Consequently, the result of the investment is not in line with the biblical mission of GBC.

The loss of evangelistic direction relative to MCS and MCSELC is primarily due to the ease with which laborers can become distracted. The many facets, pressures, and opportunities have led the leadership to focus on good things, but not on the mission. The cost of this distraction is exorbitant. Alternatively, MCS and MCSELC can be a tremendous means to fueling evangelistic fervor as well as a source of evangelistic fruit.

Thus, the context involved a consideration of the historic fundamental roots of the church, the programmatic structure of the ministry, and some costly ministries. While each of these areas are strong in their respective ways, they have also been the source of weaknesses within GBC—weaknesses that reflect a loss of conviction regarding Christ-centered evangelism. This lack of perseverance in Christ-centered evangelism is my deepest concern.

Rationale

Based on the context of GBC, the most concerning weakness is the lack of perseverance for Christ-centered evangelism. If evangelism is the sharing the gospel with the aim of persuading individuals to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, then GBC lay leaders must be, first, guided in learning the Christ-centered foundation for evangelism. This Christ-centered foundation for evangelism stands in opposition to man-centered, manipulative legalistic foundations for evangelism. Second, GBC lay leaders must be equipped for Christ-centered evangelism. This equipping includes the explanation of how Christ-centered theology specifically connects with practice. Last, the GBC lay leaders

must be practically engaged and held accountable in the practice of Christ-centered, organic evangelism.

The reason GBC lay leaders must be guided in a Christocentric foundation for evangelism is because Christ is the only compelling motive that can consistently sustain God's people in the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:14-21). Leaders can certainly brow-beat Christians into evangelism, but this method of shaming will lead people into evangelism with the wrong motives. The Christ-centered foundation will lay the theological framework to shape the heart of lay leaders before encouraging the lay leaders to act.

Another reason why the weakness of lackluster evangelistic efforts must be addressed is to help shepherd the lay leaders toward Christocentric evangelism. Because GBC's context is one of historic hyper-fundamentalism, there is confusion about what practices should be utilized in evangelism. The confused practices include some of the following: (1) scare tactics/terminology, (2) stepped process salvation, (3) shallow gospel explanation, and (4) false assurance tactics. Training the lay leaders for Christocentric evangelism will encourage deep theological growth and clarity about sound practical strategies.

Lastly, this weakness of evangelistic fervor must be addressed to practically engage the lay-influenced congregation in Christocentric, organic evangelism. Because of the GBC context, evangelism has largely been programmatic and more about something we do rather than who we are. The Christ-centered, practical approach will encourage organic practices—organic in the sense that the lay leaders will see people in their day-to-day lives as those who need to be reached. Instead of waiting for an organized, corporate outreach, the practices will encourage the lay leaders to be evangelists in every sphere of life.

Practical engagement in evangelism will also take into consideration present opportunities that the Lord has given to the church family. MCS and MCSELC are the

two largest ministries that GBC currently organizes. Both of these ministries attract many families that need to be reached with the gospel. Because of this existing relationship, the MCS and MCSELC are a tremendous opportunity for organic, Christ-centered evangelism.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to train and equip the lay leaders of Grace Baptist Church in Middletown, Ohio, for organic, Christ-centered evangelism.

Goals

The training of the lay leaders of GBC involved four particular goals. These goals were developed from the Scriptures and led to increased engagement in Christ-centered evangelism.

1. The first goal was to assess the stated motive for, knowledge of, and practice of evangelism among the lay leadership of GBC.
2. The second goal was to develop a seven-week Christ-centered evangelism course and practicum.
3. The third goal was to teach the seven-week Christ-centered evangelism course in small group sessions.
4. The fourth goal was to develop and implement a ministry plan for lay leaders to practice Christ-centered evangelism.

Upon completion of the project, the lay leaders of GBC would be equipped with the sufficient knowledge, directed toward a biblical motive, and trained for practical application in Christ-centered evangelism. Successful completion was determined by defined measurements and benchmarks as detailed in the following section on research methodology.

Research Methodology

Four goals guided the implementation of the Christ-centered evangelism project. The first goal was to assess the motive for, knowledge of, and practice of evangelism among the lay leadership of GBC. While motive is quite difficult to assess, it

is nonetheless supremely important. This goal was measured by an initial pre-project survey entitled Evangelistic Motivation Survey (EMS).¹ The survey was divided into three sections: purpose, knowledge, motivation. The purpose portion of the survey assessed the lay leaders' understanding of the ultimate goal of evangelism. The knowledge portion of the survey assessed the lay leaders' theological and practical understanding of evangelism. The motivation portion of the survey assessed reasons why the lay leaders believe that they should be actively engaged in evangelism. This goal was considered successfully met when 75 percent of the lay leaders completed and returned their surveys for pre-project analysis.

The second goal was to develop a seven-week Christ-centered evangelism course and practicum. The course included lessons to increase the participants' understanding of purpose, knowledge, and motivation for evangelism. In addition to the curriculum, practicum sections in each lesson were tested in the classroom setting. The application of the lessons in the classroom context aided participants in comprehension of the principle established by the lesson. Both the curriculum and the planned practicum were examined prior to implementation. This goal was measured by a group of expert leaders and teachers within the body of GBC. The experts measured the curriculum using a rubric to gauge biblical faithfulness and practicality of the curriculum.² This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criteria exceeded the sufficient level of the rubric.

The third goal was to teach the seven-week Christ-centered evangelism course in small group sessions. The small groups were comprised of twelve to fifteen lay leaders who had previously registered for the course. The registration was available via Google

¹ See appendix 1.

² See appendix 2.

form.³ The Google form for registration and printed copies was available to the lay leadership two weeks in advance of the anticipated start time of the classes. Once registration had been completed, a pastor(s) was assigned to the class to teach for seven consecutive weeks. This goal was measured by a post-project EMS⁴ to assess the effectiveness of the training course. The EMS assessed the student's understanding of the purpose, knowledge, and motivation for evangelism. This goal was considered successfully met when the *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-survey scores.

The fourth goal was to develop and implement a ministry plan for lay leaders to practice Christ-centered evangelism. The plan included specific tasks for which the lay leaders were equipped by the pastoral staff. These tasks were characterized as organic evangelistic tasks. Organic evangelistic tasks are those that equip lay leaders to evangelize those with whom they are in regular contact with throughout the course of a normal week. This list of individuals includes, but is not limited to, family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, mail carriers, sanitation engineers, etc. The effectiveness of this goal was measured according to the pre- and post-EMS survey.⁵ The development and implementation of this goal was considered successfully met when there was a 50 percent increase, within a two-week timeframe, of lay leaders who were practicing Christ-centered evangelism.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

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

Christ-centered evangelism. Bryan Chapell gives a comprehensive meaning for the term Christ-centered:

³ "Registration: Christ-Centered Evangelism," accessed July 9, 2020, <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScpdIjkQp9RwRAiBdL-d-Z2ixBXXSIX3fnPFXIUiDI1MYIP7g/viewform?vc=0&c=0&w=1>.

⁴ See appendix 1.

⁵ See appendix 1.

First, by indicating that the term itself is a synecdoche—standing not only for reference to Christ’s incarnation or death on the cross but for the entire matrix of God’s redemptive work, which finds its culminating expression in Christ’s person and work. Second, by indicating that a message is Christ-centered not because it makes creative mention of an aspect of Jesus’ life or death but because it discloses an aspect of God’s redeeming nature (evident in the text) that is ultimately understood, fulfilled, and/or accomplished in Christ.⁶

In addition, Mack Stiles helpfully defines evangelism: “Teaching the gospel with the aim to persuade.”⁷ By combining Chapell’s and Stiles’ respective meanings, I arrive at my definition of Christ-centered evangelism: Christ-centered evangelism is the exegetically faithful proclamation the gospel of Jesus Christ with an aim to persuade the hearer.

Lay leaders. For this project, *lay leaders* are individuals who serve in an unpaid capacity within the ministries of the Grace Baptist Church of Middletown, Ohio. The responsibilities of lay leaders include the following offices: deacons, trustees, and MCS School Board. In addition, lay leaders include all children and adult Sunday school teachers. The lay leaders serve under the direction of their respective elders.

Neo-fundamentalism. Enns defines Neo-fundamentalism as “a modern movement that, while holding to the historical fundamental doctrines of Scripture, has evolved into a movement with different emphasis and perspectives.”⁸ These additional emphasis and perspectives have a direct impact on practices within the church—practices such as evangelism.

Two limitations applied to this project. First, the accuracy of the surveys administered was dependent upon the honesty of the individuals completing the surveys. To mitigate this limitation, those completing the survey were advised that the responses would remain private. In addition, a minimum of 60 surveys were administered, each to

⁶ Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 15, Kindle.

⁷ J. Mack Stiles, *Evangelism: How the Whole Church Speaks of Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), chap. 1, Kindle.

⁸ Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago: Moody, 2014), 661.

different lay leaders, to increase the pool of respondents and minimize the potential adverse impact of a few dishonest individuals. A second limitation was that the curriculum was taught over the course of seven weeks, during which time attendance was required, which presents the risk of absenteeism. To mitigate this limitation, I recorded the sessions and provided them to the absentee individuals.

There were two delimitations to this project. First, this project was limited to twenty-one weeks, which included administering the surveys and the seven-week curriculum. Second, this project was limited to the lay leadership of Grace Baptist Church. Lay leaders are those who serve within the body as ministers of the word.

Conclusion

Evangelism is the necessary preaching of the gospel, but it must not merely be any kind of evangelistic preaching. Evangelism must be Christ-centered and organic. This Christ-centered evangelism must be evident in the life of the church's servant leaders if they will effectively lead others to preach the gospel. This conviction to see the church become Christ-centered evangelists is the driving force behind the need to train and equip the lay leaders.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR CHRIST-CENTERED EVANGELISM

Luke 24:44-49 provides a clear case for Christ-centered evangelism through Christ's scriptural instruction, commandment, and empowerment. This passage will be exegeted in the following order: (1) instruction, (2) commandment and (3) empowerment. In Luke 24:44-49, Jesus Christ presents the Christocentric hermeneutical instruction that should guide the evangelistic efforts of his followers. A correct interpretation of the Scriptures leads to a correct evangelistic approach. A Christian is to receive Christ-centered instruction and obey Christ's command by God's gracious empowerment. Consequently, instruction, command, empowerment are to be fundamentally Christ-centered.

Christ-Centered Instruction

“And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled” (Luke 24:44 AV). The significance of Christocentric instruction presumes that Jesus Christ is credible and authoritative. Luke 24:44 reveals three important realities that give weight to Luke's argument: Jesus Christ is the authoritative one speaking, is the resurrected One, and has fulfilled prophecy.

The Authority of Jesus Historically

The authority of the words in Luke 24:44 rest in who the person of Jesus is historically. Luke, the human penman, presents a historical perspective: the prophetic fulfillment and salvific intentions of Jesus. I. Howard Marshall says, “Of all the Evangelists he is the most conscious of writing as a historian, yet throughout his work the

history is the vehicle of theological interpretation in which the significance of Jesus is expressed.”¹ The fact that Jesus is speaking rests on the case Luke laid out in the gospel record.

Luke was not writing a work of fiction. Robert H. Stein writes, “In his prologue (1:1-4) he asserted that he was writing as a *historian*.”² The historical intention is noted in the account of Jesus’s birth in Luke 2:1-7. Within this birth narrative Luke meticulously includes names, places, and events that help confirm the historicity of the account.³ Stein explains, “Throughout his work Luke sought to demonstrate the truthfulness of what he recorded by tying the events to universal history.”⁴ Thus, when Luke records the words of Jesus saying, “I spake” (Luke 24:44), Luke has sought to establish an authority—an authority that is fully invested in this statement by Jesus.

The Resurrected One

The Luke 24:44 account reveals that Jesus appeared to the disciples in person. Thus, the credibility of Luke’s account is also rooted in a literal, bodily resurrected Lord. This appearance is the incarnate Jesus and not some apparition. Köstenberger, Kellum, and Quarles summarize, “Jesus then appears to the Eleven in Jerusalem and establishes that he is really resurrected and not a ghost (24:34–49).”⁵ Jesus had appeared in bodily form as the resurrected. Mike McKinley succinctly writes, “The resurrection stamps the

¹ I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Exeter: Paternoster, 1978), 35.

² Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, The New American Commentary, vol. 24 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 32–35).

³ For these names and places, see Luke 2:1-7.

⁴ Stein, *Luke*, 36.

⁵ J. Andreas Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville: B & H, 2016), 327.

word “KEPT” all over the promises of the Old Testament.”⁶ The authority of Jesus is established by both historicity and Jesus’s bodily resurrection.

The Authority of Fulfilled Prophecy

Jesus foretold his death. The historical Jesus and the resurrected Jesus—one and the same—are central to Luke’s argument. In addition, Jesus foretold his own death. Luke records the words of Jesus as, “while I was yet with you” (24:44), which is a phrase identifying an absence of Jesus from his disciples. Jesus was with the disciples, left the disciples, and returned to the disciples. This absence of Jesus is a reference to the time between the pre-passion and post-resurrection ministry of Jesus Christ.⁷ It was the time during which Jesus Christ was dead. Thus, in Luke 24:44 Jesus has rejoined his disciples as the resurrected One who has fulfilled what he foretold. Marshall notes the distinction made by Luke:

In either case the risen Jesus is referring back to what he said to the disciples while he was still with them. ἔτι ὄν σὺν ὑμῖν draws a distinction between the earthly life of Jesus and his present state in which he is no longer with them; yet in a sense he is still with them, and the words sound slightly odd. The phrase is best seen as Luke’s way (ἔτι, 1:15 and frequently) of expressing the difference between the period of Jesus’ earthly life and that of his absence from the disciples.⁸

James R. Edwards says, “The farewell address is the final link in a narrative chain that connects the resurrected Lord with the earthly Jesus.”⁹

Something has changed, but it is not the message that has changed. A cursory review of the pre-passion life of Jesus Christ reveals the following references are times in which Jesus Christ foretold of his suffering and resurrection: Luke 9:22, 44, 17:25, 18:31,

⁶ Mike McKinley, *Luke 12-24*, God’s Word for You, vol. 14 (Charlotte, NC: Good Book, 2017), 184, Kindle.

⁷ It is not merely the fact that Jesus had risen from the dead, but that Jesus had predicted his own resurrection from the dead, which adds greater authority to these words.

⁸ Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 904-5.

⁹ James. R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Luke*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2015), 726, Logos Bible Software.

22:37. Thus, Jesus is the authoritative one speaking, but here he stands at the One who had personally prophesied of his own passion and resurrection. Jesus, by way of Luke's writing, is pointing out that the message before his death is the same after his resurrection. The implication is that Jesus, by virtue of fulfilling his foretold death and resurrection, is authoritative.

The Scriptures foretold of Jesus's death. Luke 24:44 also points to the prophetic fulfillment of Jesus Christ when he says, "All things must be fulfilled." This fulfillment statement most pointedly reveals the Christocentric hermeneutic with which one must approach the Scriptures. This Christ-centered hermeneutic is the theological foundation for his followers. Edwards rightly connects the necessity of the sufferings to empowerment: "His primary objective is to enable them to understand that his sufferings as Messiah were the necessary prelude to his glorification, on the basis of which they are sent as 'witnesses,' empowered by the Holy Spirit, to proclaim repentance and the forgiveness of sins 'to all nations.'"¹⁰

When Luke says that "all things must be fulfilled," he indicates that the Old Testament prophecy necessitated fulfillment. Marshall notes, "The fulfilment of Scripture is a divine necessity."¹¹ This word *fulfilled* is πληρόω, which indicates completion.¹² If God has spoken the words, then they must be completed. This connection between God's written word and completion¹³ is strengthened by Jesus Christ's reference to each part of the Old Testament: the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms.

¹⁰ Edwards, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 726.

¹¹ Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 905.

¹² See Acts 1:16 for additional usage by Luke.

¹³ The key term is πληρόω (*plēroō*, to fulfill), which appears in several Lucan texts to refer to something anticipated in God's design that has come to pass. Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 9:51–24:53*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 2, Logos Bible Software.

As noted, Luke consolidates the Old Testament into three groupings; namely, the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms. By including these groupings, Luke is pointing out the fulfillment from all parts of the Old Testament Scriptures. Bovon writes, “They are divided into three parts, and each of them contains prophecies that must be fulfilled.”¹⁴ By Moses, Luke includes all of the Pentateuch. By prophets, Luke references the Old Testament writings of those whom God ordained for the office of prophet. Peter refers to the Old Testament prophets as *holy*, thereby indicating their sanctified status. Luke concludes the groups with psalms that encompass the Jewish hymnody. The point of Luke is to show the unified testimony of the Old Testament writings.¹⁵

One example of an Old Testament connection may be the Passover Feast connection. Luke 24:13-27 tells the account of Jesus Christ and two disciples on the road to Emmaus, and the hermeneutic teaching within this story is the same as the primary text (Luke 24:44-49); namely, “And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself” (24:27). N. T. Wright sees the Old Testament connection in the word *redeemed* used by one of the disciples in Luke 24:21: “He was the one who would redeem Israel. Clearly, for them, this referred (as Luke has been saying all along) to the new Exodus: just as Israel had been ‘redeemed’ from slavery in Egypt at the first Passover, so they had hoped that now Israel would be ‘redeemed,’ that God would purchase her freedom.”¹⁶ The Old Testament Passover

¹⁴ Francois Bovon, *Luke 3: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 19:28–24:53*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 394.

¹⁵ According to David Pao and Eckhard Schnabel, “Jesus’ reference to the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms establishes not only a general continuity with the Jewish Scriptures, but also, and more importantly, a continuity between the past reality of divine salvation in Israel’s history and the present reality of the events that had just transpired in the Holy City (see Tomson 2002: 169).” David W. Pao and Eckhard J. Schnabel, “Luke,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker; Nottingham, UK: Apollos, 2007), 401.

¹⁶ N. T. Wright, *The New Testament for Everyone* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 294, Kindle.

connection is significant, especially considering the reality that the Jews had just celebrated the Passover Feast.

Though Luke does not give additional, explicit details of Jesus's specific teaching from the Old Testament, the apostolic preaching in the book of Acts may give some clues as to the teaching of the Christ-centered hermeneutic.¹⁷ Since both the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts were written by the same human penman, a common thematic purpose allows one to reasonably surmise the Christocentric teaching of Luke 24:44. While Stein admits there are several subthemes in the writings of Luke, he also says, "It has also become clear that one cannot treat the Gospel or the Book of Acts in isolation from each other, for they are both parts of one work which the author had planned from the beginning."¹⁸

Christ is in the Prophets. Peter's message on the day of Pentecost reveals the specific Christocentric hermeneutic from the prophets. Peter says, "But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel: And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God" (Acts 2:16). Peter cites the Old Testament prophet Joel, who was prophesying to Judah. In Peter's estimation, an eschatological change has taken place. The rest of Peter's message will reveal this pouring out of the Holy Spirit to be directly related to the glorification of Jesus Christ. Marshall explains,

The citation of the prophecy thus serves initially to explain the phenomenon of Spirit-possession and speaking in tongues, but the passage moves on to announce the closely related proclamation of salvation for those who call upon the Lord. This second theme becomes in fact the dominant one in Peter's speech with his identification of the risen and exalted Jesus as the Lord and Messiah through whom salvation is offered to his audience.¹⁹

¹⁷ See Acts 7 for Stephen's message for example.

¹⁸ Stein, *Luke*, 32-35.

¹⁹ I. Howard Marshall, "Acts," in Beale and Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 533.

Christ is in the Psalms. Peter’s message not only connects Jesus to the Prophets but also to the Psalms. Peter says, “For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved” (Acts 2:25). Peter cites Psalm 16, showing how David was speaking of Jesus Christ. Marshall writes,

For what purpose has Peter used this psalm? One result is to explain why it was impossible for Jesus to be held prisoner by death. Jesus had the promise of God that he would not let his faithful one decay in the grave. But the other result, and the more significant one, is to claim that if what happened to Jesus fits what David prophesied in the psalm, then Jesus must be the Messiah.²⁰

Christ is in the books of Moses. The apostolic preaching shows Christ to be central to the Prophets and Psalms, but what about the books of Moses? In Peter’s message at the Temple, he implicitly refers to accounts within the books of Moses. Peter says, “The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go” (Acts 3:13). He also makes reference to “all his prophets” in the same message in Acts 3:18. These two implicit references may not be sufficient for the skeptic, but then Peter explicitly references the words of Moses from Deuteronomy 18:18: “For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. . . . Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.” (Acts 3:22, 26). Thus, the Christ-centered hermeneutic is also based out of the books of Moses.

The answer as to why the disciples did not understand Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms to be speaking of Jesus may be answered in the next verse. Luke 24:45 says, “Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures.” Though the instruction from Jesus included his pre-death ministry instruction and Old

²⁰ Marshall, “Acts,” 539.

Testament instruction, the instruction was not fully understood. To clarify the unified testimony of scriptural instruction, Jesus opened the understanding of the disciples to see Christological fulfillment (Luke 24:45). The word *opened* can refer to either the opening of the minds in a spiritual sense or the opening of the minds through the exposition of Scripture and Scripture's culmination in Jesus Christ. Both options are seen in the following two commentator positions: Bovon writes, "That requires the spiritual intervention of the risen Christ, since it is a matter of the transformation of the "mind" (*νοῦς*)."²¹ Marshall explains, "Explanation of the OT in terms of its fulfillment in Jesus can be regarded as an 'opening' (*διανοίγω*, 2:23; et al.) of either the Scriptures (24:32; Acts 17:3) or of the minds of the readers; *νοῦς* is found here only in the Gospels (cf. Acts 16:14; cf. 2 Mac. 1:4 for *καρδία* in the same sense; see J. Behm; TDNT IV, 951–960)."²²

Whether the disciples' understanding of Scripture is brought to fruition through the Scriptures or through a purely spiritual work is open to interpretation, but I would blend the two options listed. Transformative heart work is accomplished by the Christological exposition of the Old Testament Scriptures. This Christ-centered exposition is seen by one author as a mediatorial work of Christ. Edwards states, "Jesus Christ is the mediator between God and the believer, between the believer and all other human relationships, and between the believer and the scriptural testimony to him in Israel."²³ Thus, is there spiritual transformation? Yes. Is the Scripture the source of the transformation? Yes. Both are instrumental for instruction that transforms the heart. Thus, Christ-centered instruction is groundwork for both commandment and empowerment to come.

²¹ Bovon, *Luke 3*, 394-95.

²² Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 905.

²³ Edwards, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 734.

Christ-Centered Commandment

To Suffer, to Rise, to Proclaim

Luke 24:46 and 47 share a unique connection. Both verses contain infinitive phrases that appear to inseparably join them. The verses say, “And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” One should notice the phrases *to suffer*, *to rise*, and *to proclaim*. The latter of these phrases seems to be distinct, but it is actually a connection missed unless one reviews the original language.

The structure of the pericope points to a command from Jesus Christ. The verb *preached* is the last of three infinitive phrases used in the passage—*to suffer*, *to rise*, and *to proclaim*. Nolland says, “Though various attempts have been made to take it in other ways, the only natural way to take the infinitive κηρυχθῆναι, ‘to be preached,’ is in parallel with the previous infinitives: this activity too has been anticipated in the Scriptures (cf. Acts 13:47; 15:15–18).”²⁴ For this reason, I have included Luke 24:46 with Luke 24:47 within this section of Christ-centered commandment.

Once again, Luke connects the suffering and resurrection of Jesus Christ to Old Testament expectation. The phrase *it is written* is a common formula to refer to the sacred writings of the Old Testament. In the suffering and resurrection, Luke is referring to God’s Old Testament plan fulfilled, but in the third infinitive—to proclaim—God’s plan for the future is manifested. Bock says, “With the third infinitive, κηρυχθῆναι (*kērychthēnai*, to preach), the future of God’s plan appears. In this rich term are bound up the message’s elements that the disciples are to take to the world.”²⁵ Thus, the Christ-centered

²⁴ John Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 35C (Dallas: Word, 1993), 1219.

²⁵ Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1939.

interpretation of the Old Testament is fundamental to the proclamation ministry: the instruction is connected to the command.

Proclamation Explanation

The details of the command are found in Luke 24:47, which says, “And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning in Jerusalem.” The details describe what is to be proclaimed and where the message is to be proclaimed. The message is repentance and remission of sins. The destination for the proclamation is all nations.

As part of the prophetic fulfillment, there must be the preaching of repentance and forgiveness of sins. Bovon writes, “The expression ‘thus it is written’ (v. 46) includes the preaching of repentance and the offer of forgiveness.”²⁶ Marshall rightly observes, “The scriptural necessity of the passion and resurrection of Jesus has been established. But now a new feature is added: the mission of the church is also traced to scriptural prophecy, the interpretation of which is given by the risen Lord.”²⁷ The Lord’s word fulfilled in the suffering and resurrection of Jesus Christ gives way to how the word would be fulfilled, as detailed by Luke in the book of Acts. A Christocentric understanding of the Old Testament is fundamental to the command to proclaim, for if there were nothing from the Old Testament fulfilled, then there would be nothing to proclaim.

As noted, the anticipated preaching of the gospel will include the particular message of repentance and forgiveness of sins. By repentance, Luke communicates a genuine turning from sin to Christ. Grudem defines repentance as follows: “A heartfelt sorrow for sin, a renouncing of it, and a sincere commitment to forsake it and walk in

²⁶ Bovon, *Luke 3*, 95.

²⁷ Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 905.

obedience to Christ.”²⁸ By forgiveness of sins, Luke expresses the removal of the ultimate barrier between God and man. Bock explains, “In short, forgiveness of sins brings the opportunity to leave the darkness and come into God’s light.”²⁹ For the proclamation to fulfill what was written in the Scriptures, both repentance and forgiveness of sins must be proclaimed.

In addition, Christ-centered instruction necessarily leads to Christ-centered proclamation. Edwards seems to connect the instruction with Christocentric evangelism: “The Reformation teaching that in the rightful exposition of Scripture Jesus Christ is salvifically present—symbolized, for example, by Cranach’s portraits that place the crucifix on the same level with Martin Luther in the pulpit—is a correct understanding of this truth.”³⁰ An illustration of Christocentric instruction and command connection may be found in Acts 2:38 which says, “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” Peter commands this repentance and reception of remission of sins after he had preached a Christ-centered message on the Day of Pentecost. Acts 3:19 presents the similar message from Peter—further exhortation to repent and be converted for sins to be blotted out. In Petrine examples, Christocentric exposition led to the command to repent.

The phrase *in his name* can be understood in one of two ways: a reference to the proclaimers as ambassadors of Jesus Christ or a reference to the particulars of the message that must be proclaimed. Nolland shows the possibility of both positions:

Of the senses that ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ, “in his name,” can take (cf. at 9:48a), best here is “by people acting as my representatives” (this finds support from Acts 26:22-23 [which is notably parallel to Luke 24:44-47], where the resurrected Christ

²⁸ Wayne. A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity, 2004), 1253.

²⁹ Bock, *Luke 9:51–24:53*, 1940.

³⁰ Edwards, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 735.

proclaims “to the People and to the nations”); also just possible would be a sense based on comparison with Acts 10:43 (where, however, διὰ τοῦ ὀνόματος, “through his name” is used): “in my name” would link with “forgiveness of sins,” the point being that forgiveness of sins through Jesus is being offered.³¹

Both would be true, but for the purposes of this exegesis, either position is desirable since this dualistic position further corroborates that both the proclaimer and the proclamation are Christ-centered.

In addition, Luke introduces an important theme that would be continued in his further writing—the theme of witnesses. Luke 24:48 says, “And ye shall be witnesses of these things.” This verse serves two important purposes. First, it answers the implicit question of “How will all nations hear the message?” The answer is that these disciples would be witnesses. The second purpose is that further implicit need is created. How would these witnesses proclaim the message to all nations? The magnanimous task has become clear and personal. Edwards says, “*You are witnesses* is emphatic, reminding disciples of the crucial role they play in the mission of the church to the nations.”³²

Luke’s usage of the term *witnesses* offers two truths: it clarifies the responsibility of the disciples and it points the reader ahead to the activity of the disciples. When Jesus says, “And ye are witnesses of these things” (Luke 24:48), the implication is that the disciples must do something with the truth of Jesus Christ. Jesus uses the word *martyres* to clarify the identity of the disciples—an identity which demands responsibility. “The objective of witness is not self, but the resurrected Lord and his teachings. One must know the resurrected Jesus in order to be a witness to the gospel,”³³ says Edwards. The work of the disciples will not be approached passively: Bovon says, “One point is clear: the μάρτυρες are not yet the martyrs of late antiquity. A second point is also clear: They are not passive eyewitnesses, because they have become what they are actively (by

³¹ Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53*, 1219.

³² Edwards, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 737.

³³ Edwards, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 737.

opting for a nominal sentence Luke avoids choosing between ‘becoming’ and ‘being’).”³⁴

In addition, there is anticipation in the term *witnesses*. Bock rightly notes the anticipation:

The concept of witness will become an important theme in Acts (Acts 1:8, 22; 2:32; 3:15; 5:32; 10:39, 41; 13:31; 22:15, 20; 26:16). The verb μαρτυρέω (*martyreō*, to witness) is also used with this sense (Acts 23:11), and it often speaks of divine witness to the disciples’ testimony (Acts 14:3; 15:8). The disciples can testify to these events because they have seen them (Dillon 1978: 215-16, 291-92).³⁵

Jesus’s statement implies that Luke is not merely citing the Old Testament, but that the Lord intends his disciples to obediently fulfill the rest of the prophecy, and this statement serves to join to Luke’s second writing (the Acts of the Apostles). The anticipation of the term *witnesses* finds further connection in Acts 1:8 and fulfillment in the apostolic activities of primarily Peter and Paul in the book of Acts.

While the proclaimer and proclamation is Christ-centered, the destination confirms a New Testament reality and establishes an evident need. The New Testament reality that is confirmed is that the Christ-centered message is to be preached among all, including those of non-Jewish descent. Both the human penman of this book and the original recipient are themselves evidences that the message of the gospel was never really only for ethnic Jews. Paul confirms that the middle wall of partition between the Jew and the Gentile has been torn down in Ephesians 2:13-14: “But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us.” Also, a cursory review of other accounts of the commission, such as Matthew 28:16-20, further supports that the gospel is to be preached among all nations.

In addition to these testimonies from outside of the book of Luke are numerous evidences from within Lucan writings that indicate international destinations for the

³⁴ Bovon, *Luke* 3, 396.

³⁵ Bock, *Luke 9:51–24:53*, 1941-42.

gospel. A few stories recorded in the Gospel of Luke that further support what is meant by “among all nations” in this final command include: the centurion’s son is healed (Luke 7:1-10), the demoniac healed (Luke 8:26), and the Good Samaritan parabolic teaching (Luke 10:25-37). Within the book of Acts, Luke also gives a clear description of how this multi-ethnic expansion happened.

The book of Acts has pivotal points that display the activity *among all nations*. Acts 1:8 serves as a table of contents which says, “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” The transition from Jerusalem to Judaea and Samaria are clearly seen in Acts 8:1: “And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.”

Acts 8:1 connects two important truths from the Luke 24:47-48 passage. First, Acts 8:1 confirms that the gospel is going beyond the regions of the ethnic Jews. Second, Acts 8:1 gives further example of what the term *witness* means. Though the disciples were eyewitnesses, they would carry the message as disciples who would proclaim the message at potential cost of their own lives (Luke 14:25-34). Thus, the term *witness* is the Greek term *martyres*, which Vines defines as follows: “(μάρτυς, 3144) (whence Eng., ‘martyr,’ one who bears ‘witness’ by his death) denotes ‘one who can or does aver what he has seen or heard or knows’”³⁶ The disciples are sacrificial proclaimers of the gospel. As the book of Acts continues, this sacrifice is made evident in the chronicled ministry of the apostle Paul, whose story concludes in a prison in Rome (see Acts 28:11-16), but not before the gospel has been proclaimed in Asia Minor and in Europe.

Thus, while the phrase *among all nations* confirms that the message is to be

³⁶ W. E. Vine and Merrill Fredrick Unger, *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of the Old and New Testaments* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996), 680.

sacrificially proclaimed to both Jews and Gentiles, it also creates a need—a need for supernatural power to accomplish such a great task. Luke shows that this preaching is to begin in Jerusalem and this message must necessarily be preached internationally. The magnitude of the task set before them creates the need for empowerment. The task is too much for mere natural men.

Christ-Centered Empowerment

Luke 24:49 says, “And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.” The disciples were promised power for obedience to the commission from Jesus, and this power is directly connected with the Person of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the One making the commitment in the verse.

Students of the Word first look at the nature of this power followed by the Christocentric connection. The Christocentric connection will be seen in three ways: a promissory connection, an ascension connection, and a trinitarian connection.

The Nature of the Power

The promissory connection. The word used for *power* is the Greek word *dynamis*, and this word implies the particular nature of the power. This power is particular in both source and sort. Regarding source, it is the power of the Holy Spirit. Ambrose said, “And that we may know more completely that the Spirit is Power, we ought to know that He was promised when the Lord said: ‘I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh’ [Joel 2:28]. He, then, Who was promised to us is Himself Power.”³⁷ The power is God Himself. Of sort, it is miraculous power; a power that would enable

³⁷ Ambrose of Milan, “Three Books of St. Ambrose on the Holy Spirit,” in *St. Ambrose: Select Works and Letters*, vol. 10, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. H. de Romestin, E. de Romestin, and H. T. F. Duckworth (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1896), 117, Logos Bible Software.

particular giftings for the propagation of the gospel.³⁸

The nature of the power is significant but for the purposes of this commentary, one must see the significance of the Christocentric connection of the power. Speaking in union with his Father, Jesus Christ promises the Holy Spirit. Acts 1:8 confirms that the Holy Ghost is in view here. The disciples are once again called upon to believe what Jesus is telling them, but now they are to believe the word of the resurrected Christ. Thus, Jesus Christ gives the promise and is himself the basis of assurance—being that he has risen from the dead.

There are at least three other implicit realities within the promise of sending. First, the sending of the Spirit involves the ascension of Jesus Christ. Second, the sending of the Spirit by God the Father bookends the gospel of Luke in a unique way. Thirdly, the sending of the Spirit was prophesied by John the Baptist – an important detail recorded by Luke.

The Christocentric Connection

Ascension connection. Implicit within this promise (Luke 24:49) from Jesus is the reality that He is going to ascend to the Father. A couple of key indicators in this verse point to the ascension; namely, *I send* and *tarry*. The phrase *I send* implies that Jesus is going to do something. The word *tarry* is a command that anticipates a waiting period. When combined, *I send* and *tarry* implicitly tell the reader that Jesus is going to do something but that the disciples needed to wait. Acts 2:33 makes clear what this work of Christ would be—Jesus would ascend to the Father. Thus, the empowerment is Christocentric in that the ascension of Jesus Christ was the trigger for the sending of the power (John 16:7).

The ascension of Jesus Christ in connection to the sending of the Spirit is not new to the scriptures. While the Old Testament does speak of the outpouring of God's

³⁸ See Acts 2 for description of this power.

Spirit in Joel 2:28, Psalm 68 has a more conclusive connection between the ascension of Jesus and the sending of the Spirit. Psalm 68:18 says, “Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: Thou hast received gifts for men; Yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.” This song is part of what is anticipated in the Luke 24:49 promise.

The context of Psalm 68:18 is that of victorious conquest, presumably in Canaan. Thielman writes,

In 68:18 the psalm apparently refers to the victories that God gave the Israelites as they moved into and occupied Canaan, particularly the victory of Deborah and Barak over the forces of Sisera as it is celebrated in Deborah’s song: “You ascended to the heights; you captured captives [šābîṭā šebî; cf. Judg. 5:12: ūšābēh šebyēkā]; you received gifts among humanity, even among the rebellious, to dwell there as Yah Elohim.”³⁹

While Psalm 68:18 does point to a relevant victory in the Old Testament, Paul has in mind a greater victory in Ephesians 4:8 when he cites the same song. Ephesians 4:8 says, “Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.” It is here where Paul speaks of the ascension of Jesus in connection with the sending of the Spirit of God within the context of the victory of Jesus Christ’s resurrection. Thus, the sending of the Holy Spirit is directly connected with the ascension of Jesus Christ.

The John the Baptist connection. There is a connection between John the Baptist and the Christocentric nature of the sending of the Holy Spirit. The sending of the Holy Spirit is particularly connected with the preaching of John the Baptist. In Luke 3:16, Luke records the words of John the Baptist: “John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.” This text indicates that the sending of the Holy Spirit would be the work of God through the

³⁹ Frank S. Thielman, “Ephesians,” in Beale and Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 813-33.

Messiah. Thus, Christocentricity was not only actual through Jesus, but John foretold of this fulfillment.

The Lucan bookend connection. Luke bookends his gospel record with two accounts of God sending someone. The sending of the Holy Spirit in Luke 24 seems to also have implicit connection with the same word used in Luke 1:26, which says, “And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth.” A Lucan account which began with God the Father sending a messenger is now concluding with God the Father sending the Holy Spirit. The lesser—an angel sent; has led to the greater—the Holy Spirit sent.

In addition, Luke emphasizes the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ. One should consider the following list and important connections made by Luke:

1. Luke 3:22—The Holy Ghost descends upon Jesus at his baptism.
2. Luke 4:1—Jesus is full of the Holy Ghost and led by the Spirit into the wilderness.
3. Luke 4:14—Jesus returns in the power of the Spirit.
4. Luke 4:18—Jesus reads Isaiah 61:1 regarding the Spirit of the Lord being upon him.
5. Luke 11:13—Jesus’s teaching on prayer is for the disciples to ask for the Holy Spirit from the Father.
6. Luke 12:10—Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is unpardonable; this is said at comments directed at Jesus.

This Lucan emphasis on the Holy Spirit is no accident. Luke intentionally shows the connection between Jesus and the Holy Ghost; a connection that will now be poured out in a unique way upon the disciples. The power which the disciples previously observed in Jesus Christ would now be the same power they would receive for obedience to witness among all nations.

The Trinitarian Connection

A thorough study of power from Luke 24:49 will manifest the nature of the power as well as the central work of Jesus in manifesting and making this power possible.

Though this thorough study is true, it is insufficient because the study must include what the passage makes clear—the trinitarian connection of the passage. This trinitarian connection can be seen in at least two ways: the identification of the godhead explicitly and a preview of which Person of the godhead is sending and being sent.

The identification of the Godhead. All three Persons of the godhead are clearly identified in Luke 24:49. First, Jesus is the One who is speaking. Second, the Holy Spirit is the promised One being sent. Third, the Father will send the Holy Spirit. This comprehensive identification puts this pericope in an elite category since not too many scriptures identify all three persons of the Godhead on one occasion. Among the other passages that list all three of the godhead is Luke 3:21-22, which says, “Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.” Luke opens up the account of the life of Jesus Christ in the same manner in which he brings the gospel record to a close—by identifying the trinitarian reality of the godhead in one place.

Why is this trinitarian identity important to mention here? Luke 24:44-49 is certainly Christocentric, but it is not Christocentric at the expense of the godhead. On the contrary, the centrality of Jesus Christ to the book of Luke and to the proper interpretation of the Scriptures is consistent with the entire Godhead. Indeed, both the Father and the Holy Spirit work in support and fulfillment of Christocentricity. In Christ dwells the “fulness of the godhead bodily” (Col 2:9). The centrality of Jesus Christ actually serves to manifest God fully; thus, the nature and character of the other persons of the godhead are not belittled in a Christocentric instruction, command, and empowerment.

Sending and being sent. Another interesting aspect of the words in Luke 24:49 is that Jesus claims to be the one sending the Holy Spirit or the promise of the

Father. The interest here is that in other passages it is the Father sending the Holy Spirit. For example, John 14:26 claims that the Father will send the Spirit in the name of Jesus Christ. One possible reason why Luke may be identifying Jesus as the sending One here is that Luke is showing Jesus as the authoritative Servant. Jesus, having risen from the dead, is now given all authority. In the gospel of Matthew, the statement of authority is explicit (28:18), here it appears that Luke is asserting the authority of Jesus Christ.

To be clear, the word *power* in Matthew 28:18 is not the same as what is in Luke 24:49. Matthew 28:18 uses “power” in respect to actual authority versus the word “power” in Luke 24:49 having to do with might and strength. However, this actually may serve the stated case. Luke does not have to speak of authoritative power (*exousia*) if it is assumed in the fact that Jesus is authoritatively sending the Holy Spirit. Nonetheless, the Trinitarian connection is clear in identification, and it is a connection that confirms ontological equality though there is economic subordination within the godhead.

Additional Details on Empowerment

One should note a few final details from the Lucan account; namely, the waiting in Jerusalem and the enduing with power from on high. The city of Jerusalem figures prominently in the Old Testament Kingdom of Israel. In the Old Testament, Jerusalem is a centralized location for the authority of Israel, but in Luke’s account it will be a centralized location for empowerment and dispersion.

The city of Jerusalem. Jesus commands the disciples to wait in the city of Jerusalem. Jerusalem is significant for many reasons, not the least of which that it is where Jesus Christ died. For the Lucan account, Jerusalem is the place to which the child Jesus was brought. It is in Jerusalem where Simeon, a man enlightened by the Holy Ghost, calls Jesus the salvation of the Lord (Luke 2:25). For Luke, Jerusalem is the place to which Jesus went with his parents for the Passover annually (Luke 2:41). Jerusalem is also at least one location where the Spirit-led Jesus was tempted by Satan (Luke 4:1-9).

For Luke, Jerusalem had been specifically prophesied for the death of Jesus Christ (Luke 9:31). Significantly, Jerusalem was the place where everyone had heard of the death of Jesus (Luke 24:18). Only a stranger would not have known. Jerusalem is significant for many reasons, not least of which is an apparent reversal. By reversal, the place where Jesus died would now be the place from which Jesus's mission would be launched.

The choosing of Jerusalem for the empowerment of the disciples is both fulfillment and somewhat of a reversal. Jesus Christ did become the sacrificed Passover Lamb in fulfillment of the Old Covenant. In so doing, the testimony of his death had spread to great proportions. Now, with the sending of the Spirit, the very place where he had died would become the proverbial ground zero for the empowered message of his life. Jerusalem is a kind of ironic starting point.

Endued with Power

The phrase *endued with power* carries two important words. First, *endued* indicates an individual being robed or clothed. Paul uses a similar term metaphorically in Romans 13:12, 14 when he speaks of putting on the armor of light and putting on Jesus Christ. In Luke 24:49, the clothing metaphor is used of the work of the Spirit enveloping the disciples for the important task ahead. The empowering of the Spirit must be understood as a clothing metaphorically.

Second is the word *power*. Previously, I alluded to a distinction between the Matthew 28:18 word and the use of the same English word *power* in Luke 24:49. In the text, the word used is *dynamis*— a word that indicates a miraculous power or enablement. It is a word previously used by Luke with regard to John the Baptist (see Luke 1:17). As opposed to the meaning of authority in Matthew 28:18, Luke's concern is with the miraculous, enabling power. Thus, to be endued with power was to be clothed in the enabling, miraculous power of God.

To understand what bodily life as a follower of Jesus would look like when empowered by the Holy Spirit, one needs only look to Jesus Christ. The epitome of

Christocentric evangelism is Jesus who came preaching the gospel of the kingdom in the power of the Spirit. Luke 4:14 says, “And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about.” The evangelism of Luke 24:44-49 is to be Christ-centered in every sense through instruction, commandment, and empowerment.

CHAPTER 3
HISTORICAL, THEORETICAL, AND PRACTICAL
ISSUES RELATED TO CHRIST-CENTERED
EVANGELISM

Contrary to neo-fundamentalist forms of evangelism which may lead to false conversions, Scripture exhorts that lay leaders must be equipped for Christ-centered evangelism. Competent lay leaders must avoid neo-fundamentalist forms of evangelism in favor of Christ-centered evangelism, and competent lay leaders must be equipped for Christ-centered evangelism. The examination in this chapter includes the historical, theoretical, and practical issues related to Christ-centered evangelism.

The historical development, which produced the Neo-Fundamentalists, is complex and sometimes hard to discern. Two primary historical factors were key in the development of the Neo-Fundamentalists Movement: societal and ecclesiastical secularization.

The societal factors which led to the development the Neo-Fundamentalists are the secularization of society both theologically and morally. The ecclesiastical factors which led to the development of the Neo-Fundamentalists are theological and practical. Though the societal factors and ecclesiastical factors may appear to be separate from one another in this development, they converge in the twentieth century to produce an anti-intellectual, pragmatic form of fundamentalism known as Neo-Fundamentalism.

Societal and Ecclesiastical Secularization

Theological Societal Factor

In 1859, Charles Darwin published his infamous *On the Origin of Species* in which evolutionary theory was presented as the explanation for the origin of mankind and

all that exists. It is not only that this publication brought about a scientific revolution, but also this theory went beyond science. Historian George Marsden says, “The implications of Darwin’s theory, particularly concerning impersonal natural process as opposed to divinely guided order, went far beyond biology.”¹ Indeed this publication exceeded the bounds of biology and was an American societal concern. The scope of this project does not allow for a full detailed research of the 1925 Scopes Trial, but this trial was an attempt to ban Darwinism in public schools, which was a public concern at the time. Marsden notes, “Many fought against the onslaughts of liberalism within the major denominations. Meanwhile, William Jennings Bryan and other fundamentalists campaigned to ban the teaching of Darwinism in American schools.”² Since the conclusion of this trial and until today, the results of the 1925 trial have confirmed that mere biology was not at stake; rather, society’s understanding of theology, human origin, and purpose were at stake.

Moral Societal Factors

Not only did a theological shift take place in society, but moral changes were also taking place. These moral changes involved the secularization of American society. Marsden provides a history of fundamentalism and traces fundamentalists response to the moral secularization that took place.³

Tracing the development of Neo-Fundamentalism requires a journey through several developments: (1) the influence of wars and secularization on American religion, (2) the Fundamentalist Modernist Controversy, (3) the proliferation of doctrinal

¹ George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 20, Kindle.

² Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 6.

³ Marsden writes, “The development of fundamentalism is important in understanding the history that gave rise to the Neo-Fundamentalist Movement and, consequently, errant forms of evangelism. Marsden defines a fundamentalist as . . . an evangelical who is militant in opposition to liberal theology in the churches or to changes in cultural values or mores, such as those associated with ‘secular humanism.’” George M. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998), 1, Kindle.

minimalism (4) and the emergence of New Evangelicalism. These developments are overlapping rather than sequential. For example, secularization is noted during the World Wars, but it continues through the period of doctrinal minimalism in the middle of the twentieth century. Errant forms of evangelism were a product of multiple, simultaneous developments and not merely chronological developments.

War and Secularization of Society

Around the time of the World Wars, America was increasingly growing secular, and the fundamentalist movement in the early twentieth century was largely in response to a growing secularization⁴ of American society. This secularization was marked by increasing higher criticism of the Bible and the advancement of Darwinian Evolution. Mark Noll and Daniel Bare confirm this type of secularization. Noll writes, “The fundamentalist movement was a response to general changes in American life, of which the transformation of the universities was only one among many.” Bare argues, “The second relevant historiographical trend is that most academic treatments of fundamentalism consider a militant posture toward certain social and cultural changes that were often associated with the modernist worldview, such as an increasing acceptance of evolutionary biology, to be definitional.”⁵

Marsden takes the development a step further than Noll and Bare. For Marsden, the World Wars had a profound affect upon American living—religion included. Marsden states, “The war had accelerated and brought out into the open the secularization that had been growing in American life.”⁶ The practices of drinking and open sexuality were

⁴ Michael Pohlman explains that secularization theory “contends that modernity is intrinsically and irreversibly antagonistic to religion. As a society becomes increasingly modernized, it inevitably becomes less religious.” Michael E. Pohlman, *Broadcasting the Faith: Protestant Religious Radio and Theology in America, 1920–50* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2021), 11, Kindle.

⁵ Daniel R. Bare, *Black Fundamentalists: Conservative Christianity and Racial Identity in the Segregation Era* (New York: New York University Press, 2021), 8, Kindle.

⁶ Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 55.

becoming more accepted publicly. Marsden notes, “The movies made the most of sex stars. Semiserious popular literature was filled with discussions of Freud, Freudianism, and the importance of freedom of expression.”⁷ As the twentieth century progressed, so did the secularization of American society, and one means that was successful for societal secularization was through a combination of popular figures and pornographic printed material. This combination tactic was used by Hugh Hefner for *Playboy Magazine*. Carl Trueman notes concerning Hefner’s tactics:

Hefner’s genius lay in the way he was able to remove the social stigma typically attached to pornography and the selling of sex as a commercial interest. This was exemplified in the way *Playboy* was constructed, with its combination of titillating photographs and serious interviews with individuals of cultural significance, the latter of which Hefner added to the magazine in 1962. Thus, between 1962 and 1969 interviewees included figures of popular culture (Bob Dylan, Bill Cosby, Frank Sinatra); politicians of various stripes, nationality, and degrees of respectability (Eldridge Cleaver, Fidel Castro, George Lincoln Rockwell, George Wallace, Jawaharlal Nehru); famous art house directors (Federico Fellini, Ingmar Bergman); movie stars (Marcello Mastroianni, Jack Lemmon, Michael Caine); philosophers (Bertrand Russell, Jean-Paul Sartre); men of letters (Jean Genet, Henry Miller, Norman Mailer, Truman Capote); and so on.⁸

Though Hefner’s influence was not noted until the 1960s, the groundwork had already been laid in the early twentieth century. The wars influenced American secularization. Darwinian Evolution was gaining steam and moral debauchery was being glamorized. In this societal climate neo-fundamentalism was birthed; a climate where churches were increasingly feeling the pressures of growing secularization in society. In addition to the societal factors, ecclesiastical factors are key to understanding the development of neo-fundamentalism.

Secularization and the Churches

The influence of societal secularization upon the churches cannot be overestimated. Churches responded to this secularization in primarily two ways: the

⁷ Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 55.

⁸ Carl R. Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to Sexual Revolution* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 281, Kindle.

modernists who sought to placate and *fundamentalists* who would not placate. Bare shows the influence of this secularization within churches and how churches were responding:

In the early decades of the twentieth century, the fundamentalist movement arose as a reaction against the “modernist” or “liberal” theology gaining popularity in many churches and intellectual centers. Modernist theology sought to adapt Christianity to fit with the growing rationalistic and naturalistic sensibilities of the modern age—thus jettisoning or redefining doctrines such as the virgin birth of Christ or the divine inspiration of the Bible, which were seen as incompatible with a modern, scientific understanding of the world.⁹

While some churches attempted to maintain fundamental doctrines and fundamental practices, some churches were attempting to adapt themselves to what they were seeing in society. Those who attempted to remain true to fundamental doctrines were labeled as *fundamentalists* while those willing to adapt fundamental doctrine to the whims of the changing society were labeled *modernists* or *liberals*. One of the evidences of this form of labeling was the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy of the 1920s.

Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy

The secularization of society was serious, but some churches had also become increasingly secularized. As noted, the response to the secularization of society took two forms: fundamental versus modern. The fundamental response attempted to stay true to the core doctrines of the faith while the modern response advocated a watering down of core doctrines which were fundamental to the faith. Bare describes the Modernist theological approach: “Modernist theology typically aimed to bring Christianity into line with the most current patterns of rationalist thought, embracing higher-critical methods of biblical scholarship and often eschewing supernaturalist biblical interpretations that rested on the reliability or historicity of the miraculous events narrated in the text.”¹⁰ It is important to consider that this doctrinal deviation on the part of some churches did not begin in the 1920s, but rather that the doctrinal compromise of the 1920s was a

⁹ Bare, *Black Fundamentalists*, 2.

¹⁰ Bare, *Black Fundamentalists*, 26.

manifestation of doctrinal problems from the end of the nineteenth century. Liberal churches in the 1920s found the secularization of society to be their opportunity to *come out* with their compromised theology. Michael Pohlman also says, “Theology in America in the late 1800s ‘was no longer viewed as a fixed body of eternally bound truths. It was seen rather as an evolutionary development that should adjust to the standards and needs of modern culture.’”¹¹

Pohlman’s assertions are confirmed by the example George Marsden gives about Reverend James McCosh at the 1873 meeting of the Alliance: “An attempt to reconcile Darwinism and the Bible, presented by the Reverend James McCosh, President of the College of New Jersey (Princeton), sparked the floor debate.”¹² It is astounding that a school which was training preachers was attempting to reconcile biblical creation with Darwinian evolution. This attempt at reconciliation presumed a higher criticism of the Bible, and this higher criticism of the Bible was at the heart of liberal theology. Marsden explains, “The new Biblical criticism which gave naturalistic historical explanations of cultural development was based on virtually the same assumptions.”¹³ Thus, twentieth century modern churches were ripe for an opportunity to go public with their developing theology—a theology they had hoped would be more palatable to the changing culture around them. These changes within the churches needed a response, and that is what the fundamentalists did.

The individuals called *fundamentalists* adhered to core biblical doctrines as held by the church through past generations. Marsden states, “The term ‘fundamentalist’ originated on this occasion, when Curtis Lee Laws, conservative editor of the Baptist paper *The Watchman-Examiner*, coined it to describe those ready “to do battle royal for

¹¹ Pohlman, *Broadcasting the Faith*, 14.

¹² Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 18.

¹³ Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 20.

the Fundamentals.”¹⁴ From the beginning of the twentieth century and through the World Wars, there was a growing polarity between the fundamentalists and the modernists—a polarity between those willing to fight for core doctrines and those willing to acquiesce to the secularization within society. This polarity was called the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy.

One of the leading voices against the modernist movement was J. Gresham Machen. In *Christianity and Liberalism*, Machen uses the term *liberals* in reference to the modernists. Machen says, “This modern non-redemptive religion is called ‘modernism’ or ‘liberalism.’ Both names are unsatisfactory; the latter, in particular, is question-begging. The movement designated as ‘liberalism’ is regarded as ‘liberal’ only by its friends; to its opponents it seems to involve a narrow ignoring of many relevant facts.”¹⁵ Machen goes on to point out specific doctrinal changes that the modernists were adhering to—the necessity of blood atonement being one of these. Machen writes,

Modern men have been so much impressed with this element in Jesus’ teaching that they have sometimes been inclined to regard it as the very sum and substance of our religion. We are not interested, they say, in many things for which men formerly gave their lives; we are not interested in the theology of the creeds; we are not interested in the doctrines of sin and salvation; we are not interested in atonement through the blood of Christ: enough for us is the simple truth of the fatherhood of God and its corollary, the brotherhood of man. We may not be very orthodox in the theological sense, they continue, but of course you will recognize us as Christians because we accept Jesus’ teaching as to the Father God.¹⁶

In this quote, the blood atonement is spoken of trivially. Thus, there was a need for Machen and others to stand up for the fundamentals of the faith.

The controversy between fundamentalist and modernists were more than theological; the problems were associational. Pohlman explains, “The controversy was over not only theology, but also Christianity’s relationship with modernity. Beginning in

¹⁴ Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 57.

¹⁵ J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2009), 2, Logos Bible Software.

¹⁶ Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism*, 51.

the early 1920s, the controversy ended in 1936 when J. Gresham Machen and many other conservatives left the Presbyterian Church to form the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in America.”¹⁷ Thus, a splintering affect is noted early in the twentieth century.

Unwitting Secularization

While societal secularization was influenced by the wars and a brewing controversy between fundamentalists and modernists, there is one other significant factor to consider: an unwitting secularization of American religion through radio. The advancement of modernist theology was fueled by radio through the efforts of Harry Emerson Fosdick. While Fosdick attempted to confront the secularization of society through his *Modernist Theology*, he worked against traditional, fundamental doctrine. Thus, his attempts against secularization unwittingly promoted the secularization both of American society and churches. Pohlman notes this paradox: “In telling the story of Harry Emerson Fosdick and *National Vespers*, I argue that his radio ministry countered the secularization of American culture, but at the same time contributed to secularization by facilitating a movement away from Protestant orthodoxy in America.”¹⁸

The radio waves were not only unwittingly used to promote the secularization of America through open modernists attacks, but fundamentalists also took to the air waves in defense of the faith. Fundamentalists airwaves were dominated by Charles E. Fuller. Fuller seems to have attempted to use the radio waves to unite people around evangelism without rejecting the fundamentals of the faith. Pohlman is helpful here: “Fuller’s success uncovered a particular mood in America: one tired of the militant fundamentalism of the early decades of the century but not ready to abandon the fundamentals of the faith for theological liberalism.”¹⁹ The problem was that Fuller’s

¹⁷ Pohlman, *Broadcasting the Faith*, 23.

¹⁸ Pohlman, *Broadcasting the Faith*, 23.

¹⁹ Pohlman, *Broadcasting the Faith*, 119.

attempts unwittingly aided the secularization of American Christians as well in at least two ways: (1) through doctrinal minimalism and (2) theologically minimal music. In addition, the phrase “old-time religion” was popularized by Fuller and became commonly used within neo-fundamentalist circles. Consequently, a brief look at Fuller’s emphasis is helpful.

Fuller’s noble emphasis on evangelism led him to a radio program which avoided doctrinal depth. Pohlman quotes Philip Goff on this matter: “Without a doubt, the program’s purpose was to bring lost souls to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. . . . Charles Fuller purposefully stayed away from the debates that were already beginning between separatist and constructive fundamentalists during the war.”²⁰ The *Old Fashioned Revival Hour* radio program also used theologically minimal music that was used to draw out feelings about the past. Pohlman says,

The music played on the Old Fashioned Revival Hour was tailored to the new medium of radio. It too fostered theological minimalism. The music was designed to evoke feelings of nostalgia in the audience—a longing for a simpler time when Protestant Christianity was largely united around its confident proclamation of the simple message of the gospel.²¹

These songs included one entitled “Old-Time Religion,” which also became a common phrase used within the Neo-Fundamentalist movement. Fuller’s influence had direct impact on the development of neo-fundamentalist’s approach to doctrine and music as well as the key phrase “Old-Time Religion.” Pohlman writes, “Every week, millions of listeners tuned in to the Old Fashioned Revival Hour to imagine a religion of old—one that was simple, uncomplicated, and devoid of knotty theological questions.”²² Through this influence, an unwitting secularization of Christians took place—a secularization that led to doctrinal minimalism, theologically shallow music, and a nostalgic desire for old-

²⁰ Philip Goff, quoted in Pohlman, *Broadcasting the Faith*, 131.

²¹ Pohlman, *Broadcasting the Faith*, 133.

²² Pohlman, *Broadcasting the Faith*, 137-38.

time religion. While Fuller's claim, as well as that of his followers, would have been that he was a fundamentalist, there were clear signs of weakening, and it would not be long before another form of separatism would be birthed, but not before the famed Billy Graham came to prominence.

Ecclesiastical Separatism

In the 1950s, Billy Graham gained prominent national attention, and through Graham's association with a Protestant Council of Churches he gained the disdain of strict fundamentalists. Marsden addresses the division that ensued and the type of division: "In the aftermath of the resulting schism within the coalition, 'fundamentalism' came to be a term used almost solely by those who demanded ecclesiastical separatism."²³ This ecclesiastical separation eventually became part of the neo-fundamentalist identity. Tom Brennan says, "Thus it is that holiness demands the doctrine of ecclesiastical separation. As we shall immediately see, the doctrine of ecclesiastical separation demands fundamentalism."²⁴ For many fundamentalists, association with groups which did not hold to orthodox Christian beliefs was a step in the wrong direction, and there were only two options: reform from within or separate.

Though not all fundamentalists were Baptists, the scope of this study will look at those who became the Independent Baptists. These men became called *independent* primarily by withdrawing from the Southern Baptist Convention and other parachurch fellowships, which manifested doctrinal struggles in the 1970s. Brennan explains,

Other influential men came out of the Southern Baptist Convention in the mid-twentieth century and established large churches and schools. One of these men, J. Frank Norris, led in the founding of the Baptist Bible Fellowship, which currently represents about four thousand churches. It is similar to the GARBC in many respects. Others of these men, such as Lee Roberson (Southwide Baptist Fellowship and Tennessee Temple University), John R. Rice ("Sword of the Lord"), Lester Roloff,

²³ Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 73.

²⁴ Tom Brennan, *Schizophrenic: A Diagnosis of the Independent Baptist Movement* (Maitland, FL: Xulon Press, 2016), 59.

and Jack Hyles (Pastors' School and Hyles-Anderson College) built followings amongst the more independent type of men. These men saw the continual pattern of error that crept into man-made ecclesiastical structures beyond the church. They resolved to only associate voluntarily with other men with whom they agreed.²⁵

One should notice Brennan's phrase, "These men saw the continual pattern of error that crept into man-made ecclesiastical structures beyond the church." This phrase sounds objective, but it does not take into consideration the theological lens nor the revivalist influences upon many of these individuals.

Theological lens. Dispensational premillennialism was the theological lens through which many separatists' fundamentalists viewed the changes in America and American churches. Within this theological framework the times increasingly digressed until the *rapture* or catching away of the church just before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Marsden exposes this theological lens: "One of the distinctives of dispensationalism was that it posited that the Bible explained all historical change through a pattern of seven dispensations or eras."²⁶ Marsden also explains how this led to further ecclesiastical separation: "Dispensational premillennial interpretations of history, which had spread widely among fundamentalists, supported this separatist tendency. . . . By the 1930s the strictest fundamentalists increasingly were proclaiming the duty of ecclesiastical separatism."²⁷ In addition to this theological lens, there were also revivalist influences that predated the twentieth century, but nonetheless had a tremendous impact upon American Christianity.

Revivalist influence. Revivalist influences upon the separatists' fundamentalists can be observed in two primary areas: a theology that allowed for *easy believism* evangelism and a practice of manipulative altar calls. Altar calls typically take place at

²⁵ Brennan, *Schizophrenic*, 65.

²⁶ Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 40.

²⁷ Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 67.

the conclusion of a given church service where individuals are asked to come to the front of the church to decide about the sermon they have just heard. By *easy believism*, it is meant that a canned 1-2-3, *repeat-after-me* presentation of the gospel is given with the intention of leading the hearer to repeat a prayer of faith. Both methods are suspect and reveal historical, theoretical, and practical concerns.

History of Altar Calls

The scope of this project does not allow for a full historical development of the anxious benches—which later became known as *altar calls*. Iain Murray traces the development of these methods to the ministry of nineteenth-century evangelist Charles G. Finney. While Finney did not introduce the anxious bench, he was prolific in fueling these new methods. Murray states, “The excitement of the camp meetings had brought much attention to the visible. . . . But incautious as they tended to be, Methodists knew too much of true religion to make the ‘falling exercise’ the test of the number of converts. Something else was needed and it was found in what became known as the ‘invitation to the altar.’”²⁸

Murray exposes Finney’s connection between the anxious bench method and a person’s sincerity in submission to God:

The encouragement of physical responses to preaching (such as falling to the floor); women speaking in worship; meetings carried on through long hours and on successive days (protracted meetings); and, above all, inviting individuals to “submit to God” and to prove it by a humbling action such as standing up, kneeling down, or coming forward to “the anxious seat”—all came straight from the procedures that some Methodists had been popularizing for a quarter of a century. “The anxious seat” was only the altar call and the mourner’s bench under another name. Finney claimed that “except in rare instances” he did not use “the anxious seat” to promote revivals before the Fall of 1830.²⁹

²⁸ Iain Murray, *Revival and Revivalism: The Making and Marring of American Evangelicalism 1750-1858* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2017), 185.

²⁹ Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, 242.

In addition to testing the sincerity of a person's decision through altar calls, Murray also notes, "The anxious seat or its' equivalent, was vital to evangelism."³⁰ Finney's principles and practice became prevalent within the neo-fundamentalist movement of the twentieth century.

While in Finney's time these means were called *new measures*,³¹ this was not the only record of such principles and practices. Kevin Bauder describes the neo-fundamentalists as a particular revivalistic version of fundamentalism, and he too associates them with the practice of going to the altar:

Revivalism assumes that the normal Christian life is one of decline. Left to themselves, Christians will backslide. Therefore, Christian living becomes an oscillation between habitual backsliding and moments of revival or "getting right with God." The turning point from backsliding to revival is typically a crisis decision, and the main responsibility of the preacher is to produce these crises. He does this by means of "hard preaching," which focuses on the plan of salvation, the importance of soul-winning, and whatever rules of conduct the backslider is presumed to be violating. A person who wishes to get right with God usually communicates this crisis decision by "going to the altar."³²

In his book on evangelism, Mack Stiles gives a helpful personal illustration proving the use of these altar calls:

One Sunday, not long after, we decided to attend the large Baptist church in downtown Memphis. I cut quite a figure: I sported a huge red Afro, bell-bottom jeans, and a purple wool trench coat. We were amid crew cuts and suits. The preacher preached, all stanzas were sung, and then came the invitation. The preacher announced sternly that he would rather have someone leave during his sermon than during the invitation, "the most important part of the service." The appeal came for people to give their lives to Jesus. Hands were raised. We were thanked and then told to "just slip out" of our seats and come forward. "If you can't publicly stand up for Jesus in church, you won't ever stand up for him outside these walls," the preacher said. The logic seemed ironclad to me. John, whose head was bowed but whose eyes were opened (against instructions), whispered to me, "Do you think I should go forward?" "Well, it can't hurt," I whispered back, "I'll go with you." John popped up

³⁰ Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, 246.

³¹ Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, 232.

³² Kevin Bauder, "Hyper-Fundamentalism," in *Four Views on the Spectrum of Evangelicalism*, ed. Collin Hansen and David Naselli (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 42, Kindle.

from the pew and I followed. Dozens “slipped” out of their seats and streamed forward.³³

From Murray’s historical recounting of the anxious benches to Stiles’ personal experience, altar calls evidently became a means of confusion. The confusion came when revivalists began to associate conversion with walking an aisle. Therein lies the doctrinal problem: a different understanding of the doctrine of conversion. The confusion on conversion will be addressed later, but it is a confusion that has spanned that last two centuries.

Theoretically, the issues within revivalism include pragmatism and evident confusion. Walking down an aisle to the altar became the goal, as opposed to faith alone in the Person of Jesus Christ. Bauder lists eight consequences of this *Revivalism*.

1. It works against the notion that the normal Christian life is one of incremental growth. . . .
2. It downplays or rejects the importance of biblical exposition in preaching. . . .
3. It amplifies soul winning as the key feature of being “right with God.” . . .
4. It lends itself to externalism. . . .
5. It fosters a philosophy of leadership that puts pastors in a near-dictatorial position. . . .
6. Sixth, since numerical results are crucial, revivalistic churches tend to adopt methods that are calculated to draw crowds. . . .
7. Congregational worship is depreciated or repudiated. . . .
8. Downplays the importance of theology and, consequently, of theological education.³⁴

Though there is evangelistic zeal among Neo-Fundamentalists, there is also evident pragmatism. Bauder’s third consequence manifests the evangelistic zeal, but it also shows how soul-winning can become another moralistic deed. The sixth consequence is also troubling because it seems to imply pragmatic methods for the purpose of gaining large numbers.

Other individuals have experienced similar stories to that of Stiles and have lived through what Bauder describes as the revivalistic version of fundamentalism.

³³ Mack J. Stiles, *Evangelism: How the Whole Church Speaks of Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), chap. 1, Kindle.

³⁴ Bauder, “Hyper-Fundamentalism,” 42.

Brennan is one such individual who recounts a very personal altar experience and a reflection of that experience:

Six years after that summer, I was driving back to my dormitory room after an afternoon shift at the steel mill. For some reason, my mind turned to those days. I began to reckon the position of those young men who shared that altar with me that night. I knew so many of them so very well. Gradually, it dawned on me that the only one of the boys out of the forty or so that surrendered that night who was still preaching was me.³⁵

Brennan's experience speaks volumes about the consequences of the pragmatism associated with altar calls. Brennan also writes,

Some of you who read this are horrified. Others of you are thinking, "What's the big deal then? You surrendered, didn't you? And here you are years later preaching the Gospel. It all works." The pragmatism and spiritual immaturity of the second response is alarming. It does not work at all. The reasons I am still preaching thirty years later have nothing at all to do with the effectiveness of that invitation that night.³⁶

Brennan rightly identifies pragmatism as a problem with altar calls. Pragmatism is a philosophy which holds that the ends justify the means. In a situation like altar calls within churches, the ends are people coming down the aisle, but that is not all. Often, as noted in both examples above, the people walking down the aisle are led to believe that they are doing a particular deed that has meritorious value; they believe in their own activity rather than in Jesus. Thus, the result is a state of self-deception and confusion. This begs the question, "Does this end actually warrant the means?" No! Pragmatism in evangelism leads to confusion. John MacArthur writes, "Contemporary Christians have been conditioned to believe that because they recited a prayer, signed on a dotted line, walked an aisle, or had some other experience, they are saved and should never question their salvation."³⁷

³⁵ Brennan, *Schizophrenic*, 213.

³⁶ Brennan, *Schizophrenic*, 213.

³⁷ John F. MacArthur, *The Gospel According to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 47, Kindle.

Historical Easy Believism

The altar call is not the only method of concern, but easy believism should be avoided. Easy believism is a pragmatic tactic used in evangelism, and this tactic is evidence of a misunderstanding of the doctrine of conversion. The following is a more detailed definition and description of *easy believism*:

“Easy believism” is a somewhat derogatory term used by opponents of the view that one needs only to believe in Jesus in order to be saved. From this they conclude that those who hold to sola fide (faith alone) are saying that no corresponding need exists for a committed life of Christian discipleship as proof of salvation, but this is not true. Those who use the term easy believism are confusing justification—the one-time act of being declared righteous by God—with sanctification—the lifelong process by which the justified believer is conformed to the image of Christ. Those who call salvation by faith “easy believism” miss the fact that true conversion will always result in sanctification and a life of good works.³⁸

While this definition and description is helpful, it is incomplete. Easy believism not only neglects the lordship of Jesus Christ but also utilizes an overly simplistic method for evangelism.

Along with altar calls, the charge of *easy believism* has been leveled against those in neo-fundamentalism. Easy believism is typically identified as the type of evangelism known as the *1-2-3, repeat after me* method—an overly simplistic method. This type of evangelism does little to explain the gospel or ensure the recipient’s understanding of the gospel. In addition, when the person has heard the steps of the plan, he or she is then led in a prayer and told that he or she is now saved. The concerns with *easy believism* should be obvious—overly simplistic methods which led to the *prayer of faith*.

Historically, *easy believism* can be identified by Finney’s use of the phrase “prayer of faith.” In similar fashion, the neo-fundamentalist sees God’s initiation as primarily the fact that God sent Jesus to this earth. The weak theological foundation of neo-fundamentalists is evidenced by *repeat after me* prayers, which lead an individual to

³⁸ S. Michael Houdmann, *Got Questions? Bible Questions Answered* (Bellingham, WA: God Questions Ministries, 2002-2013), chap. 8, Logos Bible Software.

faith in their own activity of prayer. The *faith-in-my-prayer* method is the epitome of easy believism and contrary to the comprehensive understanding of God-initiated salvation. Consider Murray's assessment of Finney. The "prayer of faith" is one of three major characteristics of Finney's doctrine. Murray explains, "Some of the most characteristic opinions he came to embrace such as his denial of the doctrine of imputation, his strong commitment to teaching on 'the prayer of faith', and his general antipathy to Calvinism, can be traced to Methodism and to ideas that spread far in the aftermath of the Kentucky revival."³⁹

Mark Noll also points out this highly individualistic form promoted by Finney: "Charles Grandison Finney, one of the most effective of nineteenth-century revivalists, put it sharply in describing the best form of conversion: 'where a sinner is brought to see what he has to do, and he takes his stand at once, AND DOES IT.'"⁴⁰ MacArthur denounces easy believism when he says, "The gospel according to Jesus explicitly and unequivocally rules out easy-believism."⁴¹

At the root of contemporary neo-fundamentalism is theological confusion that has led to pragmatic methods of evangelism. If indeed conversion is purely an act of the individual, then altar calls and easy believism teaching and methods may be justified. Murray again quotes Finney when he says, "If conversion is nothing more than the moment when the sinner, employing that aid, yields to the truth and makes his decision, and if there are measures such as the altar call calculated to induce it, then, certainly, the church is to be blamed if she does not achieve conversions and revivals."⁴² If conversion is the work

³⁹ Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, 258.

⁴⁰ Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 63, Kindle.

⁴¹ MacArthur, *The Gospel According to Jesus*, 54.

⁴² Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, 249.

of God, then altar calls and easy believism are ruled out, but how do the early revivalists and fundamentalists culminate into the neo-fundamentalists?

Convergence

What was unseen by Christians in the early twentieth century was the product of many converging influences. The dispensational premillennial theology, revivalist techniques, doctrinal minimalism, theologically shallow music, and the nostalgic appeal all blended to produce a hyper-separatistic, pragmatic, anti-intellectual movement known as the neo-fundamentalists. What once began with a desire to fight against true liberal theology evolved into a movement known for evangelism dominated by manipulative altar calls and easy believism. Marsden notes the revivalist influence upon Fundamentalism: “Fundamentalism, however, also incorporated a positive impulse that often worked at cross-purposes with this negativism. Antedating fundamentalist antimodernism was the evangelical revivalist tradition out of which fundamentalism had grown.”⁴³

The New Evangelicalism was an attempt to coalesce fundamentalists together, but it was not as pure as originally thought. It appeared that Billy Graham would be able to make this unity between fundamentalists happen. Marsden states, “If the New Evangelicalism that eventually emerged as heir to the original fundamentalist coalition of the 1920s ever had a chance of achieving some real working unity it would have centered around Billy Graham in his prime.”⁴⁴ While Graham’s leadership brought hope, Marsden makes a passing comment that is important to understand the neo-fundamentalists development: “At the center of this coalition were dispensationalist premillennialists who had been promoting dispensationalist teachings for nearly half a century through prophecy conferences, Bible institutes, evangelistic campaigns, and the Scofield Reference Bible

⁴³ Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 67.

⁴⁴ Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 62.

(1909).”⁴⁵ Within the New-Evangelicals was a constituency of individuals who would eventually become increasingly separated but not over fundamentals. Only a later reflection could reveal this kind of impurity. Marsden explains,

Once it became apparent after 1925, however, that fundamentalists could not control the major northern denominations, the logic of their no-compromise position pointed toward separatism. Dispensational premillennial interpretations of history, which had spread widely among fundamentalists, supported this separatist tendency. Dispensationalism taught the apostasy of the major churches of “Christendom” as part of a steady cultural degeneration during the present “church age.” By the 1930s the strictest fundamentalists increasingly were proclaiming the duty of ecclesiastical separatism.⁴⁶

The problem within the fundamentalist movement was not that there were individuals standing for the fundamentals of the faith. The problem is that the term *fundamentalism* developed into internal battles for secondary or tertiary issues (i.e., dispensationalism, premillennialism, old-time religion, hymnbooks, women apparel, musical preferences, etc.) and practices for Christian worship and living. Paul Enns writes,

Neo-fundamentalism may be identified as the modern movement that, while holding to the historic fundamental doctrines of Scripture, has evolved into a movement with different emphases and perspectives. Neo-fundamentalism has remained true to the historic doctrines of the Christian faith, steadfastly defending those doctrines in pulpits and classrooms. Neo-fundamentalism has also tended toward legalism, adding explicit statements regarding behavior to doctrinal statements.⁴⁷

One could say that the term *fundamentals* was expanded to include much more than originally intended. The result was, as Marsden says, “*Fundamentalism* came to be a term used almost solely by those who demanded ecclesiastical separatism.”⁴⁸

This type of separation would often be called second degree separationism. Enns describes this trend: “In addition, neo-fundamentalism has also advocated secondary separationism, calling for avoidance of other Christians who do not follow the same rigid

⁴⁵ Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 57.

⁴⁶ Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 67.

⁴⁷ Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, ed. Jim Vincent and Allan Sholes, rev. and expanded ed. (Chicago: Moody, 2014), 662, Logos Bible Software.

⁴⁸ Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 73.

standards. In advocating this attitude, neo-fundamentalism has tended toward divisiveness, splitting of churches, and fostering of ill will among genuine Christians.”⁴⁹ Ironically, this segment of fundamentalism did coalesce, but that union did not last long.

Matthew Lyon writes about this kind of secondary separation between Bob Jones, Jr., and John R. Rice:

The difference between Rice and Jones, Jr. became apparent in 1971 with an ambitious conference for evangelism that Rice was initiating. . . . It’s planning committee had the usual leaders such as Bob Jones, Jr, Jack Hyles, and Lee Roberson, but also included Earl Oldham, a prominent leader in the World Baptist Fellowship. . . . All was well, until Rice invited prominent conservative Southern Baptists R. G. Lee and W.A. Criswell to speak at the conference. . . . Jones, Jr. was not on board for this ecumenical fundamentalism. For Jones, Jr. a fundamentalist should attack not only modernists, but also compromising Christians. Jones, Jr. saw little difference between W.A. Criswell, whom he called a ‘traitor to the Cause of Christ, and Billy Graham.’⁵⁰

For Jones, Jr., separation from Graham was not enough. Anyone who would not separate from Graham was worthy of attack as well. Thus, Jones, Jr. distanced himself from Rice. This is one example of secondary separation.

The branch of fundamentalism which advocated for ecclesiastical separation eventually coalesced under the leadership of Jerry Falwell and became called the *Neo-Fundamentalists*. Marsden explains,

As evangelicalism in the late 1970s reemerged into prominence in American public life, the movement produced spinoffs that shone more brightly than the fragmenting ex-fundamentalism that once provided a sort of center. One of these was the Moral Majority, arising from the unexpected quarter of separatist fundamentalism. Jerry Falwell was in fact a reformer of fundamentalism, whose role in some ways paralleled that of Graham and his new evangelical cohorts of the 1950s. “Neo-fundamentalist” is an appropriate term for Falwell’s movement.⁵¹

Though Marsden associates the Neo-Fundamentalists with Falwell’s Moral Majority organization, some saw Falwell as liberal. Marsden continues:

⁴⁹ Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, 662.

⁵⁰ Matthew Lee Lyon, “John R. Rice and Evangelism: An Essential Mark of Independent Baptist Fundamentalism” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2019), 25-26.

⁵¹ Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 76.

While holding to the fundamentalist heritage of ecclesiastical separatism (and hence remaining distant from Graham), Falwell tried to bring fundamentalists back toward the centers of American life, especially through political action. Politics meant making alliances. Stricter fundamentalists, like Bob Jones III, condemned Falwell as a pseudofundamentalist.⁵²

Consequently, they separated from Falwell's movement. Beyond Bob Jones III, figures such as Tom Malone, Shelton Smith (Sword of the Lord), and Paul Chappell took up the mantle within neo-fundamentalism—a product of both original fundamentalist and revivalist influences manifested through errant evangelistic strategies.

Avoiding Errant Forms of Evangelism

Because the neo-fundamentalist movement has a history of separating over secondary and tertiary issues, the people within this movement can be highly divisive and legalistic; and their means of evangelism can lead to mass confusion. Altar calls and easy believism have become convictions of those within this movement, and it is these forms of evangelism that must be avoided. Bauder's contemporary assessment is helpful. While Bauder does describe a revivalistic version of fundamentalism, he also describes what he calls "Hyper Fundamentalism."⁵³ The similarities between the revivalistic and hyper versions of fundamentalism do overlap, but *Hyper-Fundamentalism* takes the furthest of extremes. Of the eight characteristics of *Hyper-Fundamentalism*, Bauder's sixth reason is why altar calls and easy believism have become points of division. Bauder writes, "Sixth, hyper-fundamentalists sometimes turn nonessentials into tests of fundamentalism."⁵⁴ Both altar calls and easy believism have become woven within the fabric of identity of many Neo-Fundamentalists—they have become convictions which lead to confusion. MacArthur notes that these evangelistic means lead to people who are confused about conversion:

Modern evangelism is preoccupied with decisions, statistics, aisle-walking, gimmicks, prefabricated presentations, pitches, emotional manipulation, and even intimidation.

⁵² Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 76.

⁵³ Bauder, "Hyper-Fundamentalism," 41.

⁵⁴ Bauder, "Hyper-Fundamentalism," 43.

Its message is a cacophony of easy-believism and simplistic appeals. Unbelievers are told that if they invite Jesus into their hearts, accept Him as personal Savior, or believe the facts of the gospel, that is all there is to it. The aftermath is appalling failure, as seen in the lives of millions who have professed faith in Christ with no consequent impact on their behavior. Who knows how many people are deluded into believing they are saved when they are not?⁵⁵

Thus, both altar calls and easy believism are forms of Neo-Fundamentalist evangelism that must be avoided in favor of Christ-centered evangelism. For progress toward Christ-centered evangelism, those serving the church must be equipped through teaching on true Christian mission and conversion as well as equipped with resources that promote organic, Christ-centered evangelism.

Equipping for Christ-Centered Evangelism

When equipping lay leaders for Christ-centered evangelism, it is easy to immediately slip into practical, pragmatic teaching, but there must be doctrinal teaching that produces practice out of a right heart. What kind of teaching must be presented so that the heart of the lay leader is called to faithful obedience? First, there must be a clear understanding of Christian mission. Second, there must be a doctrinal understanding of biblical conversion. Third, the gospel must be taught as truth for Christians and not merely for non-Christians. Lastly, biblical tests for true conversion must be taught to the lay leaders so that they are able to ward off easy believism.

Equipping Requires Teaching on What Is True Christian Mission

Mission in neo-fundamentalism is confused because of how Christian purpose and identity are misunderstood. Bauder says, “Hyper-fundamentalists are marked by an inability to receive criticism.” This characteristic of being unable to receive criticism is an issue of identity. Since neo-fundamentalists have invested so much of their self-worth in other things rather than in Christ, they cannot stand any criticism of that which they highly esteem (i.e., personal preferences, standards, extrabiblical issues). This intolerance

⁵⁵ MacArthur, *The Gospel According to Jesus*, 120-21.

to criticism is based on an identity rooted in religion or religious activity—what some have considered a sociological problem.

The late professor of Sociology Philip Rieff understood cultural history to be developing through various kinds of stages. He identified each of these stages by a particular kind of man characterized by that in which the culture found their identity. For example, Carl Trueman sites Rieff’s cultural development ideology: “The political man is the one who finds his identity in the activities in which he engages in the public life of the *polis*.”⁵⁶ The following quote expresses a sociological connection with the identity struggle of the neo-fundamentalists: “Eventually, political man gave way to the second major type, that of religious man. The man of the Middle Ages was precisely such a person, someone who found his primary sense of self in his involvement in religious activities: attending mass, celebrating feast days, taking part in religious processions, going on pilgrimages.”⁵⁷ Rieff’s sociological assessment of cultural history, the religious man, can be identified as characteristic of neo-fundamentalists. Consequently, the identity of fundamentalists within this movement has been attached to the doing of mission—even if the means are pragmatic. Christian purpose and mission have been misunderstood.

Cary Schmidt speaks of this confusion between mission and identity as well. In his book entitled *Stop Trying: How to Receive—Not Achieve—Your Real Identity*, he refers to this kind of identity, not as the Rieff’s *religious man* but rather the *Traditional Identity*. To understand how this confusion of identity takes place, one should consider Schmidt’s description of this kind of identity: “Traditional identity is external to us—forming from the outside in. We learn who we are by growing up, learning the ropes, keeping the rules, and gaining the skills to survive and succeed in the culture in which ‘fate’ placed us.”⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Trueman. *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, 44.

⁵⁷ Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, 44.

⁵⁸ Cary Schmidt, *Stop Trying: How to Receive—Not Achieve—Your Real Identity* (Chicago: Moody, 2021), 55.

One should notice the aspect here of “keeping the rules.” Schmidt goes on to write, “Traditional identity is insufficient because it is performance-based and conditional. A traditional identity is only as strong as you are good in the eyes of others. . . . This identity is also based upon the acceptance of others when they approve of our performance, which laces our relationships with conditional factors.”⁵⁹ Consequently, when someone places so much emphasis on their own performance, criticism is highly personal. Criticism is perceived to be speech against the individual in a deeply personal way. This perceived personal attack is rooted in an identity that misunderstands purpose and mission; thus, one must teach purpose and mission—a purpose and mission that is grounded in God himself.

Purpose must be understood before mission. The Christian’s purpose cannot be confused with any other principle, and to understand purpose one need only answer the question, “Why do you exist?” Ephesians 1 is helpful for understanding purpose. Three times in the passage, the scripture makes clear that God has worked to make the Ephesian Christians “to the praise of his [God’s] glory” (Eph 1:3-14). Mankind exists for the glory of God; but how is this glory of God intentionally manifested?—through mission.

God’s mission is the means to God’s purpose. God’s mission is that the gospel of the glory of God would be preached in all the world. Christopher Wright explains, “It is not so much the case that God has a mission for his church in the world, as that God has a church for his mission in the world. Mission was not made for the church; the church was made for mission—God’s mission.”⁶⁰ The Christian’s purpose should never be a performance or practice goal. Practice should flow out of purpose. Mission must flow out of established purpose. Identity speaks to who the Christian is and why he or she exists. Identity is that intrinsic worth is not found in the doing of mission but in the very Person

⁵⁹ Schmidt, *Stop Trying*, 58-59.

⁶⁰ Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God’s People: A Biblical Theology of Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 16, Kindle.

of God. Not only must there be training on mission, but the doctrine of conversion must be clearly taught.

Equipping Requires Teaching on Christian Conversion

Easy believism is a theological problem. The doctrine of conversion in neo-fundamentalism is confused because of the theological starting point, meaning that conversion is believed to be man-initiated rather than God-initiated. Murray notes some of Finney’s doctrine:

A decision of the will, not a change of the nature, was all that was needed for anyone to be converted. . . . He [Finney] criticized the idea that conversion involved an action of omnipotence, or creation, and warned against those who prayed as though they believed that the Spirit’s influences were necessary to make the unconverted “able to obey their Maker.”⁶¹

Finney’s understanding of conversion was new, and it directly impacted his evangelistic efforts. Murray says, “By 1835 he was ready to tell his hearers that he was presenting what was virtually a new theology of conversion.”⁶² For Finney, conversion came about through the decision of the individual. Consequently, doing whatever was necessary to cause this decision was warranted—including manipulative tactics. Under this new theology, conversion became a matter of strategy. Murray cites Finney: “For men to be converted, he argued, ‘it is necessary to raise an excitement among them.’”⁶³ MacArthur gives testimony to this fact in his ministry as well: “As a pastor I regularly rebaptize people who once ‘made a decision,’ were baptized, yet experienced no change. They come later to true conversion and seek baptism again as an expression of genuine salvation. We hear

⁶¹ Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, 245.

⁶² Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, 246.

⁶³ Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, 246.

such testimonies nearly every week from the baptistery of Grace Community Church.”⁶⁴
Mankind can receive glory when the doctrine of conversion is understood in this way.

In many respects, conversion is based on the savior of the *Self*. This idea of the *Self* is appealing today, especially considering the current context of Western culture. Helen Pluckrose and James Lindsay have been helpful in identifying modern conceptions in the West. They explain in their book *Cynical Theories*,

In an honor culture, they explain, it is important to refuse to be dominated by anyone. Thus, people are highly sensitive to slights and respond to any indication of disrespect with immediate aggression, or even violence. Self-sufficiency is a core value in this kind of culture, which dominated the Western world for hundreds of years and is still prevalent in some non-Western cultures and in certain subcultures within the West, such as street gangs.⁶⁵

There are several principles to note from Pluckrose and Lindsay’s citation. First, the honor culture is most comparable to the neo-fundamentalist way of thinking. It is not uncommon to be met with anger over control issues. Second, the honor culture is characterized by high sensitivity—another comparison to the neo-fundamentalist movement. Third, self-sufficiency is identified as a core value. This self-sufficient way of thinking has bled over into neo-fundamentalist doctrine of and consequent practices for conversion.

A doctrine of conversion based in a culture of self-sufficiency leads to pragmatic strategies that blur lines between altar calls and true conversion. The blurring of lines is proven by Finney’s beliefs. Murray writes on the subject:

For Finney and appeal for a public action had become an essential part of evangelism. He believed that all that was needed for conversion was a resolution signified by standing, kneeling, or coming forward, and because the Holy Spirit always acts when a sinner acts, the public resolution could be treated as “identical with the miraculous inward change of sudden conversion.”⁶⁶

⁶⁴ MacArthur, *The Gospel According to Jesus*, 24.

⁶⁵ Helen Pluckrose and James Lindsay, *Cynical Theories: How Activist Scholarship Made Everything about Race, Gender, and Identity—and Why This Harms Everybody* (Durham, NC: Pitchstone Publishing, 2020), 228

⁶⁶ Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, 250.

The doctrine of conversion was changed to make mankind the driving force. Paul Chitwood exposes this change in his dissertation about the Sinner's Prayer: "One of the many unforeseen results in this theological compromise was an approach to conversion that in both practice and theory views conversion as nothing more than a decision of the will."⁶⁷ Chitwood's argument is helpful because he shows the inevitable connection between the theology of conversion and the practice of the Sinner's Prayer. He goes on to quote Bill Leonard's criticisms of revivalism, which have their roots in Finney.

Not only is the doctrine of conversion confused with an activity such as coming forward in a service, but this man-centered self-sufficient doctrine also led Finney to teach that parents could control the conversion of their own children. For Finney, ensuring the conversion of one's own child was accomplished by getting the child to pray *the prayer of faith*. Murray quotes Finney: "We see that pious parents can render the salvation of their children certain. Only let them pray in faith and be agreed as touching the things they shall ask for, and God has promised them the desire of their hearts."⁶⁸

Finney's *prayer of faith* is eerily reminiscent of today's *sinner's prayer*, and seems to also reveal early glimpses of modern concepts of the Self—a Self that can determine one's own destiny. Doctrinally, this errant theology promotes an idea of self-salvation. Carl Trueman addresses the development of the highly sexualized mindset within the West. While this may sound wildly different from the topic at hand, it is quite relevant. In tracing the development of thought, Trueman analyzes the influence of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the foundations of modern selfhood. As part of this historical study, Trueman cites Charles Taylor's reference to Rousseau:

It [self-determining freedom] is the idea that I am free when I decide for myself what concerns me, rather than being shaped by external influences. It is a standard of

⁶⁷ Paul Harrison Chitwood, "The Sinner's Prayer: An Historical and Theological Analysis" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2001), 97.

⁶⁸ Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, 282-83.

freedom that obviously goes beyond what has been negative liberty, where I am free to do what I want without interference by others because that is compatible with my being shaped by society and its laws of conformity. Self-determining freedom demands that I break the hold of all such external impositions and decide for myself.⁶⁹

In Finney's doctrinal position, conversion was in the power of the human will, and it stands to reason that this influence can be traced to human nature and a culture within which independence and self-determination has been incubated.

Though Finney taught that parents could bring about the conversion of their own children, he did not feel himself to have accomplished the conversion of his own children. Finney is later recorded as not even knowing if any of his six children were ever converted. Murray records,

Finney and his first wife were married in 1824 and had six children. Thirty-two years later, as his first biographer reported, Finney was preaching on the training of children one Sunday at Oberlin, when he stopped and exclaimed, "Brethren, why am I trying to instruct you on the subject of training your children in the fear of god when I do not know that a single one of my children gives evidence of having been converted?"⁷⁰

Conversion should be considered quite differently—it is the work of God. Conversion should be considered through descriptive, academic, and scriptural means. Descriptively, Michael Green elaborates the conversion of the apostle Paul in four movements, but the words Green uses place the emphasis rightly: "First, God touched his conscience. . . . Second, God illuminated his mind. . . . Third, God touched his will. . . . Fourth, God transformed the whole rest of his life."⁷¹ One should notice that Green shows conversion to be the work of God.

Academically, conversion is defined by Wayne Grudem as follows: "Conversion is our willing response to the gospel call, in which we sincerely repent of sins and place

⁶⁹ Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, 128.

⁷⁰ Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, 289.

⁷¹ Michael Green, *Evangelism Through the Local Church: A Comprehensive Guide to All Aspects of Evangelism* (Vancouver, BC: Regent College Publishing, 2012), 35-36.

our trust in Christ for salvation.”⁷² One should notice how conversion is based on a response and not a work based on man’s initiative. Both descriptively and academically, conversion must be fundamentally based in God.

Scripturally, there is confusion over conversion based in faulty interpretation. Romans 10:13 says, “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” This verse has been largely used to prove the case for the sinner’s prayer, which is typically the conclusion of the *1-2-3, repeat-after-me* plan. The implication of the common interpretation of this verse is that the call is that of an unbeliever; but Romans 10:14 makes clear that the call is the result of belief that follows from the preaching of the gospel. This subtle but important nuance is the difference between believing in the prayer as the reason for salvation or seeing the prayer as confession and evidence of belief. The confusion has resulted from the largely pragmatic, numbers-oriented neo-fundamentalists approach to conversion. In contrast, reviewing conversion descriptively, academically, and scripturally proves that it is the work of God and not the work of man.

Both the novelty and the superstitious nature of the Sinner’s Prayer should cause concern. The Sinner’s Prayer is a relatively new addition within Christendom. Chitwood writes, “The historical roots of the prayer can be traced theologically to changes that began to take place on the frontier, primarily during the Second Great Awakening.”⁷³ As to the superstitious nature of the Sinner’s Prayer, J. D. Greear says, “The sinner’s prayer is not a magic incantation or a recipe you follow to get a salvation cake.”⁷⁴ Greear rightly calls this an incantation since the words often include asking Jesus into one’s heart—a phrase that is not biblical and lends toward superstition. Further careful analysis of the Sinner’s Prayer is beyond the scope of this project, but there is warranted cause for

⁷² Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity, 2004), 709, Logos Bible Software.

⁷³ Chitwood, “The Sinner’s Prayer,” 61.

⁷⁴ J. D. Greear, *Stop Asking Jesus into Your Heart* (Nashville: B & H, 2013), 8, Kindle.

concern, since most of Christian history did not use this prayer and since the terminology of asking Jesus into one's heart is unbiblical.

Equipping Requires Resources Which Promote Christ-Centered Evangelism

In addition to equipping lay leaders by training on mission and conversion, Christ-centered evangelistic resources must be provided for lay leaders. At least two topics must be considered when defining Christ-centered evangelism: an explicit gospel message and a biblical test for true conversion. Neither the gospel message nor the test of conversion can be assumed, and both means serve to guard against errant forms of evangelism.

Explicit gospel message. Matt Chandler makes helpful reference to one of the common enemies of the gospel in his book *The Explicit Gospel*. The gospel enemy is “Christian Moralistic Therapeutic Deism.”⁷⁵ Chandler writes,

The idea behind moral, therapeutic deism is that we are able to earn favor with God and justify ourselves before God by virtue of our behavior. This mode of thinking is religious, even “Christian” in its content, but it’s more about self-actualization and self-fulfillment, and it posits a God who does not so much intervene and redeem but basically hangs out behind the scenes, cheering on your you-ness and hoping you pick up the clues he’s left to become the best you you can be.⁷⁶

The greatest danger within this moralistic framework is that once a person prays the prayer of faith in Jesus Christ then he is able to revert to faith in his works for a kind of post-salvation self-justification. Chandler says,

For some reason—namely, our depravity—we have a tendency to think that the cross saves us from past sin, but after we are saved, we have to take over and clean ourselves up. This sort of thinking is devastating to the soul. We call this the “assumed gospel,” and it flourishes when well-meaning teachers, leaders, and preachers set out to see lives first and foremost conformed to a pattern of behavior (religion) and not transformed by the Holy Spirit’s power (gospel). . . . The idolatry

⁷⁵ Matt Chandler, *The Explicit Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 11, Kindle.

⁷⁶ Chandler, *The Explicit Gospel*, 13.

that exists in man's heart always wants to lead him away from his Savior and back to self-reliance⁷⁷

The connection between the moralistic therapeutic deism and evangelism within the neo-fundamentalists movement is two-fold. First, since that gospel is primarily perceived as a destination fix (i.e., people can receive their *get-out-of-Hell* card), the gospel is purely a tool to be used for reaching unbelievers rather than for believers. Second, evangelism becomes a work for self-actualization within the moralistic framework. Both the destination fix ideology and the pursuit of self-actualization through evangelism reveal a truncated view of the gospel. To this truncated view the answer is the explicit gospel—the gospel for unbelievers and for believers. In addition to expanding one's understanding of the gospel, there should be biblical tests for conversion rather than faith in a prayer—a test for true conversion.

A test for true conversion. Easy believism is a real concern within the neo-fundamentalist movement; consequently, there should be biblical tests for conversion rather than placing faith in a recited prayer. Mack Stiles explains, “The requirement of a changed life guards us from ‘easy believism.’”⁷⁸ Stiles is correct. Biblical conversion produces a radical change in relationship to God, God's commands, Christian brethren, and to sin. A cursory reading of the Epistle of First John confirms the marks of a true convert. Among these marks are love for God, love for brethren, obedience to God's law, and the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit. In addition to these marks of conversion in First John, there is also the mark of true discipleship.

Stiles quotes Dever when he says, “The ultimate mark of conversion, as I've heard Mark Dever rightly say, is not walking an aisle, but picking up a cross.”⁷⁹ While

⁷⁷ Chandler, *The Explicit Gospel*, 14.

⁷⁸ Mack Stiles, *Marks of a Messenger: Knowing, Living, and Speaking the Gospel* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2010), 76.

⁷⁹ Stiles, *Marks of a Messenger*, 77.

easy believism calls a person to perform a prayer, true conversion is marked by the call of a person to a Person—Jesus Christ. Discipleship should not be separated from salvation.

In John MacArthur’s *The Gospel According to Jesus*, he cites both A. W. Tozer and

James M. Boice on this matter:

A. W. Tozer said, “The Lord will not save those whom He cannot command. He will not divide His offices. You cannot believe on a half-Christ. We take Him for what He is—the anointed Saviour and Lord who is King of kings and Lord of all lords! He would not be Who He is if He saved us and called us and chose us without the understanding that He can also guide and control our lives.”⁸⁰

James M. Boice, in his book *Christ’s Call to Discipleship*, writes with insight about the salvation/discipleship dichotomy, which he frankly describes as “defective theology”: This theology separates faith from discipleship and grace from obedience. It teaches that Jesus can be received as one’s Savior without being received as one’s Lord. This is a common defect in times of prosperity. In days of hardship, particularly persecution, those who are in the process of becoming Christians count the cost of discipleship carefully before taking up the cross of the Nazarene. Preachers do not beguile them with false promises of an easy life or indulgence of sins. But in good times, the cost does not seem so high, and people take the name of Christ without undergoing the radical transformation of life that true conversion implies.⁸¹

The lay leaders must be trained to understand the gospel for the believer and equipped with biblical tests for conversion. In understanding the truth about the explicit gospel, evangelism ceases to be merely a moralistic activity. Why? Because when the gospel is personally applied to the would-be evangelist, he is motivated by the completed performance of Jesus. In other words, he is free to evangelize because of the identity the believer already has in Jesus. This is what it means to be Christ-centered. In training for the true tests of conversion, easy believism is warded off and there is no need for giving the recipient false assurance. With proper training the would-be evangelist understands that conversion is the work of God, and that God will produce a radical change in the life of the recipient when he or she is truly converted.

⁸⁰ MacArthur, *The Gospel According to Jesus*, 53.

⁸¹ MacArthur, *The Gospel According to Jesus*, 53-54.

Equipping Requires Christ-Centered Practical Measures

In addition to the training measures already listed, there are Christ-centered alternatives to the neo-fundamentalists practices of easy believism and altar calls. These Christ-centered measures include the practice of the gospel presentation, the practice of inviting a person to respond, direction for overcoming barriers to evangelism, and identification of people within spheres of influence. This final section will elaborate what these measures are and how they may be practical.

The practice of the gospel presentation is not new within neo-fundamentalists circles, but for lay leaders who have been trained in the practice of easy believism, this practice is necessary. As opposed to the *get-out-of-hell* gospel presentation, it is better to begin where the apostle Paul began in Romans 1:16-21. God is presented as the righteous Creator. Within this gospel presentation, presenting God as Creator is a means whereby creature accountability is established. Not only is God the Creator, but man is presented as a sinful, rebellious creature before this God in Romans 1:22-25. This rebellion of mankind has garnered the just wrath of the Creator God. Despite this rebellion God has provided the means whereby mankind may be forgiven of this sinful rebellion. The means provided is Jesus Christ, who is the penal substitution for mankind according to Romans 3:24-25. As the One who has stood in the place of sinners, Jesus Christ lived the life mankind could not live, died the death that all mankind deserved, and rose from the dead. When this good news is presented, a response should be invited as seen in Romans 4:23-25. The only acceptable response is repentance and faith in Jesus Christ alone for the forgiveness of sin. Stiles uses the following outline: God, Man, Christ, and Response. Stiles encourages verbal gospel presentation practices:

Practice the “gospel in a minute.” Know how to say the basic principles of the gospel message in a minute or two. I use “God, Man, Christ, Response” as an outline in my head. But the basic principle is to think through what needs to be communicated so that someone can understand what God has done through Christ for lost sinners such

as us, so that we might repent of our sins and turn to Christ in faith. Say it in language you would use naturally in conversation with friends.⁸²

After the gospel presentation has been given, probably one of the most difficult practical steps is to invite a response. The difficulty is presumably a matter of fear. Timothy K. Beougher writes, “We tend to focus on the strategy and forget the power. But the strategy is worthless without the power.”⁸³ It is important to remember that all the evangelist is doing is asking for a response, and that faith is not in the technique but in the Lord. People must be invited. Stiles says, “Finally, don’t forget to invite people to cross the line into a relationship with the living Christ. Many are just waiting for someone to tell them what the next step of faith is for their lives.”⁸⁴

What about the *sinner’s prayer* – should we use it? The sinner’s prayer is an effective tool but it must be used wisely with one nuance. Rather than asking the individual, “would you like to pray to be saved?,” it would be better to ask the evangelized the following: “Would you like to confess your belief to God in prayer?” The first question can mislead someone into thinking that it is their own prayer that will save them. The second question affirms that they have believed the gospel and asks them to confess with their mouth what they have already believed. So, if by *sinner’s prayer* one means that the person is confessing existing belief, then, yes, the sinner’s prayer should be used.⁸⁵

In addition to training in gospel presentation and invitation, lay leaders must consider the barriers that keep them from evangelizing. Beougher includes six chapters in his helpful book entitled *Overcoming Walls to Witnessing*. While lay leaders need training in overcoming all the barriers Beougher lists, the barrier of giftedness seems to be one of the common excuses today for not evangelizing. Beougher presents the logic of this barrier:

⁸² Stiles, *Marks of the Messenger*, 116.

⁸³ Timothy K. Beougher, *Overcoming Walls to Witnessing* (Leyland, England: 10Publishing, 2021), 19.

⁸⁴ Stiles, *Marks of a Messenger*, 119.

⁸⁵ See Kevin DeYoung’s tract entitled, *The Biggest Story* for an exemplary model of this.

“Evangelism is a spiritual gift; I don’t have the spiritual gift; therefore, God does not expect me to do evangelism.”⁸⁶ Through a personal experience with a speaker, Beougher convincingly argues that one does not need the so-called “gift of evangelism” to evangelize. In addition, Scripture both gives clear commands to evangelize and records normal believers evangelizing. Consequently, all lay leaders and members of the church must be trained in evangelism and any barriers that would prevent obedience.

Lastly, there should be an awareness brought to those within one’s specific spheres of influence for the purpose of evangelism. *Concentric Circles of Concern: Seven Stages for Making Disciples*, by W. Oscar Thompson and Carolyn Thompson Ritzmann, has been helpful in bringing practical awareness to individuals within one’s sphere of influence. Using a circular pattern, Thompson begins with the middle circle and works his way to an outer circle. The graph lists the following individuals within one’s circle of influence: (1) self, (2) family, (3) relatives, (4) friends, (5) neighbors and associates, (6) acquaintances, (7) person X.⁸⁷ One of the advantages of this material is that Thompson and Ritzmann emphasize the importance of making sure that relationships are restored, otherwise, one’s evangelism is hindered. They write, “The key to a fulfilled life is relationships. Things do not satisfy; relationships do. The first relationship is with the Father. When he becomes Lord of our lives, we forfeit forever the right to choose whom we will love, and he releases his love in us to build right relationships.”⁸⁸ It is in this way that the authors deal with the would-be evangelist. The heart and character of the individual must be dealt with first before moving into practice.

The training must be such that the Christian lay leader does not see the need for alternative, manipulative strategies for producing shallow results. Thus, following the

⁸⁶ Beougher, *Overcoming Walls to Witnessing*, 25.

⁸⁷ W. Oscar Thompson and Carolyn Thompson Ritzmann, *Concentric Circles of Concern: Seven Stages for Making Disciples* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 20. Kindle.

⁸⁸ Thompson and Ritzmann, *Concentric Circles of Concern*, 11.

relationship study, the authors lead the reader toward practical steps of intentionally surveying relationships, praying, building relationships, and loving people. A training that organically connects the evangelist to the ministry of evangelism in such a way is necessary to avoid dependency upon easy believism and altar calls.

It is then not only equipping by training in doctrine but also equipping by providing practical resources that are necessary for Christ-centered evangelism. Training in a clearer understanding of the gospel as well as training for marks of true conversion will help to ground lay leaders in the kind of doctrine that is averse to a need for easy believism or formal, corporate altar calls. The training, though, must move beyond the classroom to the practice. Thus, verbally practicing the gospel presentation, practically overcoming barriers to evangelism, and practicing concentric circles all serve as measures which can help develop and maintain Christ-centered evangelism among the lay leaders of Grace Baptist Church.

CHAPTER 4

DETAILS AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

The purpose of this project was to train and equip the lay leaders of Grace Baptist Church in Middletown, Ohio (GBC), for organic, Christ-centered evangelism. By this project I assessed the motive for, knowledge of, and practice of evangelism among GBC's lay leadership. In addition to the assessment, the project implementation included both doctrinal lectures and practical exercises. This chapter will both provide the details of the project and a description of how the project was implemented. The details include a survey, curriculum, and implementation schedule.

Class Formulation

The GBC lay leaders were selected based on their participation within the ministries, faithful testimony of service, and diversity of age and stage of life. The participants serve as deacons, trustees, teachers, and preachers within the ministry. In addition, each of the participants are faithful in attendance to the assembly. The diversity of age and stage of life was important so that the church body could be fully represented in the class. I held a meeting before the project began to explain to the lay leaders the plan and intended outcome of the project. In addition, they understood that they were free to refuse to be a part of the project.

As part of the class, participants agreed to take both a general survey and the Evangelistic Motivation Survey (EMS). The general survey provided information about the individual, including a unique e-mail address for later assessment purposes. This general survey was paired with the pre-training EMS. The EMS was taken before and

after the lectures. The purpose for taking the survey twice was to gauge the effectiveness of the curriculum by comparing the pre-survey and post-survey results.

In accordance with the requirements of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, all Ethics Committee forms were completed and submitted for approval. Signed approval from the Ethics Committee was received via e-mail on September 23, 2021.

Details of the Evangelistic Motivation Survey

Eighteen lay leaders from GBC were asked to participate in the evangelistic training. After each of the individuals agreed, they were given a schedule of weeks during which the training would take place. During week 1, the EMS was handed out. The survey assessed participants in three areas relative to evangelism: purpose, knowledge, and motivation.¹ The reason for this area of the survey was to assess the perceived purpose for evangelism relating to God's glory, church growth, Hell, and God's pleasure.

In addition to the survey's purpose section, the second part of the EMS was regarding the knowledge of evangelism.² The reason for the section of knowledge was to survey the participants' knowledge about evangelism as it relates to Christian participation, exclusive leadership participation, process of evangelism, and the relationship between evangelism and biblical interpretation.

The last section of the EMS was around the subject of motivation.³ The reason for this motivation section was to survey participants' motive for evangelism relating to the perception of others, the command of Christ, the evangelist's love for God, and the love of God generally.

¹ See appendix 1.

² See appendix 1.

³ See appendix 1.

Additional Survey Participants

In addition to the eighteen GBC lay leaders, the survey was administered anonymously to any willing participants attending GBC. The purpose for the additional survey was to expand the total number of individuals surveyed and to check the integrity of the results of the eighteen lay leaders. A larger pool of survey-takers helped to gauge the results of the smaller group of lay leaders. Consequently, the results listed in the following section will show the comparative results.

Processing Pre-Training EMS

The purpose section of the EMS had four statements, and respondents submitted an answer for each one. Each statement was designed to identify what respondents believed to be the ultimate motivation for evangelism. Due to the fundamentalist background of the church, identifying this motivation was non-negotiable.

Table 1. Results of purpose section of EMS

	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
GBC Lay Leaders (18)						
Question #1					6%	94%
Question #2	22%	17%	29%	5%	22%	5%
Question #3 ⁴	28%	28%	28%	17%		
Question #4	44%	28%	11%	17%		
GBC Anonymous (84)						
Question #1				4%	6%	90%
Question #2* ⁵	14%	11%	11%	20%	20%	23%
Question #3 ⁶	17%	19%	7%	19%	20%	14%
Question #4 ⁷	42%	25%	6%	13%	4%	8%

⁴ Percentages are rounded up.

⁵ One individual did not respond to this question.

⁶ Three individuals did not respond to this question.

⁷ Two individuals did not respond to this question.

When comparing the pre-training survey results between GBC lay leaders and general membership, there were some similarities and a few key discrepancies. Regarding question 1, all people tended to agree. While question 2 responses tended to spread across the spectrum a little more than question 1, question 3 stands out as the greatest discrepancy. None of the GBC lay leaders agreed or strongly agreed that the ultimate goal of evangelism is to avoid going to hell. On the same question, the general membership had an accumulative 34 percent in the same categories.

The knowledge section of the EMS had four questions (see table 2). The goal of this portion of the EMS was to determine if participants knew what is meant by Christ-centered evangelism and who should be involved in evangelism.

Table 2. Results of the knowledge section of the EMS

	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
GBC Lay Leaders (18)						
Question #5					11%	89%
Question #6	94%					6%
Question #7	50%	28%	17%	6%		
Question #8	24%	6%	29%	18%	18%	6%
GBC Anonymous (84)						
Question #5			2%	5%	20%	73%
Question #6	77%	15%	4%	2%	1%	
Question #7 ⁸	40%	21%	9%	18%	8%	5%
Question #8 ⁹	24%	18%	6%	22%	18%	13%

When comparing the results for the knowledge section of the survey, most of the results were relatively similar between the lay leaders and GBC membership. Though there were some differences, the overall summary of each of the surveys revealed that respondents were together in either agreement or disagreement. What became apparent is the wide range of answers for statement 8. This wide range between agreement and

⁸ Four individuals did not respond to this question.

⁹ Twelve individuals did not respond to this question.

disagreement can be seen in both the lay leaders and GBC membership data. Statement 8 assessed the need for Christ-centered biblical interpretation as necessary for Christ-centered evangelism—an assessment that is at the heart of this project.

The motivation section of the EMS had four statements. These statements were designed to identify why lay leaders should be engaged in evangelism. The range of potential motivations include (1) everyone is watching, (2) Christ commanded it, (3) love FOR God, and (4) love OF God.

Table 3. Results of motivation section of EMS

	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
GBC Lay Leaders (18)						
Question #9	50%	11%	22%	6%		11%
Question #10	6%		6%		11%	78%
Question #11		6%		6%	6%	81%
Question #12					6%	94%
GBC Anonymous (84)						
Question #9	34%	22%	10%	19%	8%	7%
Question #10	1%	2%		6%	28%	63%
Question #11	1%		1%	1%	25%	71%
Question #12				2%	27%	70%

When comparing by selection of agreement and disagreement, the GBC lay leaders and members were relatively consistent with each other. The concerning result was the apparent confusion over a proper biblical motive for evangelism. This confusion can be seen in the overwhelming agreement on three of four statements in the motivation section of the EMS.

Curriculum and Practicum

The teaching of the GBC lay leaders for Christ-centered evangelism took place over the course of seven weeks, included post-lesson breakout sessions, and addressed matters from chapters 2 and 3 of this this project. The seven weeks of teaching began on

April 18, 2021, and concluded on May 30, 2021. The series was entitled “#onmission,”¹⁰ and the primary topics addressed were evangelism and discipleship. These lessons were taught on Sunday evenings between 6:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. The lesson included handouts for students as well as PowerPoint slides. At the conclusion of each lesson, students divided into small groups for question-and-answer discussions. These discussion groups were led by other elders from within the church. Also, a curriculum rubric was given to elders who evaluated the lessons.¹¹

In addition to the seven-week training, a seven-week practicum took place from October 17, 2021 and December 19, 2021. The practicum included materials, homework, and practical exercises to practice what the students had learned in each of the lessons. The practicum will be discussed in the following section of this chapter.

Phase 1: Seven-Week Curriculum

Lesson 1 of the curricula was entitled “Purpose before Mission: Why Are We Here?” The thesis for the lesson was as follows: “Before we can effectively talk about our mission, we must be clear about our ultimate purpose.” The text for this lesson was primarily from the book of Ephesians, and the lesson covered the lay leader’s purpose in four areas: scripturally, confessionally, ecclesiastically, and constitutionally.

Lesson 2 was entitled, “How Do We Fulfill God’s Purpose Ecclesiastically?” The thesis for this lesson was as follows: “We must understand what God’s mission for the church is.” Since the lesson was a biblical theology of mission, various texts were used throughout the Bible. In this lesson, students were taught the difference between purpose and mission. In addition, mission was shown in a redemptive context with an emphasis on the New Testament mission of making disciples.

¹⁰ See appendix 3 for lesson outlines.

¹¹ See appendix 2.

Lesson 3 was entitled, “How Do We Fulfill God’s Mission of Making Disciples?” The primary texts included Matthew 28:19 and Mark 16:15. The thesis of lesson 3 was as follows: “If we are to fulfill mission, we must evangelize, and if we will evangelize then we must be clear on what this word means and what it does not mean.” This lesson deconstructed wrong ideas of evangelism and presented scriptural distinction, description, and definition for evangelism.

Lesson 4 was entitled, “What Are Hurdles to Evangelism?” The primary text was Luke 24:44-49, and the thesis was, “Biblical evangelism requires that we be clear on fundamental teaching, organic ministry, and missional investment.” By this lesson, I deconstructed some of the hurdles to evangelism—hurdles previously listed in chapter 1. These hurdles included fundamental drifting, programmatic ministry, and costly ministries.

Lesson 5 was entitled, “Biblical Evangelism Requires a Christ-Centered Hermeneutic.” The primary text in this lesson was Luke 24:44-49. The thesis for this lesson was as follows: “If we will avoid manipulative, man-centered evangelistic practices we must interpret the scriptures in a Christ-centered manner.” The goal of this lesson was to show how Luke 24 clearly connects one’s hermeneutic with mission. In addition, this lesson served to build upon the last lesson of deconstruction of hurdles.

Lesson 6 was entitled, “A Christ-Centered Command.” The primary text of this lesson was Luke 24:44-49, and the thesis was as follows: “Because Jesus is the center of the scriptures, we must see Jesus as central to the command to evangelize.” The goal with this lesson was to avoid evangelism as purely a self-dependent moral activity—evangelizing with self-confidence and the purpose of gaining merit with the Lord. The command to evangelize was to be accomplished in the power of the Lord and because of the finished work of Jesus Christ.

Lesson 7 was entitled, “Christ-Centered Empowerment.” The primary text for this lesson was Luke 24:44-49, and the thesis was as follows: “If you will obey the Christ-centered command to evangelize, you must have Christ-centered empowerment.” Lesson

7 explained the source of power for evangelism. At the conclusion of this lesson the EMS was administered a second time.

Phase 2: Curriculum Practicum

Though the lessons and planned times included breakout sessions, the lessons were designed to develop the students theologically and philosophically in Christ-centered evangelism. The practicum was a separate set of organized small groups with the express purpose of putting to practice the curriculum lessons.

The practicum small group sessions began on October 17, 2021, and concluded on December 19, 2021. The practicum meetings took place on Sunday evenings between 5:00 p.m. and 5:45 p.m. These small group sessions were held with the lay leaders and followed a simple agenda—prayer, lesson review, discussion time, practical application goal, and homework.

Each practicum session included references to three resources. The first resource was *Evangelism in a Skeptical World* by Sam Chan.¹² Students had to read chapters 1 and 2 of Chan’s book. The second was *Invitation to Evangelism* by Timothy K. Beougher, of which students had to read chapters 10 through 13.¹³ The third resource was *Concentric Circles of Concern* by W. Oscar Thompson, Jr.¹⁴ The circles of concern chart was referenced during practicum sessions 2 and 3.

¹² Sam Chan, *Evangelism in a Skeptical World: How to Make the Unbelievable News about Jesus More Believable* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018).

¹³ Timothy K. Beougher, *Invitation to Evangelism: Sharing the Gospel with Compassion and Conviction* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2021).

¹⁴ Oscar Thompson, Jr., with Carolyn Thompson Ritzmann, *Concentric Circles of Concern: Seven Stages for Making Disciples* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999).

In addition to the three books, *The Biggest Story*¹⁵ tract by Kevin DeYoung was utilized as well as the “30-Day Who’s Your One?” prayer guide.¹⁶ To utilize the tract, we read it out loud and encouraged using it as an aid in evangelism. To utilize the prayer guide, we paired the leaders into groups of two. Following the pairing, participants were encouraged to fill in the name for whom they would be praying daily, share that information with their partner, and begin praying for the soul of the individual that needs to be evangelized.

Each week had a particular agenda which we followed. Week 1 of the practicum small group included an opening prayer and a brief reading from Romans 9:1. Following the review of the #onmission lesson 1, we discussed chapter 1 of I Chan’s book. I facilitated discussion with various questions, and there was good feedback. Following the discussion, we proceeded into an explanation of Concentric Circles¹⁷ and the survey form. The homework given, to be completed before the second meeting, was to fill out the Concentric Survey forms and to read the “Who’s Your One” sermon entitled, “On Earth as In Heaven.”¹⁸ The sermon outline, which was included with the kit, was printed and handed out to participants. In addition, the EMS was administered at this time. We concluded each meeting with prayer, and during that ensuing week a summary email was sent to all participants.

Week 2 of the practicum small group followed a similar pattern to the agenda from week 1. After opening in prayer, we reviewed #onmission lesson 2. In addition, we reviewed the sermon outline from the prior week by pre-planned discussion questions. We concluded with discussion review about the Concentric Circles Survey, which

¹⁵ Kevin DeYoung, *The Biggest Story* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017).

¹⁶ North American Mission Board, “Prayer Guide,” in *Who’s Your One? Church Kit*, provided by request from NAMB in September 2021, <https://whosyourone.com>.

¹⁷ Thompson and Ritzmann, *Concentric Circles of Concern*.

¹⁸ J. D. Greear, “On Earth as In Heaven,” in NAMB, *Who’s Your One?*

participants were to have them filled out by week 2. Homework for the next week was given and included reading chapter 2 of *Evangelism in a Skeptical World* by Chan and chapters 12 and 13 of *Invitation to Evangelism* by Beougher. Another sermon outline from “Who’s Your One” was handed out for reading prior to week 3—“Healing of the Paralytic.”¹⁹

Week 3 of the practicum small group followed the following agenda: review of #onmission lesson 3, discussion of chapters 12 and 13 from Beougher’s book, discussion of “Who’s Your One” sermon outline from the prior week, and further discussion on the Concentric Circles Survey. Homework this week included the sermon outline from the “Who’s Your One” kit entitled “The Importance of One.”²⁰ A 30-Day Prayer Guide from the “Who’s Your One” kit was handed out to all participants. Participants were instructed to identify a prayer partner and begin the prayer guide before the next meeting. The prayer guide has a daily prayer that the participant prays for a particular individual whom they list. The name of the individual that they were going to pray for was to come from the Concentric Circles Survey. Last, participants were instructed to read chapters 10 and 11 from Beougher’s book.

Week 4 of the practicum small group included the following agenda: #onmission lesson 4, prayer guide, chapters 10 and 11 from *Invitation to Evangelism* by Beougher, and review of sermon entitled “The Importance of One.”²¹ In addition to the review and discussion, we began discussion for 2022 goals. We concluded the meeting by discussing ways to overcome excuses for neglecting evangelism.

Week 5 of the practicum small group included a review of the prayer journal, #onmission lessons 1 through 3, and goals for 2022. As part of the review, three questions

¹⁹ Jason Gaston, “Healing of the Paralytic,” in NAMB, *Who’s Your One?*

²⁰ Johnny Hunt, “The Importance of One,” in NAMB, *Who’s Your One?*

²¹ Hunt, “The Importance of One.”

were asked: (1) how do we accomplish our purpose? (2) who is responsible for evangelism?, and (3) what is the ultimate goal of evangelism? These questions were taken from the #onmission lessons and facilitated further discussion during the practicum. Week 5 concluded with a homework assignment to review chapter 2 of *Evangelism in a Skeptical World* and chapter 13 of *Invitation to Evangelism*.

Week 6 of the practicum small group included a review of the prayer journal, #onmission lessons 4–7, chapter 2 of *Evangelism in a Skeptical World* and chapter 13 of *Invitation to Evangelism*. Six questions were used to facilitate the review time: (1) if Christ-centered evangelism does not mean leading a person through a three to four step plan, what does it mean? (2) how is Christ-centered evangelism based on a particular type of biblical interpretation? (3) what should be the compelling motive that you have for evangelism? (4) why must evangelism include the message of the gospel verbally? (5) what is the reason that evangelism should be done with urgency? and (6) what does it mean to be a sower of the gospel rather than inspect the heart? Week 6 concluded with a homework assignment to read chapter 21 from *Invitation to Evangelism*.

During the final week of the practicum, the following agenda was observed: 2022 goals discussed, 2022 touchpoint dates established, 2022 implementation plan discussed, and book discussion. The goals for 2022 were set for the members of the small group. These goals include a hospitality goal and invitation goal. The hospitality goal is to host someone or a family for the purpose of building a relationship with a view to evangelism. This person or family should be one for whom the participant had been praying. The invitation goal is to invite an individual to the Easter Sunday special service. This invitation should be extended to the person for whom the individual had been praying. Both the hospitality and invitation goals are to be completed by end of first quarter of 2022.

Touchpoint dates were established for 2022 for the small group to gather again to discuss progress on the annual goals. Two dates were established: March 13, 2022, and

June 26, 2022. These meetings will take place at the GBC campus and will be conducted for the sake of accountability.

In addition to goals and touchpoint dates, we established an implementation goal. The implementation goal is a plan to have the curriculum evaluators of the project identify at least one individual within the body whom they can disciple in the “Training of the Lay Leaders of Grace Baptist Church for Christ-Centered Evangelism Project.” On March 13, 2022, the curriculum evaluators will be presented an entire copy of the project. The implementation of the project will begin third quarter of 2022.

Post-Training EMS

On the final day of the practicum, the EMS was re-administered. The EMS was re-administered to gauge the development of the participants over the course of the entire training of lessons and practicum. The results and comparison of this final EMS are located in chapter 5.

Curriculum Evaluation

The lessons and practicum were completed in a manner that served all parties. By May 30, 2021, fully scripted lessons for teachers were written. The teacher lessons were also sent to the expert panel of eight individuals for review and feedback. In addition, a student handout was completed for each lesson. The student handouts included blanks to fill in the outline points as well as space for general notes. The PowerPoint presentations were completed as well.

The expert panel consisted of eight qualified individuals—five men and three women. The first two individuals on the expert panel have been a part of GBC for approximately fifteen years. Currently, he serves as the chairman of the deacons, and she is his wife. They have faithfully served in servant-leadership capacities for approximately fourteen of their years at GBC.

The third individual on the expert panel is a pastor at GBC. He presently serves as the Connections Pastor, who is responsible for evangelism and discipleship within the ministry. Prior to serving at GBC, he served as a lead pastor for five years. He has biblical training through the Master of Divinity level.

The fourth individual on the expert panel presently serves on the Christian school board of elected officials. He serves as a secretary of the school board and leads the children ministries at GBC. His expertise comes from knowledge of the costly ministries that detract from the mission of evangelism. Having grown up in the ministry, he is keenly aware of the need for changes and missional direction.

The fifth and sixth individuals are another couple who have served at GBC for the last twenty-one years. He was educated in Bible and presently serves as the Christian school high school Bible teacher. She presently serves alongside him in the Christian school. In addition to their biblical training, they have shown themselves to be faithful evangelists.

The seventh and eighth individuals are current missionaries who were home for furlough. This missionary couple both have biblical college training, and served as pastor and wife prior to heading to the mission field. Due to their biblical training and practical field experience in evangelism and discipleship, they provided a unique and helpful perspective to the curriculum.

The members of the expert panel utilized the curriculum evaluation tool found in appendix 2. The first two statements evaluated the curriculum based on biblical faithfulness. All respondents indicated that the curriculum was exemplary in biblical faithfulness.

The third statement of the evaluation was related to the scope of the curriculum. All evaluators, except one, marked the scope of the curriculum to be exemplary. The one outlier marked the curriculum to be sufficient in scope of Christ-centeredness.

The next two statements of the evaluation were related to methodology. The first of these statements elicited feedback regarding the distinction between Christ-centeredness and other means of evangelism. On this statement, most marked “exemplary” while the remaining evaluators marked “sufficient.” The second statement about methodology was the most helpful as it requested feedback about the diversity of the training (i.e., lecture, discussion, role play, etc). Most evaluators marked this statement as “sufficient.” This indicated a lack of methodology in the project or that the format of the class could have been better.

The last two evaluation statements addressed the practicality of the curriculum. The first was primarily noted as “exemplary.” The last statement revealed another weakness of the project. When considering whether the practicum allowed for participants to engage one another, most evaluators considered this area as sufficient only. This consensus revealed that there should have been more opportunities to engage one another. One evaluator commented, “Time constraints were apparent. This course would benefit from an extra 30 minutes each session in order to assist with practical applications, role play , etc. Great content that encourages growth in understanding the Biblical truths of our purpose and evangelism. Best part for me was learning to effectively have a prayer partner.”

Conclusion

The project was necessary and required the extended time of training for the context of GBC. Due to the background and prior understanding of both Scripture and the practice of evangelism, it was necessary that the surveys, lessons, and practicum all work in conjunction to shape the lay leaders’ understanding of evangelism that is rooted in a Christ-centered hermeneutic. In all, the project took approximately fourteen weeks of teaching and training and approximately fourteen hours of classroom and practicum time. In addition, each participant had reading homework and exercises incorporated into the training. The training took place over the course of nine months. In addition to the training,

future implementation plans and goals were established so that the project might continue to bear fruit in the future at GBC.

CHAPTER 5

PROJECT EVALUATION

The project evaluation chapter will carefully consider the purpose, goals, strengths, and weaknesses of the ministry project. In addition, the question, “What would I do differently?” will be answered. Once the evaluation material has been presented a final section will describe both theological and personal reflections regarding the project.

Evaluation of the Project’s Purpose

The purpose of this project was to train and equip the lay leaders of Grace Baptist Church in Middletown, Ohio for organic, Christ-centered evangelism. The project accomplished the purpose in at least three different ways. First, there was substantial, concentrated teaching. The teaching was substantial in that it included a wealth of doctrinal and philosophical information over a seven-week period. The teaching was concentrated in that the information focused on Christ-centered evangelism, including an exegesis of Luke 24:44-49.

Second, the project accomplished the purpose by equipping the lay leaders. The leaders were equipped in at least four ways: with both curriculum and books; evangelism prayer-journals; key passages from Scripture; and measures for accountability. Accountability was key for the lay leaders. Throughout the project, the leaders were quite acquiescent to matters of doctrine, and they agreed with matters of practical evangelism. Consequently, accountability through discussion groups and prayer partners served to help the leaders follow through on what they knew they should be doing.

Third, the project accomplished the purpose through an emphasis on Christ-centered evangelism. Several lessons were designed to deconstruct ideas and practices

that were man-centered and manipulative forms of evangelism. These deconstructed ideas were replaced through exegesis of Luke 24:44-49. Christ-centered evangelism was both defined and described.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

The training of the lay leaders of GBC involved four goals. These goals were developed from the Scriptures and led to increased engagement in Christ-centered evangelism.

The first goal was to assess the stated motive for, knowledge of, and practice of evangelism among the lay leadership of GBC. An assessment was accomplished through the Evangelism Motivation Survey (EMS). Success in this goal was measured when a minimum of 75 percent of the lay leaders completed and submitted the survey. This goal was met through the honest feedback of the participants. Each of the questions were completed by the lay leaders for a 100 percent response rate.

The second goal was to develop a seven-week Christ-centered evangelism course and practicum. Success in this goal was met when the expert panel completed the evaluation rubric and concluded that the curriculum was equal to or exceeded the sufficient level. The seven-week curriculum, with teacher's scripted lesson and student handouts, were fully developed. The seven-week practicum was also developed and included additional books and materials for the practice of Christ-centered evangelism.

The third goal was to teach the seven-week Christ-centered evangelism course in small group sessions. This goal was successfully met when the *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-survey scores. To compare the individuals' pre-training survey and post-training survey, the unique identifier was the participants' email addresses.¹ While there was significant

¹ Comparison of the results may be reviewed in the strengths, weakness, and future changes section.

progress in questions related to purpose, there was one area where the results did not meet expectations.² Initially, the plan was to have several small group leaders teach the curriculum in small groups sessions. However, instead of that plan, I taught the lessons in a larger group. After the teaching session, the large group broke up into smaller groups for questions and discussion about the lesson. These small group discussions were facilitated by both elders and lay leaders. I believe this contributed to a lack of effectiveness initially. Despite the changes, the goal was met but not according to the original plan.

In addition, the original plan did not anticipate an additional seven weeks of practicum training. The original plan for this goal was to both teach the lessons in a small group setting and give practical exercises for the participants to engage in throughout the ensuing week. What took place is that an additional seven weeks were set aside for lesson review and practicum. While this was not the original plan, it allowed participants to have additional preparation before practice.

The fourth goal was to develop and implement a ministry plan for lay leaders to practice Christ-centered evangelism. Goal 4 would be successfully met when there was a 50 percent increase of individuals involved in evangelism within a two-week timeframe. This goal was met during the last four weeks of the practicum meetings and was completed with a 61 percent (11 of 18 individuals) rate of participation. The practical exercises gave participants clear disciplines while the accountability meetings allowed for appropriate weekly reporting.

The first part of the ministry plan included a month of prayer through the “Who’s Your One” prayer journal. Prior to the month of prayer, which was November 2021, lay leaders were to identify both a prayer partner and an individual for whom to pray. In addition to the prayer journal, participants were given a goal for the ensuing

² See the strengths, weaknesses, and future changes for details.

year—host and evangelize the one person, or family, for whom they are praying. During the last meeting, participants were given evangelism packets containing an evangelistic tract, a Christmas card, and a Christmas ornament to send to the individual for whom they were praying.

Goal 4 also included quarterly touch points for the participants and plan for churchwide implementation. The touchpoints are times when the lay leaders reconvene to evaluate progress in Christ-centered evangelism. Lastly, for churchwide implementation, lay leaders have been assigned a small group within the local church. The curriculum evaluators will read and study the “Training the Lay Leaders at Grace Baptist Church for Christ-Centered Evangelism” project. After further study has been made, they will teach the church the same lessons and practicum every three years beginning in 2022. These final aspects conclude the ministry plan for the project.

Strengths, Weaknesses, and Future Changes

The following section includes the strengths and weaknesses of the project. To affirm strengths and weaknesses, I have included a pre-training and post-training EMS comparison. In addition, the comparison of the EMS results exposes areas that should be changed in the future.

Pre- and Post-Training Survey Comparison

The EMS was administered before and after the practicum. Of the eighteen individuals who began the practicum, eleven were present on the final day to complete the EMS. The first four questions of the survey assessed the purpose of evangelism. Table 4 shows the changes from the pre-practicum EMS and the post-practicum EMS on the purpose section of the survey. There was a definitive movement in responses in this purpose section of the survey. Note how 100 percent of the participants became clear on the purpose of evangelism in question 1. Question 4 also shows growth—participants better understood that doing the work of evangelism is not so that God would be happy

with them.

Table 4. Comparison of pre-training and post-training EMS

	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Pre-Training (18)						
Question #1					6%	94%
Question #2	22%	17%	29%	5%	22%	5%
Question #3 ³	28%	28%	28%	17%		
Question #4	44%	28%	11%	17%		
Post-Training (11)						
Question #1						100%
Question #2	72%	18%		10%		
Question #3	82%	9%	9%			
Question #4	90%	10%				

The second part of the EMS assessed participants' knowledge regarding responsibility in evangelism. Table 5 shows the comparison between pre-practicum and post-practicum results. Question 8 was the greatest area of concern and seems to point to a weakness in the training. The students grew in polarity on the connection between hermeneutics and evangelism and they did not grow in a way consistent with the intended outcome.

Table 5. Comparison on knowledge section of EMS

	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
GBC Lay Leaders (18)						
Question #5					11%	89%
Question #6	94%					6%
Question #7	50%	28%	17%	6%		
Question #8	24%	6%	29%	18%	18%	6%
GBC Anonymous (11)						
Question #5					10%	90%
Question #6	90%	10%				
Question #7	72%	18%	10%			
Question #8	36%	18%			10%	36%

³ Percentages are rounded up.

The final portion of the EMS assessed the motivation of evangelism. Table 6 shows the comparison between the pre-practicum and post-practicum EMS results. On question 9, participants agreed that all, including lay leaders, should evangelize. This response became more definitive in the post-training response.

Table 6. Motivation section of the EMS

	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
GBC Lay Leaders (18)						
Question #9	50%	11%	22%	6%		11%
Question #10	6%		6%		11%	78%
Question #11		6%		6%	6%	81%
Question #12					6%	94%
GBC Anonymous (11)						
Question #9	90%	10%				
Question #10	10%					90%
Question #11 ⁴		10%	10%	10%	10%	60%
Question #12						100%

Strengths of the Project

The strengths of the project can be quantified in six facts about the project. First, the purpose of Christ-centered evangelism was presented clearly and simply. An entire lesson was devoted to training about Christian purpose. Clarity and simplicity occurred because one passage was exegeted: Ephesians 1:3-14. When Christ-centered evangelism is clearly tied to purpose, then response of the participants is tied to biblical conviction.

The second strength of the project was that it was grounded in the explicit mission that Jesus Christ gave to his followers. The lessons showed how purpose and mission are interconnected and what Christ’s mission is for his followers: to make disciples. Explaining the mission in detail gave participants a greater confidence that they know what they are to be doing because the command came from the lips of Christ.

⁴ Only ten respondents for questions 11 and 12.

The third strength of the project was the concentration on evangelism. Though purpose and mission were taught in the lessons, the overall project was about evangelism. Evangelism can be overlooked or crowded out by many other good, Christian activities. Thus, to have a project primarily focus on what some Christians might consider a spiritual discipline allowed the lay leaders to see evangelism as a necessary part of life.

The fourth strength of this project was the deconstruction of wrong ideas, through practical examples, about evangelism. Due to the nature of the context at Grace Baptist Church of Middletown, Ohio, several evangelistic practices were founded upon weak theology. Both these doctrines and practices were deconstructed with the Bible lessons as well as by practical examples. Each lesson included an illustration that corroborated the elements of evangelism that needed to be changed.

Reconstruction through the exegesis of Luke 24:44-49 is the fifth strength of this project. Through careful exegetical work of Luke 24, lessons were developed and taught. These lessons were fundamental to the evangelistic practices which were later encouraged. Without question, the groundwork in the biblical text was the most important strength of this evangelism project. In addition, this lesson showed how a biblical hermeneutic is connected to Christ-centered evangelism.

The practical emphasis was the sixth strength of this project. The emphasis was practical in several points. First, there was a practical application section of each lesson. Second, there was a discussion time after each lesson. In addition, there was a seven-week practicum that included handouts, examples, homework, prayer journal, and other valuable tools. The practical emphasis stretched from the lesson time to the weekly lives of the participants.

Weaknesses of the Project

There were at least six weaknesses of the project. First, there were noted time constraints. During the seven-week practicum, forty-five-minute sessions were set aside

for the class. Without fail, we ran out of time each week without completely covering all the agenda for the session. Consequently, the time felt rushed and incomplete each week.

A second weakness that is connected to the first was that insufficient time was given to the review of information from homework and the prior week's lesson. Because most participants are volunteers within the body of Christ and we were only meeting one time per week, more time should have been allotted for the purpose of review. This would have aided in the retention and application of the information.

The insufficient review time led to, I believe, the third weakness. The third weakness is that on question 8 of the EMS, participants trended away from the correct response in the post-training survey. The nature of this question required more training and repetition. Consequently, not all participants made the important connection of seeing a Christ-centered hermeneutic as fundamental to a Christ-centered method of evangelism.⁵

A fourth weakness of the project was that we did not take time to practice some of the practical lessons in class. For example, when we discussed a plan for evangelism or overcoming objections, we should have broken up into teams to practice in the classroom setting. This kind of practice would have aided in retention of information and application of the lesson. While discussion was good, practice would have made the training better.

The original plan was to complete all lessons and practicum within one, seven-week period. A fifth weakness of the project was that the project had to be extended from seven to fourteen weeks. Though this could be seen as a strength, I see it as a weakness because it was more difficult to keep people motivated over a longer period. Consequently, there was a drop off in commitment toward the end of the fourteen weeks.

Lastly, having too many materials contributed to information overload. Books, lesson handouts, tracts, sermon outlines, and the prayer journal were all part of the material

⁵ Question 8 of the EMS should have been reworded for clarity. On principle, true evangelism is Christ-centered. Thus, this lack of clarity contributed to the responses.

given to the participants. This, I believe, could have been consolidated to a few materials and would have made the precision of outcome better.

What I Would Do Differently?

There are at least three things I would have done differently. The scheduled teaching sessions were on Sunday evenings at 6:00 p.m. This allowed for the lessons to have sufficient time, but this was not the case for the practicum. The practicum times, which were later in the year and scheduled at 5:00 p.m., had to be concluded by 5:45 p.m. because of a 6:00 p.m. churchwide Bible study. Consequently, the practicums were hurried. In reflecting upon this time constraint, I would schedule the practicums for another day or evening of the week. Scheduling for a different day and time would have encouraged greater commitment through the end of the project and unhurried times together.

Another matter I would handle differently is the roll out of the project. The project would have been more effective to begin with three or four people rather than eighteen. Beginning with three or four would have allowed for more personal interaction, deeper training, and better retention. After training the three or four individuals, I could have proceeded to have the three or four people help me train another group of three or four lay leaders. The roll out of the project would have been more effective this way.

The last difference has already been mentioned, but it deserves a concentrated focus—that is, having an extended time for the practicum training. In planning, I worked for efficiency and completion rather than deeper training and discipleship. Extended time for the practicum training would have allowed me to take time in developing the practical exercises, such as the circles of influence and overcoming objections. The additional time would also have allowed me to make better connections to the doctrine and philosophy that supports Christ-centered evangelism. Extended time would have allowed for an environment of discipleship as opposed to a hurried, task-driven environment. The pressure of the time constraints led me to treat the time as more objective-driven rather than Christ-centered and people-oriented.

Theological Reflections

Regarding God and His Word

God's mission did not begin with the Great Commission in the Gospels. In studying Luke 24:44-49, and in reading *The Mission of God's People: Biblical Theology for Life*,⁶ I learned that Christ-centered evangelism was a part of God's redemptive plan. In Luke 24:44-49, part of the Old Testament fulfillment that Jesus mentions is that of preaching in Christ's name; meaning, preaching is part of the prophecy of the suffering and the resurrection of Jesus. Seeing God's mission in this redemptive way expanded my perspective from seeing evangelism as an end to seeing evangelism a means to an end. Evangelism is God's chosen means through which the good news of Jesus is preached so that all things might be brought back under God.

Understanding evangelism as a part of God's redemptive plan shaped my perspective of evangelism to avoid two extremes. The first extreme of evangelism that I had a tendency toward was seeing evangelism as a moralistic act whereby God would be happier with me. As part of the Luke 24:44-49 study, Jesus promises the power to evangelize—this truth is the heart of Christ-centered evangelism. Christ-centered evangelism is not merely that Jesus is the center of the message, but that evangelism demands a power mediated because of the finished work of Jesus. Thus, I do not need a moralistic activity to make me acceptable with God. Because Jesus made me acceptable with God, I must evangelize. In other words, I should evangelize because of the status I already have with God and not to gain status with God.

The second extreme of evangelism that I tended toward was devaluing evangelism. Having learned the sufficiency of Jesus Christ led me to see the importance of evangelism, but this realization did not lead me to be intentional about the matter of evangelism. Through exegeting Luke 24:44-49 and reading *Invitation to Evangelism*:

⁶ Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God's People: Biblical Theology for Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010).

Sharing the Gospel with Compassion and Conviction by Dr. Timothy Beougher, I was convicted about being intentional in evangelism. Christ commanded and empowered his followers to evangelize. Evangelism, as opposed to lethargy, is the result of Christ's finished work. Beougher's book both acknowledged my dependency upon Christ's power as well as my responsibility to be intentional in evangelism.

Regarding the Church

The evangelism project also helped me develop in ecclesiology. During the study, I had to show from Scripture that the church was responsible for evangelism. This responsibility led to exegesis which deepened my conviction that the entire body of Christ should be engaged in the mission of Christ. This conviction about church involvement helped to ward off an idea I had been contemplating of identifying people who were gifted in evangelism and relegating the responsibility to those people. Evangelism is not only for the gifted, it is for the whole church.

In addition, it is true that Jesus Christ builds his church, but this truth does not compete against the church's responsibility to evangelize. Both truths—Christ building his church and our evangelizing lost people—coalesce together. Jesus builds his church through the faithful evangelistic efforts of his church. Wayne Grudem affirms the church's priority of evangelism when he says, "This evangelistic work of declaring the gospel is the primary ministry that the church has toward the world."⁷

Personal Reflections

Evangelism was a stated priority but not a practical and intentional priority. While I teach and preach that evangelism is a command, I found that through the practical exercises and homework, I had to discipline myself to such a degree that it exposed my neglect of evangelism. I had not only neglected intentional evangelism, but I noted my

⁷ Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 868.

tendency to shy away from intentional conversations where there would be awkwardness. Thus, I learned that I needed to be given more to prayer; in particular, prayer for boldness and intentionality in evangelism.

As a minister, I also learned that evangelism must be emphasized consistently throughout an entire year. My tendency is to place emphasis on a spiritual matter for a certain portion of the year. Often this emphasis is thematic; but evangelism must be shown to be a part of everything we do as a church. Consequently, my sermons are beginning to include applications emphasizing evangelism.

In addition to increased sermonic applications on evangelism, I noted a deficiency in my discipleship. The project forced me to teach and train individuals on a very specific topic. Thus, this project exposed a common gap in much of my discipleship. While our discipleship does include gospel-centered materials, spiritual disciplines, and systematic theology, it lacks practical application. The most lacking part of the practical application is the matter of Christ-centered evangelism.

Conclusion

The “Training the Lay Leaders of Grace Baptist Church for Christ-centered Evangelism” project was effective over the course of the year, but there is more to come. With the additional training of individuals that is planned and other touchpoints in the future, I anticipate that the church will continue to learn what Christ-centeredness means and that the church will continue to mature in the evangelism. My hope and prayer are that the church will fully depend upon the finished work of Christ and that they will learn to effectively communicate this truth to those who are in darkness.

APPENDIX 1

EVANGELISTIC MOTIVATION SURVEY

The following instrument is the Evangelistic Motivation Survey (EMS).¹ Some general questions are followed by a twelve-question survey with a six-point Likert scale. The instrument's purpose was to assess each participant's present level of theological understanding and practical application of Christ-centered evangelism.

¹ Survey adapted from Frederick Clay Muse, "Implementing a Strategy at Crossway Christian Fellowship, Pelham, Alabama, to Develop Members Who Practice Lifestyle Evangelism" (DMin project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014), 96.

Name of Evaluator: _____ Date: _____

Name (or 4-digit code): _____

Gender: _____ Age: _____

General Questions

1. How many years have you been a professing Christian? _____
2. How many years have you been a member of Grace Baptist Church (GBC)?

3. Are you currently serving as a lay leader within the ministry of GBC? _____
4. Are you married? _____
5. Do you have children? _____
6. Do you regularly tell others about Jesus Christ? _____
If so, how often? _____
7. When is the last time you shared your testimony one-on-one? _____

EVANGELISTIC MOTIVATION SURVEY

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

Purpose

1. The ultimate goal of evangelism is for God to be glorified.
SD D DS AS A SA
2. The ultimate goal of evangelism is for the church to grow.
SD D DS AS A SA
3. The ultimate goal of evangelism is so that everyone can avoid going to Hell.
SD D DS AS A SA
4. The ultimate goal of evangelism is so that God would be happy with me.
SD D DS AS A SA

Knowledge

5. Every professing Christian should be involved in evangelism.
SD D DS AS A SA
6. Only the pastors and leadership of the church should be involved in evangelism.
SD D DS AS A SA
7. Christ-centered evangelism means that you lead a person through a 3 or 4 step plan of salvation.
SD D DS AS A SA
8. Christ-centered evangelism is based on a particular way of biblical interpretation.
SD D DS AS A SA

Motivation

9. Lay leaders should be engaged in evangelism because everyone else is watching them.
SD D DS AS A SA
10. Lay leaders should be engaged in evangelism because Christ commanded them to do so.
SD D DS AS A SA

11. Lay leaders should be engaged in evangelism because they love God.

SD D DS AS A SA

12. Lay leaders should be engaged in evangelism because of the love of God.

SD D DS AS A SA

Other Comments:

APPENDIX 2

EVANGELISM CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC

The following evaluation was sent to the expert panel of GBC leaders, including an active pastor, a retired pastor, and selected individuals from elected boards who regularly teach the Word of God.¹ This panel evaluated the course curriculum to ensure biblical faithfulness, scope, methodology, and practicality.

¹ Rubric adapted from Marquez Dupree Ball, “Training Members at Uplift Church in Laurel, Maryland for Personal Evangelism” (DEdMin project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2019), 76.

Name of Evaluator: _____ Date: _____

Christ-Centered Evangelism Curriculum Evaluation Rubric					
1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Biblical Faithfulness					
All scripture was properly interpreted and explained.					
The content of the curriculum was theologically sound.					
Scope					
The content of the curriculum sufficiently explained Christ-centered evangelism.					
Methodology					
The curriculum distinguishes Christ-centered methodology from other means of evangelism.					
The format of the class was diverse for the purposes of learning—lecture, discussion, role play, etc.					
Practicality					
The curriculum includes opportunities to practice Christ-centered evangelism.					
There is a practicum part of the curriculum for the participants to engage one another.					

Other Comments

APPENDIX 3
LESSON OUTLINES

#onmission 001

Max Fernandez / General

#onmission / Evangelism; Discipleship; Mission / Luke 24:44–49; Ephesians 1:1–14
7-Week Series at GBC on missional evangelism

Title: Purpose before Mission: Why are we here?

Text: Ephesians 1:1 - 14

Series: #onmission

Introduction:

Why are we Christians here upon this earth?

Thesis:

Before we can effectively talk about our mission, we must be clear about our ultimate purpose.

Body:

(1) Our purpose scripturally - Ephesians 1:1-14

Scripturally, the Christian's purpose is to be to the praise of the glory of God.

(2) Our purpose confessionally - Ephesians 4:4-6

Confessionally, we must agree with the scripture that our chief end is to be to the praise God's glory.

(3) Our purpose ecclesiastically

Ecclesiastically, the purpose is to be to the praise of God's glory together.

(4) Our purpose constitutionally

The GBC constitution states:

The purpose of the church is to glorify the Lord through unified, loving obedience to God's Word.

Whether we look at ultimate purpose for our existence scripturally, confessionally, ecclesiastically, or constitutionally, we come to the same conclusion. We exist for God's glory. Thus, soul winning is not what our existence is all about. Soul winning is only a part of why we exist.

Conclusion:

Why all the fuss about ultimate purpose? If our purpose is to glorify God, then consider that being #onmission requires:

- (1) Theological richness - an ever-deepening understanding of God, his nature and attributes
- (2) Practical carefulness - practices that are rooted in sound Theology
- (3) Social comprehensiveness - an all-encompassing view of purpose that sanctifies our whole life/relationships
- (4) Personal awareness - a conscience that is founded upon scripturally founded purpose/practices

Being #onmission must not begin with a mission briefing. Rather, we must begin with ultimate purpose. The ultimate purpose for our existence will help us to understand the role of mission within our lives or rather our lives within His mission.

#onmission 002

Max Fernandez / General

#onmission / Evangelism; Discipleship; Mission / Luke 24:44–49
7-Week Series at GBC on missional evangelism

Title: How do we fulfill God's purpose ecclesiastically?

Text: Variety

Series: #onmission

Introduction:

God's mission is the means to God's purpose

Thesis: We must understand what God's mission for the church is.

Body:

First, what is God's mission?

- (1) God's mission existed before the New Testament

God's Mission in the Garden – Genesis 1:26-27, Genesis 3:15

God's Mission in Abraham & Israel – Romans 4:16, Exodus 12-14,
Galatians 3:16

- (2) God's mission is bigger than any one local body. – I Corinthians 3:9,
Philippians 1:27

While individual local church autonomy is important, it can be taken to an extreme. The extreme of autonomy is typically caused by division over secondary and tertiary issues. What do these kinds of divisions result in?

- (3) God's mission is made clear by the gospel command – “**make disciples.**”

Of all the passages, Matthew 28:16-20 may possibly be the most noted and quoted of the Great Commission passages.

Conclusion:

The Mission and the Church

Is there an ecclesiastic dimension to this? In other words, is this just something to be done individual or corporately? In the scriptures that we have already seen we

have evidence of the corporate nature of this command. But one glaring example that we find in the New Testament is Acts 13:1-4, 14:21-23.

How do we go about fulfilling God's purpose ecclesiastically?

- We accomplish purpose by obedience to God's mission.
- We must understand what the mission is. The mission is to "make disciples".
- We must see that this is part of God's kingdom plan.
- We must seek to make disciples are part of the local NT church.

#onmission 003

Max Fernandez / General

#onmission / Evangelism; Discipleship; Mission / Luke 24:44–49
7-Week Series at GBC on missional evangelism

Title: How do we fulfill God's mission of making disciples?

Text: Matthew 28:19, Mark 16:15

Series: #onmission

Introduction:

If the mission of God is that we would make disciples, how do we accomplish this?

Thesis: If we are to fulfill our mission, we must evangelize, and if we will evangelize then we must be clear on what this word means and what it does not mean.

Body:

(1) Distinguishing Evangelism

Evangelism must not be confused with other activities. Explanation given of what evangelism is not.

(2) Describing Evangelism (I Thessalonians 1:5)

Evangelism may be easier to understand by describing it. Descriptions historically of evangelism.

(3) Defining Evangelism (Acts 1:1, 5:25, Galatians 1:12)

Two definitions for evangelism made available.

Discussion of God. Man. Christ. Response template. (Romans 1-4)

Trusting God to bring conversion, that is made known by water baptism.

Trusting: Our aim must not be confused with conversion. (John 1:12-13, John 3:5-8)

Conclusion:

Making disciples requires evangelism — meaning that we are teaching the gospel with the goal to persuade the hearers to be converted. (II Corinthians 5:11, 4:2)

#onmission 004

Max Fernandez / General

#onmission / Evangelism; Discipleship; Mission; Fundamentalism / Luke 24:44–49
7-Week Series at GBC on missional evangelism

Title: What are Hurdles to Evangelism?

Text: Luke 24:44-49

Series: #onmission

Introduction:

Now that we have covered our purpose of glorifying God, the mission of making disciples, and the means of making disciples through evangelism, we must pause and consider carefully what may be some of the hurdles we will encounter when evangelizing. The kinds of hurdles of which I speak are not hurdles from the outside, such as different worldviews, religions, or denominations though these are formidable obstacles. The hurdles which we should consider first are those internal hurdles — ones that we may overlook and may cause us to stumble. If we are not aware of internal hurdles, we may never encounter and successfully overcome some of the external hurdles.

Thesis: Biblical evangelism requires that we be clear on fundamental teaching, organic ministry, and missional investment.

Body:

Three Obstacles to Evangelism:

(1) Unintentional Fundamental Drifting

The hurdle arises when fundamental truths are added to or amended, and there are three theological drifts that have consequences in evangelism.

- An Unintentional Drift in Salvation Teaching (John 5:39)
- An Unintentional Drift towards the Approval of Man (II Corinthians 5:14-21)
- An Unintentional Drift towards a Anemic Gospel (Romans 10:13-14)

(2) Undetected Programming for Ministry

Programs can be detrimental to organic, super-natural, Spirit-empowered evangelism. (I Thessalonians 1:8)

- Forming Dependency upon Programs
- Dependency replaced the Organic

(3) Unintentional Spending for Costly Ministries

As a ministry there are expenses handed to us because we live where we live and with what we live (location, operations, facilities). There are also ministries that require investment so that they might be sustained. If we are not careful, we can drift from intentional investment in mission-oriented ministries.

- The Strength of Missional (mission-oriented) Investment
- Detraction from the Mission
- Potential in Costly Ministries

Conclusion

How do we maintain clarity in these areas?

You might think that the obvious remedy for this is that we keep our eyes on mission, but it is my conviction that our perspective must be rooted in a right interpretation and application of the Bible. Maintaining a Christ-centered interpretation and application of the Bible will help us to be fundamental in our teaching, organic in our Christian living, and missional in our spending. Luke 24:44-49 [will be covered in #mission005]

#onmission 005

Max Fernandez / General

#onmission / Evangelism; Discipleship; Mission / Luke 24:44–49
7-Week Series at GBC on missional evangelism

Title: Biblical Evangelism Requires a Christ-centered Hermeneutic

Text: Luke 24:44-49

Series: #onmission

Introduction:

A Christian is to receive Christ-centered instruction and obey Christ's command by God's gracious empowerment. Consequently, instruction, command, empowerment is to be fundamentally Christ-centered.

Thesis: If we will avoid manipulative, man-centered evangelistic practices we must interpret all the scriptures in a Christ-centered manner.

What makes the instruction of Jesus authoritative?

- (1) The Authority of Jesus Historically (Luke 24:44, Luke 2:1-7)
- (2) Authority as the Resurrected One (Luke 24:44)
- (3) The Authority of Fulfilled Prophecy (Luke 24:44, 9:22, 44, 17:25, 18:31, 22:37)
 - Jesus foretold his death. The historical Jesus and the resurrected Jesus—one and the same—are central to Luke's argument.
 - The Scriptures foretold of Jesus' death. Luke 24:44 also points to the prophetic fulfillment of Jesus Christ when he says, "*All things must be fulfilled.*"
 - Christ is in the Prophets. Peter's message on the day of Pentecost reveals the specific Christocentric scripture study approach from the prophets. Acts 2:16.
 - Christ is in the Psalms. Peter's message not only connects Jesus to the Prophets but also to the Psalms. Acts 2:25.
 - Christ is in the books of Moses. In Peter's message at the Temple, he implicitly refers to accounts within the books of Moses. Deuteronomy 18:18, Acts 3:22, 26.

Conclusion:

Thus, Christ-centered instruction is groundwork for both commandment and empowerment to come.

If we will avoid manipulative, man-centered evangelistic practices we must interpret all the scriptures in a Christ-centered manner.

#onmission 006

Max Fernandez / General

#onmission / Evangelism; Discipleship; Mission / Luke 24:44–49
7-Week Series at GBC on missional evangelism

Title: A Christ-centered Command

Text: Luke 24:44-49

Series: #onmission

Christ-centered interpretation leads us to the Christ-centered_commandment. We must can and must obey.

Thesis: Because Jesus is the center of the scriptures, we must see Jesus as central to the command to evangelize.

(1) Christ-Centered Commandment

Luke 24:46, 47 share a unique connection. Both verses contain infinitive phrases that appear to inseparably join them.

(2) Explanation of the Christ-centered Command (Luke 24:47)

The *details* describe what is to be proclaimed and where the message is to be proclaimed. The message is repentance and remission of sins. The *destination* for the proclamation is all nations.

(3) The Recipients of the Christ-centered Command - “Witnesses” (Luke 24:48)

This verse serves two important purposes.

First, it answers the implicit question of “How will all nations hear the message?” The answer is that these disciples would be witnesses.

The second purpose is that further implicit need is created. How would these witnesses proclaim the message to all nations? The magnanimous task has become clear and personal. Edwards says,

(4) The Need for the Christ-centered Command [for Empowerment]

While the proclaimer and proclamation is Christ-centered, the destination confirms a New Testament reality and establishes an evident need. The New Testament reality that is confirmed is that the Christ-centered message is to be preached among all, including those of non-Jewish decent.

Conclusion:

006 #onmission - Christ-centered interpretation leads us to the Christ-centered commandment. We must obey.

Because Jesus is the center of the scriptures, we must see Jesus as central to the command to evangelize.

#onmission 007

Max Fernandez / General

#onmission / Evangelism; Discipleship; Mission / Luke 24:44–49
7-Week Series at GBC on missional evangelism

Title: The Christ-centered Empowerment

Text: Luke 24:44-49

Series: #onmission

Christ-centered evangelism requires faith in Christ-centered empowerment.

Thesis: If you will obey the Christ-centered command to evangelize, you must have Christ-centered empowerment.

The disciples were promised power for obedience to the commission from Jesus, and this power is directly connected with the Person of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the One making the commitment in the verse.

How is the power promised centered on Jesus Christ?

(1) Christ is the Basis of the Promise (Luke 24:48-49)

Jesus Christ gives the promise and is himself the basis of assurance—being that he has risen from the dead.

(2) Christ's Ascension is the Contingency of the Power

So, the empowerment is Christ-centered because Jesus made the promise based on Himself — the resurrected One. Secondly, the empowerment is Christ-centered because it was contingent on the ascension (return of Jesus to Heaven) of Jesus Christ.

- Ascension in the NT (Acts 2:33, John 16:7)
- Ascension in the OT (Psalm 68:18, Ephesians 4:8)

(3) Christ's Life Models Empowerment

The empowerment is Christ-centered because it is based upon the authority of the resurrected Christ, it is contingent upon his ascension, and Jesus is the supreme model of what Holy Spirit empowered means.

- Clothed with Power (Luke 24:49)

- Miraculous Power (Luke 1:17, Matthew 28:18)
- Modeled Power (Luke 4:14)

Conclusion:

The evangelism of Luke 24:44-49 is to be Christ-centered in every sense through instruction, commandment, and empowerment.

APPENDIX 4

HANDOUTS

**Handout 1—Purpose Before Mission:
Why Are We Here?**

Ephesians 1:1-14

#onmission

It should stand to reason that understanding our purpose for existence is fundamental to self-awareness, function, and pursuits in life.

Question: Why are Christians here upon this earth?

Thesis: Before we can effectively talk about our mission, we must be clear about our ultimate purpose.

Lesson Questions/Responses:

Are good intentions always a good starting point? _____

What is a statement that we might make with good intentions but that might lead us to potential problems? _____

What are some potential problems if we unintentionally replace ultimate purpose with something else? _____

Through what four lenses should we consider purpose?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Where does the word *ecclesiastically* come from? _____

What are some applications from this lesson (as given in the conclusion)?

Being #onmission must not begin with a mission briefing. Rather, we must begin with ultimate purpose. The ultimate purpose for our existence will help us to understand the role of mission within our lives or rather our lives within His mission.

**Handout 2—From Purpose to Church Mission:
How Do We Fulfill God's Purpose
as a Church (Ecclesiastically)?**

Matthew 28:16-20

#onmission

Question: How do we fulfill God's purpose?

God's _____ is a means to God's purpose.

Thesis: We must understand what God's mission is for the church.

Lesson Questions/Responses:

What is God's mission? _____

Yes or No? Did God's mission exist before the New Testament?

What are some examples of God's mission in the Old Testament?

What are some Bible references of God's mission in the Old Testament?

What is a theological triage? _____

What should be our heart response when we understand that the mission is bigger than one local church body? _____

Summarize the mission in two words from Matthew 28:16-20. _____

What are some activities today that people call mission?

Handout 3—How Do We Fulfill Christ's Mission of Making Disciples?

Matthew 28:19, Mark 16:15

#onmission

Review:

#001 - Our ultimate purpose is to be to the praise of God's _____.

#002 - God is glorified as we fulfil his mission of making _____.

Lesson: How do we fulfill Christ's mission of making disciples?

Mark 16:15 says:

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the _____ to every creature.

Thesis: Making disciples demands that we _____.

Lesson Questions/Responses:

What are some examples of what evangelism is not?

Circle One: Of the two definitions given for evangelism, which one seems most clear to you?

(1) Teaching the gospel with the aim to persuade. – Stiles

(2) Presenting the good news freely and trusting God to convert people. -- Jamieson

How do we fulfil Christ mission of making disciples?

1. Teaching: People must be taught

What is the gospel?

The gospel is the _____ news of what Jesus Christ has done to save sinners.

What is a potential problem with an **anemic** gospel?

What is a potential problem with a **bloated** gospel?

A Romans Alternative:

- God: R _____ / Reference in Bible - _____
- Man: R _____ / Reference in Bible - _____
- Christ: R _____ / Reference in Bible - _____
- Man: R _____ / Reference in Bible - _____

2. Trusting: Our aim must not be confused with conversion.

Yes or No: Does evangelize mean to win converts? _____

Conversion is the work of the _____.

Bible References: _____

3. Testing: Conversion is made known in water baptism and a life of following Christ.

Bible Reference: _____

A person who has been baptized into Jesus Christ will begin to live a life of increasing allegiance to Jesus.

Conclusion:

Making disciples requires _____ -- meaning that we are teaching the gospel with the aim to persuade.

Handout 4—What Are the Obstacles for Evangelism?

John 5:39, II Corinthians 5:14-21, I Thessalonians 1:8, Luke 24:44-49

#onmission

Review:

#001 - Our ultimate purpose is to be to the praise of God's _____.

#002 - God is glorified as we fulfil his mission of making _____.

#003 – Making disciples demands that we _____.

#004 – Evangelism has conquerable _____.

Lesson: What are the obstacles for evangelism within our context?

Thesis: *Biblical evangelism* requires that we be clear regarding fundamental _____, organic _____, and missional (mission-oriented) _____.

Lesson Questions/Responses:

What are some fundamentals?

What are some obstacles?

1. Unintentional Fundamental Drifting

What is one symptom of a man-centered understanding of the doctrine of salvation?

We attempt evangelism the way we do because we read the Bible the way we do. When we read the Bible and immediately go to personal application, we tend to miss the point of the Bible — Jesus Christ. When we misinterpret the scriptures in this way, we tend towards Christless, results-oriented, man-centered, pragmatic obedience.

What should be our motive in evangelism and what reference explains this?

What is one example of a confused practice in evangelism that reveals an anemic gospel understanding?

2. Undetected Programming for Ministry

Yes or No: Are programs bad to have? _____

What might programs replace, if we are not careful?

“A strict diet of evangelistic programs produces malnourished evangelism.”

-Stiles [Evangelism, 46]

What is one example of organic gospel ministry? List the reference.

3. Unintentional Spending for Costly Ministries

Would you consider mission-oriented investment important? _____

Is the investment mission-oriented if the ministry is not helping accomplish mission?

Conclusion:

Thesis: *Biblical evangelism* requires that we be clear regarding fundamental _____, organic _____, and missional (mission-oriented) _____.

How do we maintain clarity in these areas?

Maintaining a Christ-centered _____ and _____ of the Bible will help us to be fundamental in our teaching, organic in our Christian living, and missional in our spending.

Reference: _____

Handout 5—What Kind of Interpretation of Scriptures Is Necessary for Christ-Centered Evangelism?

Luke 24:44-49

#onmission

Review:

#001 - Our ultimate purpose is to be to the praise of God's _____.

#002 - God is glorified as we fulfil his mission of making _____.

#003 – Making disciples demands that we _____.

#004 – Evangelism has conquerable _____.

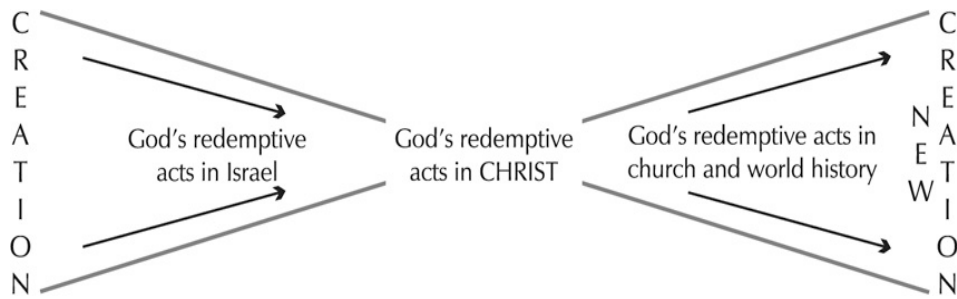
#005 – Christ-centered evangelism requires a _____ - _____ interpretation of the scriptures.

Thesis: If we will avoid manipulative, man-centered evangelistic practices we must interpret all the scriptures in a _____ - _____ manner.

"If we think that the scriptures are primarily about what we have to do [man-centered] rather than what Christ has done [Christ-centered], then we will approach evangelism with dependency upon us rather than upon Christ."

Redemptive-Historical Progression¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶ Greidanus, Sidney. *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method*. Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999.



Lesson Questions/Responses:

True or False: A correct interpretation of the Scriptures leads to a correct evangelistic method.

Christ-Centered Instruction – *he spake*

Christ-centered instruction presumes that Jesus is the _____ One speaking.
(Luke 24:44)

Luke shows the authority of Jesus:

- (1) Historically
- (2) As the _____ One
- (3) By fulfilled _____
 - a. _____ foretold of his own death
 - b. The _____ foretold Jesus' death
 - ii. Christ is in the _____.
 - iii. Christ is in the books of _____.

How did the disciples come to understand the scriptures? (Luke 24:45)

Transformative heart work is accomplished by the supernatural work of God through Christ-centered study of the Old Testament Scriptures.

Conclusion:

- Christ-centered _____ is groundwork for both **commandment** and **empowerment** to come.
- If we will avoid manipulative, man-centered evangelistic practices we must interpret all the scriptures in a _____ - _____ manner.

- **#onmission005** - Christ-centered evangelism requires a Christ-centered _____ of the scriptures.

Discussion Questions:

- What is an example of a non-Christ-centered approach to Old Testament scriptures?
- How does Luke 24:44-49 specifically connect interpretation to evangelism?
- What is one way that we can grow in Christ-centered study of the Bible?
- What question should you ask your leaders that may help you grow in a Christ-centered approach to the scriptures?

Handout 6—How Should We Consider the Command to Evangelize?

Luke 24:44-49

#onmission

Review:

#001 - Our ultimate purpose is to be to the praise of God's _____.

#002 - God is glorified as we fulfil his mission of making _____.

#003 – Making disciples demands that we _____.

#004 – Evangelism has conquerable _____.

#005 – Christ-centered evangelism requires a _____ - _____ interpretation of the scriptures.

Small grid for personal application of OT scriptures:

- **God** – What does this passage tell me about God?
- **Man** – What does this passage tell me about mankind?
- **Christ** – How does this passage point me to Christ (comparison/contrast)?
- **Response** – How should I believe/obey because of the finished work of Christ?

#006 – Christ-centered interpretation leads us to the Christ-_____ commandment.

Thesis: Because Jesus is the center of the scriptures, we must see Jesus as central to the _____ to evangelize.

Christ-Centered Commandment

A Christocentric understanding of the Old Testament is fundamental to the command to proclaim, for if there were nothing from the Old Testament fulfilled, then there would be nothing to _____.

-
- *Our obedience required Christ's _____.*
-

What questions can I ask about any commands?

1. How did the obedience of _____ make my obedience possible?
2. Did Christ have to live, die, and rise again for you to be able to _____ the command? If so, why?

Explanation(s) of the Christ-Centered Command
Explanation Part #1- Repentance and Forgiveness

Repentance - _____

Forgiveness - of sins brings the opportunity to leave the _____ and come into God's _____.

Explanation Part #2 – “In His Name”

- People acting as _____.
- People acting through the name of _____.

The Recipients of the Christ-centered Command

They were called “_____”. This name answers, in part, the question of how the message would get to the nations.

Jesus’ statement implies that Luke is not merely citing the Old Testament, but that the Lord intends his disciples to obediently fulfill the rest of the _____, and this statement serves to join to Luke’s second writing (the Acts of the Apostles). The anticipation of the term witnesses finds further connection in Acts 1:8 and fulfillment in the apostolic activities of primarily Peter and Paul in the book of Acts.

The Need Caused by the Christ-centered Command

...while the phrase among all nations confirms that the message is to be sacrificially proclaimed to both Jews and Gentiles, it also creates a need—a need for supernatural power to accomplish such a great task.

Luke shows that this preaching is to begin in Jerusalem and this message must necessarily be preached internationally. The magnitude of the task set before them creates the need for _____.

The task is too much for mere natural men.

Handout 7—What Is the Power for Evangelism?

Luke 24:44-49

#onmission

Review:

#001 - Our ultimate purpose is to be to the praise of God's _____.

- Not church growth.
- Not the avoidance of Hell.
- Not so that God will be happy with me.

#002 - God is glorified as we fulfil his mission of making _____.

#003 – Making disciples demands that we _____.

- This means all Christians, regardless of gifting.
- Not only pastors/leaders.

#004 – Evangelism has conquerable _____.

- Our motivation is not the approval of men.
- Our motivation must be the love of Christ.

#005 – Christ-centered evangelism [CCE] requires a _____ - _____ interpretation of the scriptures.

- CCE is based on a particular interpretation of the scriptures
- Means that our goal is not to lead a person through a 3 or 4 step process.

#006 – Christ-centered interpretation leads us to the Christ-_____ commandment.

#007 – Christ-centered evangelism requires faith in Christ-centered _____.

Thesis: If you will obey the Christ-centered command to evangelize, you must have Christ-centered _____.

Final Survey

Christ-Centered Empowerment (Luke 24:49)

First, the message of Luke 24:44-49 teaches us that the scriptures are to be _____ in a Christ-centered manner. Second, there is the

*command to evangelize. This _____ is also Christ-centered in that it required the prophetic fulfillment by Christ in order to require the command to preach. Lastly, the **empowerment** for obedience required Christ's work as well.*

How is the promised power (empowerment) Christ-centered?

- (1) Christ is the basis for the _____.
 - a. The promised power is the Holy _____.
 - b. The _____ is Jesus Christ.
 - The disciples are once again called upon to believe what Jesus is telling them, but now they are to _____ the word of the resurrected Christ.

Why should they believe Jesus Christ?

Jesus Christ gives the promise and is himself the basis of assurance—being that he has risen from the dead.

- (2) Christ's _____ is the contingency of the power.

So, the empowerment is Christ-centered because Jesus made the promise on the basis of Himself—the resurrected One. Secondly, the empowerment is Christ-centered because it was contingent on the _____ (return of Jesus to Heaven) of Jesus Christ.

- a. _____ in the New Testament (Acts 2:33, John 16:7)
- b. _____ in the Old Testament (Psalm 68:18, Ephesians 4:8)

Thus, the sending of the Holy Spirit is directly connected with the ascension of Jesus Christ, as prophesied in both the Old and New Testaments.

- (3) Christ's life models _____.
 - a. _____ with power (Romans 13:12,14)
 - b. _____ power
 - c. _____ power (Luke 4:14)

The evangelism of Luke 24:44-49 is to be Christ-centered in every sense through instruction, commandment, and empowerment.

Important Information:

June 13 – July 18, 2021, Sundays 6:00 PM

Several gifted teachers will teach us about *Knowing, Living, and Speaking the Gospel*.

The series is entitled *Marks of the Messenger*. In preparation for the series, each family

will receive a book on Sunday, May 30. This series will complement our *Evangelism* series and will lead us into our **Mission Conference** on **July 25-28**.

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ABSTRACT

TRAINING THE LAY LEADERS OF GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH OF MIDDLETOWN, OHIO FOR CHRIST- CENTERED EVANGELISM

Maximino Fernandez, DMin
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2022
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Timothy K. Beougher

This project sought to equip the lay leaders of Grace Baptist Church in Middletown, Ohio, for Christ-centered evangelism. Chapter 1 introduces the ministry context and goals of this project. Chapter 2 provides the theological basis for this project through an exegesis of Luke 24:44-49. Chapter 3 addresses the practical application of Christ-centered evangelism in a fundamental ministry context. Chapter 4 describes the project itself, including all content and curriculum. Chapter 5 is an overall project evaluation based on completion of specified goals.

VITA

Maximino Fernandez

EDUCATION

BA, Slidell Baptist Seminary, 2007

MA, Crown Seminary, 2009

PhD, Louisiana Baptist University, 2011

MDiv, Luther Rice College and Seminary, 2019

MINISTERIAL

Youth Pastor, Grace Baptist Church, Middletown, Ohio, 2002-2008

Associate Pastor, Grace Baptist Church, Middletown, Ohio, 2008-2013

Senior Pastor, Grace Baptist Church, Middletown, Ohio, 2013-