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EQUIPPING MEMBERS AND ATTENDERS FOR
EVANGELISM AT WASHINGTON HEIGHTS
BAPTIST CHURCH, DAYTON, OHIO

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EQUIPPING MEMBERS AND ATTENDERS FOR
EVANGELISM AT WASHINGTON HEIGHTS
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To my Lord Jesus Christ, my wife and kids,
and the saints at Washington Heights.

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PREFACE

I would like to thank the faculty and staff at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary for their guidance and leadership in this endeavor. Their input, teaching, and exhortations have led to the project at hand. This project is the culmination of years of study, months of reading, and hours and hours of coursework.

I would like to thank pastor Dave Kisner, my pastor and friend, for his encouragement to pursue this doctoral degree. Without the freedom and flexibility he allowed, this project would not have been possible.

I would like to thank the dear saints at Washington Heights Baptist Church. This church is the only one I have ever called home. The individuals here have shaped and molded me in ways beyond calculation. My prayer is that this project would be used by God to change the community around WHBC for all of eternity. Without the encouragement of the church this degree would not be possible. Without the financial assistance of these wonderful people, this degree would not have happened.

Finally, I thank my patient, loving, and supportive home team: my wife, Grace and our children, Cade, Caroline, Charlotte, Levi, and Wesley. This doctoral work has been paid for by you all as well. I thank you for allowing me to make the sacrifices necessary to complete this work. And I thank you for making sacrifices, doing life without dad, when necessary for a season.

Justin Hoppe

Dayton, Ohio

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Ray Kinsella stood in his cornfield and heard a soft whisper floating with the breeze, “If you build it, they will come.”¹ This is likely the most recognized phrase from the movie *Field of Dreams*. In the movie, Ray ends up plowing over part of his cornfields, which he cannot actually afford to do, to create a baseball field. There are a lot of plot twists and intrigue, and a fair amount of Hollywood magic, but Ray’s crazy decision to follow the whisper turned out well and everyone lived happily ever after. There was a time in America when pastors were hearing this same whisper on the wind regarding bigger buildings and gymnasiums. They dreamed of building facilities that could be used to reach the community. Many churches saw crowds gathered for volleyball leagues, basketball open gyms, and any number of other sports activities. Washington Heights Baptist Church was one of those churches that built a gymnasium with the dream of filling it with crowds and seeing the community reached for Christ; unfortunately, in the past fifteen years, that dream has not come true.

Context

Washington Heights Baptist Church (WHBC) is located at the crest of a hill, just south of Dayton, Ohio. When this piece of property was purchased, it was covered in corn, but the property sat adjacent to a fairly new road, Far Hills Avenue. This road was built to connect the city of Centerville to the city of Dayton. The church leadership hoped that this strategic location would allow them to bring the gospel to the community that was sure to grow in the decades to come. The community did indeed grow as businesses

¹ Phil Alden Robinson, *Field of Dreams* (Universal Pictures, 1989).

and housing developments began to move north and south along Far Hills Avenue. Attendance peaked in the late 1990s and then the church experienced a slow decline for a number of years. Attendance has now leveled out and has held steady for the last three to four years. However, the dream of reaching the community for Christ as of yet, is largely unfulfilled.

WHBC has benefited from a long heritage of solid biblical teaching, both from the pulpit and in the Adult Bible Fellowships (ABFs). The senior pastors who have served the church well have intentionally cultivated this heritage and high view of biblical teaching. This heritage has resulted in a high level of biblical literacy among many who regularly attend; however, the people are rather content to receive biblical teaching and seem reluctant to act on it in some areas of their lives. One particular area is in personal evangelism.

In 2009, WHBC built a beautiful gymnasium that has allowed some significant opportunities to engage the community over the past fifteen years. Each winter the church runs an Upward Basketball League, averaging 120 students per season. During the registration process, families are asked to indicate if they have a church home. For the 2020 season, almost 30 percent of the families did not list a home church. The majority of other families attend other churches in the Dayton area.

Every summer for many years, WHBC has conducted Vacation Bible School. Over the last three years, attendance has increased from around 180 children involved to over 300. Parents are asked to provide basic information during the registration process, including if they attend a church regularly. For the 2019 VBS, almost 30 percent of the families involved did not list a church where they regularly attend. Close to 30 percent of the families attend WHBC, and the remainder attend other churches in the area.

Building a gymnasium has not resulted in the conversion growth that the leadership anticipated. There are several reasons ranging from staffing changes and cultural

realities of suburban life in the twenty-first century; however, the largest factor is likely a lack of personal evangelism to complement the community events the church has held.

The church has not relied solely on the building to reach the community. WHBC has begun to develop a relationship with a few elementary schools in the community near the church. The church provided several services to the schools, including special meals for all faculty and staff, recess relief for teachers and even feeding dinner to all the attenders of a trunk or treat event sponsored by the school. The church leadership has worked with one of the principals, who is a member of WHBC, to explore ways for the church to make a more significant impact on the staff. Up to this point all of the activities with these schools have been on the school campuses and not on church property.

One encouraging sign regarding WHBC's commitment to the Great Commission is that WHBC is a sending church. For nearly the entire history of the church, WHBC has raised up, sent out, and supported cross-cultural missionaries. Over twenty individuals and families have been commissioned to global missions with WHBC as their sending church. Missionaries are serving on every continent, except for Antarctica, that have been sent out by Washington Heights. Over fifty adult missions trips have been sent out and nearly as many teen mission trips. This culture of engaging the nations for Christ is one of my favorite things about WHBC.

For all the rich heritage and culture of WHBC, it remains a church that is content to know about Christ and His Word. I am concerned about the lack of personal engagement in reaching the lost people of the community with the saving gospel of Jesus Christ. Recently, while on a deacon retreat, the leadership of WHBC was asked to indicate how many people they had led to Christ in the last year. Only one of the thirteen men gathered had led someone else to Christ in the last twelve months. If this is true of the leadership of WHBC, then one can assume that it would also be true of the general population of attenders. If WHBC is going to be effective for Christ in an increasingly secular world, this has to change.

Rationale

WHBC must develop an evangelism training program for four reasons:

(1) Christ commissioned the church to make disciples of all nations, which requires evangelism; (2) each day people in the community are dying without a relationship with Christ—WHBC needs to engage with as many of these people as possible; (3) one of the primary functions of any church is to equip the saints for the work of the ministry; and (4) a church that does not reach the community is failing in one of its vital roles.

In one of his last appearances to his disciples before his ascension, the Lord Jesus looked at his disciples and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt 28:18-20).² This passage of Scripture is often referred to today as the Great Commission. In these verses Jesus gave the church its marching orders. The people of WHBC are fully aware of the mandate for evangelism, and yet there is a lack of evidence that evangelism is being practiced regularly in the lives of individuals. An evangelism training course would equip the members and regular attenders at WHBC to fulfill their role in the Great Commission.

Christians live each day with the hope that Christ will soon return and make all things new. This truth is especially encouraging as the world seems to fall deeper into sin and evil; however, it is imperative that Christians remember the awful destiny of all who are not saved. Scripture teaches that all who have not placed their eternal hope in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus will face eternal torment in hell. Philippians 3:18-21 contrasts those who live with the hope of heaven and those whose end is destruction. Paul writes,

² All Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version, unless otherwise stated.

For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. (Phil 3:18-21)

People whom God has placed near the members of WHBC are dying every day. As ambassadors for Christ (2 Cor 5:18-20) it is incumbent on the people of WHBC to engage in personal evangelism. The leadership of WHBC must provide training that equips the individuals to be ambassadors.

An important role of every church is to equip the saints for the work of ministry. Paul writes to the church at Ephesus,

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful scheme. (Eph 4:12)

Jesus came to seek and save the lost. The ministry of the church is to be ambassadors for Christ. WHBC must equip the saints for the work of the ministry with effective evangelism training.

There was a time in America when all that was required of a church was to open its doors and exist. The culture was such that most people were involved in some way with a church. That day has passed. With each generation the percentage of people engaged in church decreases. There will come a day when organic growth (births) in churches will no longer be able to stay ahead of attrition.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to train members and attenders at Washington Heights Baptist Church, in Dayton, Ohio, to effectively share the gospel with unsaved people they know.

Goals

The following four goals reflect the necessary steps to achieve the purpose of this project. Each goal depends on the others to accomplish the purpose.

1. The first goal was to assess the current evangelistic practices of individuals at WHBC.
2. The second goal was to develop an evangelism training course for a group of individuals at WHBC.
3. The third goal was to equip the individuals to share the gospel in their community.
4. The fourth goal was to develop a ministry plan to intentionally engage community contacts in gospel conversations.

Research Methodology

The first goal was to assess the current evangelistic practices of individuals at WHBC. This goal was measured by administering the Personal Evangelism Inventory (PEI) to a group of 18 adults at WHBC.³ This goal was considered successfully met when the surveys had been completed and data analyzed to determine the current evangelistic practices of the individuals surveyed at WHBC.

The second goal was to develop an evangelism training course for a group of individuals at WHBC for personal evangelism training. This goal was measured by an expert panel who utilized a rubric to evaluate the biblical, theological, and applicability of the curriculum.⁴ This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criteria met or exceeded the sufficient level.

The third goal was to equip the individuals to share the gospel in their community. Individuals attended an eight-session training course that focused on developing practices and techniques to equip them to contextualize the gospel in conversations with their unsaved contacts. This goal was measured by pre- and post-

³ See appendix 1. All the research instruments used in his project were performed in compliance with and approved by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use.

⁴ See appendix 2.

training PEI survey that measured the individual's level of beliefs and practices related to share the gospel with those in their community (neighbors, coworkers, acquaintances, or unsaved family).⁵ This goal was considered successfully met when a *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-survey scores.

The fourth goal was to develop a ministry plan to intentionally engage community contacts in gospel conversations. This goal was measured by a panel of two ministry leaders/missionaries who utilized a rubric to evaluate the functionality of the plan, communication processes, training elements, and the action steps.⁶ This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators met or exceeded the acceptable level. Had the 90 percent benchmark not initially been met, then the material would have been revised until it met the standard.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

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

*Transformational evangelism.*⁷ Transformational evangelism is sharing the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ with the goal of life change, specifically acceptance of the gospel.⁸ Transformational evangelism is distinct from outreach activities. These two activities differ because outreach activities often build community connections where those connections did not previously exist. While transformational evangelism seeks to build relationships with people already in one's personal sphere of influence.

⁵ See appendix 1.

⁶ See appendix 3.

⁷ The distinction is made here between activities that are often called "outreach" and the act of evangelism with the goal of life change. The terminology *transformational evangelism* is meant to represent that distinction.

⁸ J. Mack Stiles, *Evangelism: How the Whole Church Speaks of Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 26.

The key distinction is that transformational evangelists look to move conversations toward gospel truth and outreach activities focus on bringing the community to church.

Outreach activities. Outreach activities provide opportunities for a church to make contact with unbelievers. These activities are largely pre-evangelistic in that they establish credibility, relationship, and groundwork for later evangelism. WHBC has a strong history of engaging the community with activities intended to increase contact between the secular community and the church.

One limitation applied to this project. The accuracy of the pre- and post-training PEI surveys were dependent upon the willingness of the respondents to be honest about their current evangelistic beliefs and practices as well as any changes in those beliefs and practices. To mitigate this limitation, respondents were promised that their answers would remain anonymous by using a self-made four-digit code in place of any other identification.

Three delimitations were placed on the project. First, the project addressed the evangelistic practices of individuals who are actively involved at WHBC. Second, the project was confined to an eight-week time frame. This gave sufficient time to prepare and teach the eight training sessions and conduct the post-training survey after the sessions were completed. Finally, this project was limited to training individuals to improve evangelistic practices, not necessarily the eventual conversion of those with whom they share the gospel.

Conclusion

Washington Heights Baptist Church must learn to engage the community that God has placed it in with the gospel of Jesus Christ. This evangelism training program equipped individuals to share the gospel with unbelievers with the goal of personal transformation. Chapter 2 examines the scriptural support for personal, contextualized transformational evangelism. Chapter 3 presents definitions of evangelism, barriers to evangelism, and evangelism tools. Chapter 4 describes the preparation of the course and

the timeline followed. Chapter 5 is an evaluation of the entire project with reflections on key insights.

CHAPTER 2

SCRIPTURE EXHORTS BELIEVERS TO ENGAGE UNBELIEVERS WITH THE GOSPEL

In the beginning God created a context. He created a universe, physics, the earth, and all the creatures on it as a context for his relationship with mankind. When the work was done, God joined his image bearers in the garden. He entered the context of Adam and Eve and they existed, for a time, in perfect relationship. God did not require Adam and Eve to transcend the chasm between earth and heaven. He did not wait for them to somehow learn to speak with the tongues of angels. God went to them. He pursued them and revealed himself to them, in their context. God entered the garden and walked with Adam. He told Adam his purpose on earth, gave him his mandate, and provided Eve as a partner. God spent time in the context of the garden and revealed himself to Adam and Eve so they could relate to him. In Genesis 2:18–25, God is shown taking deep concern over Adam’s state of aloneness as well as the work God gave him to do:

Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” Therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. (Gen 2:18-25)

In Genesis 2:15-17, God told Adam he had the freedom to eat from every tree in the garden except one, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Eating from this tree would result in separation from God and death. Anyone familiar with Scripture

knows the rest of the story: Adam and Eve rejected God's authority and sought to determine right from wrong on their own terms. Eve was deceived by the serpent and chose to reject God's authority over her, while her husband, Adam, "was with her" merely stood by watching this take place (Gen 3:5-6). This rejection broke their perfect relationship with God and brought death and curses on all of creation. In Genesis 3:14-19, the curses of sin are expressed. To the serpent God said, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel" (3:14-15). In this curse the serpent was faced with condemnation and a prophesy of eventual destruction.

To Eve, God said, I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you" (Gen 3:16). In this curse, Eve and all her female offspring would now face agonizing pain in childbirth. But also, conflict between Adam and Eve would be the normal experience. She would bristle under his leadership, and he would exercise authority. To Adam, God said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field" (Gen 3:17-18). God had given Adam work to do before sin, and presumably that work would have been much easier before sin entered the world. And finally, God told Adam the end result of his sin would be death: "By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Gen 3:19).

However, in the aftermath of their rebellion, God did not leave Adam and Eve on their own. He entered the Garden once again; he entered their context and met with them. The Scriptures read, "and they heard the sound of God walking in the garden in the

cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But called to the man and said, ‘Where are you?’” (Gen 3:8-9). Adam and Eve had hidden themselves in the brush and covered themselves in leaves. But God engaged them and killed an innocent animal to make clothes for them, covering over their nakedness (Gen 3:20-21). In the first act of substitutionary death, that innocent animal’s blood was shed to cover over the sins of Adam and Eve. Allen Ross writes about the significance of these few verses to the rest of human history:

All God’s dealings with people as sinners can be traced back to this act of disobedience by Adam and Eve. God is a saving God, however, and the fact that He clothed Adam and Eve testifies to that. An animal was sacrificed to provide garments of skin, and later all Israel’s animal sacrifices would be part of God’s provision to remedy the curse—a life for a life. The sinner shall die! (Ezek. 18:20; Rom. 6:23) Yet he will live if he places his faith in the Lord, who has provided a Substitute. The skin with which God clothed Adam and Eve perpetually reminded them of God’s provision. Similarly in the fullness of time God accepted the sacrifice of Christ, and on the basis of that atonement He clothes believers in righteousness (Rom. 3:21-26).¹

In some ways, the narrative of Scripture can be understood as the infinite Creator God engaging in transformational, personal, contextualized evangelism with his finite creation. God entered into the lives of his people over and over again in the Old Testament. God called to Abram and said, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing . . . and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen 12:1-3). God wrestled with Jacob and gave him a blessing, saying, “Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed. . . . So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, ‘For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered’” (Gen 32:27-32).

God appeared to Moses in the burning bush, revealing to him his name, “Then he (God) said, ‘Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which

¹ Allen P. Ross, “Genesis,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1985), 33.

you stand is holy ground.’ And he said, ‘I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’” (Exod 3:4-6). God sent Moses to rescue the Israelites from slavery to Egypt, saying, “Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt” (Exod 3:10). God met Moses on Sinai and established the formal relationship between God and the people, recounting the ways he had delivered them from slavery and demonstrated his power (Exod 19). God led the people through the desert and into the Promised Land, the land he had promised to Abram centuries before in Genesis 15:18: “On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, ‘To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadomonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Grigashites and the Jebusites.’” In Deuteronomy 34:4, overlooking the land, God said to Moses, “This is the land of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, ‘I will give it to your offspring.’”

After commanding Joshua to enter the Promised Land, God promised his presence by saying, “No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake. Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them” (Josh 1:5-7). God even gave instructions for a tabernacle, the place in which he would dwell among the people while they wandered through the wilderness. He told Moses, “And you shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark, you shall put the testimony that I shall give you. There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you about all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel” (Exod 25:21-22). Eventually, after the construction and consecration of the temple and after the ark of the covenant was placed in the Holy Place, “a cloud filled the house of the LORD, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of

the LORD filled the house of the LORD” (1 Kgs 8:8-10). When God’s presence filled the Temple, he was showing the people of Israel that he would dwell among them as he promised.

All the Old Testament structures for sacrifices and festivals looked forward to when God would send his Son to be the final sacrifice covering over the sins of all mankind. In the opening pages of the New Testament, Matthew provides the genealogy linking Jesus the son of Joseph back to David and Judah and Abraham, saying “The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Matt 1:1). Jesus is presented as the long-awaited Messiah. He would come to lay down his life for the sins of all upon the cross at Calvary. This sacrifice of the sinless, spotless Lamb of God on behalf of sinners throughout all generations is the essence of the gospel. Jesus accomplished this work and then, before ascending to his rightful place at the right hand of God, he gathered his disciples and gave them instructions for taking the good news of the gospel out into the world.

The Charge to Make Disciples

At the end of his earthly ministry Jesus gathered his disciples and commissioned them to take the gospel to all nations. In this Great Commission Jesus set the course: the mission for his church. The charge to make disciples of all nations is found in Matthew 28:18-20. Many churches have used these verses as the basis of their mission program, and for good reason.

The other Gospel writers each also record a commissioning by Jesus. Mark 16:15-16 says, “And he [Jesus] said to them, ‘Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.’” In Luke 24:44-48, Jesus revealed himself to the disciples by telling them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was with you . . . thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations,

beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.” Luke later records another commissioning: “But you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). John also shares Jesus’s charge to his disciples: “Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.’ When he has said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’” (20:21-22). While these passages certainly provide a charge by Jesus for his followers to share what they had seen and what he had taught them, Matthew 28 will be the focus of this section.

The Commissioning

The commissioning starts with the proclamation of Christ’s authority, but Jesus gets to the command quickly. He commands his disciples to go and make disciples. Jesus had spent three years modeling for the disciples how they were to make disciples, and now he was sending them out to make new disciples who would in turn make new disciples. He tells them to “go”—they were not to stay centralized in Jerusalem. They were called to take the gospel to ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

The Great Commission gives the church its mission and purpose. Jesus commanded his disciples to make disciples of all nations, baptizing and teaching them to make disciples of others and teaching those new disciples all that Jesus had taught. This cycle of multiplication and reproduction is the primary activity of the church in this age. When the Lord Jesus returns at the *Parousia*, he will gather his followers to him and the mission of the church will be completed. There will be no evangelism in heaven. This task is of first importance for the church from the time of the Great Commissioning until the end of days.

The Basis for Authority for the Commission

Jesus does not begin the Great Commission with the command to his disciples; rather, he begins with a declaration of his authority. He not only claims the authority to

send out his disciples, but also that his authority extends to all of heaven and earth, including in verse 19 all nations and people. This authority belongs to Jesus because he is seated at the right hand of God (Acts 7:55-56; Rom 8:34; Eph 1:20; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3, 12:2). Paul explains in Philippians 2:9 that “God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name.” Jesus has the authority to command his disciples to do anything because he possesses that authority, given to him by the Father.

David Platt explains in his commentary on Matthew that “Jesus’ authority is *the* basis for everything else that follows in this text. His authority over heaven and earth means that Jesus is not just the personal Lord and Savior over us. . . . He is Lord regardless of what we think of him.”² Platt writes that Christ’s authority undergirds all of what the church is called to do. When the church engages in evangelism there is confidence that unbelievers will be reached with the gospel because Jesus has declared his authority for the gospel to change lives.

Making and Teaching Disciples

Given that this project trained members and attenders of Washington Heights for evangelism, one may ask what the relationship is between evangelism and discipleship. In many ways, these two terms are often used interchangeably in the church. This is understandable as the activities involved in both evangelism and discipleship are essentially the same—teaching people about the things that Jesus taught his disciples and told them to teach others. Some churches, like Washington Heights, often treat evangelism and discipleship as two distinct activities. Evangelism relates to unbelievers being taught about Jesus and to obey him. And discipleship is believers being taught about Jesus and to obey him.

² David Platt, *Exalting Jesus in Matthew*, Christ Centered Exposition (Nashville: Holman, 2013), 371.

However, as has been previously discussed from Matthew 28, Jesus commanded his followers to make disciples and baptize them, indicating those who were being made into disciples were unbelievers before they became disciples and then were baptized. Therefore, it is better to understand that the activities of evangelism and discipleship³ are very closely linked and should be treated that way. History may show that churches that view these as separate and distinct activities are less effective in one or the other and possibly both. Washington Heights, maybe one of those churches.

In 1963, Robert Coleman wrote a book that has been influential in the lives of many Christians. In *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, he argues that Christians today can look to the Gospels not only for the revelation of Jesus and his work on earth, but also for “the way he lived and how he taught others to live.”⁴ Discussing of Jesus’s purpose on earth, Coleman writes,

He intended to save out of the world a people for himself and to build a church of the Spirit which would never perish. He had his sights on the day his Kingdom would come in glory and power. . . . His life was ordered by his objective. Everything he did and said was a part of the whole pattern. It had significance because it contributed to the ultimate purpose of his life in redeeming the world for God.⁵

Coleman argues that Jesus had a plan to fulfill his purpose on earth. This plan consists of eight guiding principles that result in lives changed as people are transformed into disciples of Jesus.

³ Over the years others have sought to describe and distill Jesus’s approach or method of making disciples (evangelism). Bill Hull used, “Tell them what, Tell them why, Show them how, Do it with them, Let them do it, and Deploy them” to describe Jesus’s model for evangelism/discipleship. Bill Hull, *The Disciple-Making Pastor: Leading Others on the Journey of Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 243-66. For more examples among many others, see also, LeRoy Eims, *The Lost Art of Disciple Making* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978) 27-47; and Jim Putman, *Real-Life Discipleship: Building Churches That Make Disciples* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2010), 77-148. While these authors offer helpful perspectives, this project looks to Coleman’s work as a model worth further consideration.

⁴ Robert Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (1963; repr., Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1993), 22.

⁵ Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 23.

Robert Coleman provides eight principles that he sees as the Master's plan for making disciples and training them. The principles are selection, association, consecration, impartation, demonstration, delegation, supervision, and reproduction. Coleman cautions against linear thinking related to the eight steps of the Master's plan: "It must be said that the steps are not to be understood as invariably coming in this sequence, as if the last were not initiated until the others had been mastered, actually, all of the steps were implied in each one, and in some degree they all began with the first."⁶ Each of these steps in the plan will be discussed in this section.

Selection. Before Jesus could begin making disciples out of followers, he had to recruit them. So, his first step was to identify a group of men to follow after him, in whom he would invest his time, energy, and teaching over the course of several years. Coleman writes, "The initial objective of Jesus' plan was to enlist men who could bear witness to his life and carry on his work after he returned to the Father."⁷ Given the nature of Jesus's goal of winning the world for himself, one might expect him to seek out men of renown who commanded attention and could wield some authority. Or one might expect Jesus to look to the leading religious scholars of the day; men whose teaching impacted the hearts and minds of faithful Jews. However, it appears Jesus's first criteria for his followers was men who were willing to follow and learn. Speaking of these simple men Coleman writes, "Though often mistaken in their judgements and slow to comprehend spiritual things, they were honest men, willing to confess their need. . . . What is perhaps most significant about them is their sincere yearning for God and the realities of his life."⁸

Jesus called out this small group of followers and identified them as unique. Jesus had many followers but spent intentional, specific time on the twelve. He focused

⁶ Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 25.

⁷ Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 27.

⁸ Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 29.

his most intense and challenging teaching on this group of men who would go on to radically impact the rest of human history. Before moving to the next part of the plan, it is helpful to point out the strategy behind Jesus's decision to be so exclusive with this small group when there were so many others who followed him. Coleman writes, "Jesus was not trying to impress the crowd, but to usher in a kingdom. This meant he needed people who could the multitudes. . . . Thus before the world could ever be permanently helped, people would have to be raised up who could lead the multitudes in the things of God."⁹ Jesus knew the most effective way of training the twelve was to focus his most important teaching on them to prepare them to train others.

Association. After selection is the principle of association. Jesus's process of training the twelve was not to enroll them in a course of study at the local synagogue or seminary. He did not pass out a course curriculum with outlines, readings, or exams. He did not pull the twelve out of society for concentrated study on some far away hill. Jesus lived life with these men and along the way taught them how to live as God desired them to live. "It was by virtue of this fellowship that the disciples were permitted," Coleman writes, "'to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God' (Luke 8:10). Knowledge was gained by association before it was understood by explanation."¹⁰

As Jesus and his disciples walked through the mundane elements of life in the first century, Jesus took time to point out biblical principles, correct wrong doctrinal understanding, and reshape theological assumptions. He did this while conducting a ministry of preaching the coming kingdom, healing the sick, curing the lame, and making the blind see. In the day-to-day ebb and flow of ministry Jesus imparted his way of life to the twelve and they were slowly equipped to pass on his teaching to others.

⁹ Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 35.

¹⁰ Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 42.

Consecration. The next principle that Coleman provides is consecration.

Coleman writes,

Jesus expected the men he was with to obey him. They were not required to be smart, but they had to be loyal. This became the distinguishing mark by which they were known. . . . The simplicity of this approach is marvelous if not astounding. None of the disciples was asked to first make a statement of faith or accept a well-defined creed. . . . For the moment all they were asked to do was to follow Jesus.¹¹

Eventually, Jesus began to expect more and more of his disciples. Coleman explains,

Following Jesus seemed easy enough at first, but that was because they had not followed him very far. It soon became apparent that being a disciple of Christ involved far more than a joyful acceptance of the Messianic promise: it meant the surrender of one's whole life to the Master in absolute submission to his sovereignty. There could be no compromise. . . . This was strong teaching not many people could take it. They liked to be numbered among his followers when he filled their stomachs with bread and fish, but when Jesus started talking about the true spiritual quality of the Kingdom and the sacrifice necessary in achieving it (John 6:25-59), many of his disciples "went back, and walked no more with him" (John 6:66).¹²

This high standard was not arbitrary. Jesus knew that following him would be difficult.

At the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught, "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matt 5:10-12). Later, after Matthew recounts how Jesus sent out the twelve to proclaim that the kingdom was at hand, he also shares the warning Jesus gave. He writes, "Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles" (Matt 10:17, 18). Jesus expected obedience and loyalty because he knew that only the truly committed would be able to endure the persecution to come.

¹¹ Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 51.

¹² Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 52.

Impartation. The next principle Coleman describes in *The Master Plan of Evangelism* is impartation. As the disciples grew closer to Jesus, they began to understand deeper and deeper truths. Coleman explains that throughout the process of knowing Jesus more fully the disciples received many things from him. They received a calling on their lives to be sent. Jesus set them apart, “sanctifying” them for the work for which he prepared them. They were given his approval and blessing to go out and do the work.¹³ After his ascension they would receive the promised Holy Spirit who would empower, encourage, strengthen, and enable them to take his message of the gospel out into a hostile world.

Demonstration. The next principle in Jesus’s plan is demonstration. Jesus modeled for his disciples what it looked like for a person to live as God intends. Coleman identifies five areas where Jesus gave the disciples examples of how to live. Jesus taught and modeled a vibrant prayer life. Coleman writes, “He emphasized the life of prayer again and again when talking with his disciples, continually enlarging on its meaning and application as they were able to comprehend deeper and realities of his Spirit. It was an indispensable part of their training, which in turn they would have to transmit to others.”¹⁴ Jesus also showed the disciples how to use Scripture. He challenged the common interpretations of passages, clarifying their meaning, and sometimes applying them in new ways. Jesus modeled for his followers a high regard for the Scriptures. Coleman writes, “All of this served to show the disciples how they too should know and use the Scriptures in their own life. The principles of Bible exhortation were practiced before them so repeatedly that they could not help but catch on to at least some of the rules for basic Scriptural interpretation and application.”¹⁵

Jesus also taught the disciples how to win souls. He was constantly pointing

¹³ Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 60-62.

¹⁴ Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 72.

¹⁵ Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 73.

people to the message that he was here “to seek and save the lost” (Luke 19:10). Coleman writes, “Practically everything that Jesus said and did had some relevance to their work of evangelism, either by explaining a spiritual truth or revealing to them how they should deal with people.”¹⁶ The final two aspects that Coleman points to are the way Jesus taught and that he was always teaching. “All the disciples had to teach them,” writes Coleman, “was a teacher who practiced with them what he expected them to learn. Evangelism was lived before them in spirit and technique. Watching him, they learned what it was all about.”¹⁷ And Jesus was always teaching, whether walking past a fig tree (Mark 11:12-25) or looking at flowers (Matt 6:28-33), he regularly used day-to-day moments to teach his followers. Sometimes, Jesus would interact with an individual and then turn to his disciples to go deeper into what they had just observed. One such case was the story of the rich young ruler. Coleman explains,

After Jesus had dealt with him rather sternly, and the young ruler went away sorrowful because he loved his riches more than the Kingdom of God, Jesus turned to his disciples and said: “It is hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 19:23; cf., Mark 10:23; Luke 18:24). . . . This led to an extended conversation in which Jesus explained the reason for his approach to this good moral man, while using the opportunity to apply the principle to their own profession of faith (Mark 10:24-31; Matt 19:24-20:16; Luke 18:25-30).¹⁸

Delegation. Jesus also delegated to the twelve. He gave them work to do: he framed the mission for them, gave them instructions, and sent them out. He told them to go and seek people who were open to them, reasonable and friendly. “In effect,” Coleman writes, “the disciples were told to concentrate their time on the most promising individuals in each town who would thereby be able to follow up their work after they

¹⁶ Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 74.

¹⁷ Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 74.

¹⁸ Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 75, 76.

had gone.”¹⁹ Jesus warned them of challenges and persecution, but also encouraged them not to lose heart or be afraid.

Supervision. Jesus did not send them out on their own and release them to carry on the work without support—he maintained supervision over them. Coleman writes,

Not long after the Twelve were sent out, they gathered themselves “together with Jesus’ to tell ‘what things they had done’” (Matt 6:30; Luke 9:10). It would appear from the Bible that this reunion was prearranged, and hence, the initial solo excursion of the disciples was merely a field assignment as they continued with their training with the Master.²⁰

Jesus answered their questions, such as when they failed to cast out a demon in Matthew 17:18-20. He continued to teach them and model for them how they should live. He continued to impress upon them the importance of his work.

Reproduction. And finally, Jesus expected the disciples to go out and make more disciples, to be focused on reproduction, Coleman’s finally principle. In Jesus’s High Priestly prayer, he prays, “I do not ask for these only,” speaking of his disciples with him, “but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (John 17:20-21). Coleman writes, “He expected others to believe in him (John 17:20), and these in turn to pass the word along to others, until in time the world would know who he was and what he came to do (John 17:21, 23).”²¹ Jesus anticipated countless generations of disciples who were taught how they should live, how to obey Christ’s teaching, and how to pass that message along to others, who would in turn pass it on to others. Paul charged Timothy with this same mission:

¹⁹ Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 82.

²⁰ Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 89.

²¹ Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 99.

“And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful me, who will be able to teach others also” (1 Tim 2:2).

Baptizing Disciples

In the Great Commission, Jesus commanded his followers to “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them” (Matt 28:19). John the Baptist had been baptizing people for years as an act of public repentance of sins. Jesus also participated in baptism at the beginning of his ministry and while he had nothing to repent of, he set an example for his followers. The early church understood that baptism was a powerful symbol of obedience and identification. Paul taught the believers in Rome that they, having been saved, ought not go on sinning while taking grace for granted: “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried with him by baptism into death, in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life” (Rom 6:3-4).

The church has used baptism as a symbol of the death, burial, and resurrection for thousands of years. When Philip was miraculously transported to meet the Ethiopian eunuch, after believing the gospel asked to be baptized immediately (Acts 8:26-40). When Peter shared the gospel with Cornelius and his family and they believed, “he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 10:47-48). In Acts 18, Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue in Corinth, believed and was baptized (Acts 18:8). This command to baptize new converts has been part of church life since the Great Commission.

Go

Jesus never intended his disciples to stay huddled together in Jerusalem. He told them right there on the mountaintop that he expected them to go out from that place and make disciples “of all nations” (Matt 28:19). Right before Christ’s ascension, Jesus told the gathered disciples that they would receive power “when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the

end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). After Pentecost and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the disciples began to take the gospel across Jerusalem and Judea. Following Stephen’s martyrdom (Acts 7), Philip took the gospel to Samaria (Acts 8), and then Peter received his vision which launched him into ministry to the Gentiles (Acts 10). After these events, the early church began to send out missionaries all over the area. Paul took four separate missionary trips ranging far and wide throughout the Mediterranean (Acts 13-14; 15:36-18:23; 18:24-21:14; 26:30-28:30).

Jesus and Paul

The rest of this chapter evaluates four passages that provide examples of contextualized evangelism. In John 3 and 4, Jesus engages two people from very different backgrounds and shares truth about himself and the kingdom of heaven. In Acts 17, Paul shares the gospel with Jews in Thessalonica and then with Gentiles in Athens. These four texts provide biblical examples of presenting the gospel based on the context of the person being evangelized. The gospel is not changed or reinvented; rather, the presentation is tailored to address the specific situation of the unsaved person.

Jesus Models Personal and Contextual Evangelism

Jesus came to earth to live the life mankind was created to live—a life that walks with God in perfection and sinless righteousness. By living a life of perfect submission to the Father, Jesus was able to die in an act of substitutionary atonement for all who would believe. In the process of accomplishing these purposes, Jesus provided an example for all mankind to emulate. He showed his followers how to pray, worship, serve, and relate to other people. He also modeled evangelism as he went about his ministry to the people he encountered. The following section will evaluate two passages from the Gospel of John where Jesus engages two individuals with a personal, transformational, and contextualized process of evangelism. In each scenario, Jesus discerns the true need

of the individual and addresses that need directly in a way that is tailored to the individual to whom he is talking.

John wrote his Gospel with the purpose of showing that Jesus was indeed the Christ, the Son of God, as he had claimed to be (John 20:31). Throughout his book, John recounts miracles that Jesus performed as well as interactions between Jesus and the people. It has been suggested that John relates a series of these interactions beginning with Nicodemus. John's purpose is to provide a few representatives of different kinds of people. In John 3, a man named Nicodemus approaches Jesus under cover of night. Jesus had begun his public ministry and word about him had been spreading throughout the region. Nicodemus wanted to learn more about Jesus but did not want to approach him publicly. Upon first glance, Nicodemus seems a strange representative for mankind, especially since John identifies him as a Pharisee and "ruler of the Jews." A Pharisee held immense social and religious authority in first century Israel. James Boice points out that Judaism in the first century was essentially an ethical cult where ritual behaviors and adherence to the Law was the measure of spirituality. As a Pharisee, Nicodemus represented the pinnacle of righteous, moral living, but he was also a scholar and politician. His role as Pharisee would have put him in contact with political leaders in the area, both Jewish and Roman.²² Jesus had begun to draw attention for his miracle at Cana (John 2:1-12) and for cleansing the Temple (2:13-22). These public displays of authority and power likely drew Nicodemus's attention to Jesus. In chapter 3, John relates the late-night interaction between Jesus and Nicodemus.

Scholars offer many different reasons as to why Nicodemus desired cover of night for this conversation, but the text does not explicitly state his reasons.²³ Nicodemus

²² James Montgomery Boice, *The Gospel of John: The Coming of the Light*, paperback ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 228-31.

²³ Leon Morris suggests that Nicodemus "had a fear of men, or at least a careful regard for their opinions." Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 220. D. A. Carson points out,

came to Jesus and opened the conversation by acknowledging the miracles and teaching Jesus had done: “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him” (John 3:2). In this opening dialogue, Nicodemus shows respect to Jesus by calling him Rabbi. He identifies Jesus as a teacher from God, and that he possessed the power to perform miracles.

Nicodemus was likely hoping that Jesus would explain how he had been given the privilege and power to teach the way he did and to perform miracles. Though, Jesus simply ignores this line of conversation and moves directly to address Nicodemus’s true need. Earlier in chapter 2, John placed a brief statement in verses 23-25 about the fact that Jesus was able to discern the hearts of the people. He told his readers that many people had started to believe in Jesus, but that Jesus knew their faith was not in his divinity or ability to save them. John said, “Jesus knew what was in man,” and then he begins the story of Nicodemus. Jesus responds to Nicodemus by saying, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (3:3). Nicodemus questions how it is possible for a person to be reborn, bringing up the obvious physical issues. Jesus understood that Nicodemus’s faith and trust was not in the substitutionary sacrifices conducted in the temple but in his own ability to live in a way that would earn entrance into the kingdom of God.

Jesus tells Nicodemus that every person is born physically but that they must be reborn spiritually, which cannot be accomplished through physical effort. He says, “that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (3:6) and “the wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes” (3:8). In these two statements, Jesus explains that

Some have thought this reference to ‘night’ is nothing more than a personal reminiscence of an historical detail. Others remind us of the texts demonstrating that rabbis studied and debated deep into the night. Still others speculate that Nicodemus came to Jesus at night in order to benefit from the cloak of darkness, fearing to be identified in the public mind with the Galilean teacher and wonder-worker. (D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, Pillar New Testament Commentary [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991], 186)

Nicodemus's confidence in his works is misplaced and not enough to give him access to heaven. When Nicodemus still has questions about what Jesus means, Jesus points out that Nicodemus is thinking in purely earthly terms and will not understand until he can believe in the Son of Man. Jesus then reminds Nicodemus of the events from Numbers 21:4-9 when God sent fiery serpents as a punishment against the people for wishing they could go back to Egypt. Just as Moses lifted the image of the snake so the people could be saved, so also must the Son of Man be lifted up. This is clearly a foreshadowing of the crucifixion. Jesus here is telling Nicodemus that it is not good works and keeping the Law that will save, but rather believing that the Son of God has come to save the world. Nicodemus had placed his faith in his good works and in keeping the Law. Jesus showed him that his works would not save him.

Some scholars suggest that Jesus's words stop at the end of verse 15 and that John provides commentary on Jesus's conversation with Nicodemus.²⁴ Whether these words are the words of John or Jesus, it can be assumed that the conversation likely continued longer than the brief account recorded. It can also be assumed that Nicodemus left that conversation and did not make a public profession of faith in Jesus right away. John notes in chapter 7 that Nicodemus defends Jesus when the Pharisees try to arrest Jesus, and in chapter 19 he brings spices for Jesus's body following the crucifixion.

In this interaction, Jesus took what he knew about Nicodemus and applied the truth of the gospel to his life. He pointed out that Nicodemus had lived his life thinking primarily of earthly, temporal realities and that his true need was spiritual rebirth. Jesus confronted Nicodemus's confidence in his righteous living and explained that the only way into the kingdom was through the lifted-up Son of God. Jesus provided personal contextualized evangelism in this conversation with Nicodemus by spending time with him, identifying his true need, and sharing the way to salvation. Jesus provides an

²⁴ Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 185.

example of personal contextualized evangelism in his interaction with Nicodemus who served as a representative of the best of society. The apostle John then turns the story to possibly the worst representative of society: the Samaritan woman at the well.

The Woman at the Well

In John 4, the apostle provides the story of Jesus interacting with the Samaritan woman at the well. D. A. Carson writes, “John may intend a contrast between the woman of this narrative and Nicodemus of Ch. 3. He was learned, powerful, respected, orthodox, theologically trained; she was unschooled, without influence, despised, capable only of folk religion. He was a man, a Jew, a ruler; she was a woman, a Samaritan, a moral outcast. And both needed Jesus.”²⁵ Jesus intentionally engaged people who were lost and in need of salvation.

After the events of John 3, Jesus and his disciples leave Jerusalem because the Pharisees were beginning to take notice of his popularity (4:1-3). Jesus began traveling back to Galilee but passed through Samaria intentionally.²⁶ He came to a well and the text says, “So Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well,” and had sent the disciples ahead to get some food (4:6, 8). As he sits at the well, a woman approaches, and he asks her for a drink of water (4:7). She responds with surprise, saying, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?” (4:9). He ignores her protestation and makes a strange claim: if she knew whom she was talking to she would have asked him for a drink, “and he would have given you living water” (4:10). She responds incredulously in strictly physical terms by pointing out that Jesus had nothing to draw water from the well. John writes,

²⁵ Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 216.

²⁶ Scholars vary widely on the purpose, significance and meaning of “had to” in verse 4. See Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 215-16, Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 589-90.

The woman said to him, “Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock.” Jesus said to her “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” (4:11-14)

The woman exclaims that she would love that kind of water and asks for some (4:15).

This is where Jesus shifts the conversation to address the woman’s true need. He tells her to go and bring back her husband to the well (4:16). She responds that she has no husband, to which Jesus says, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’; for you have had five husbands and the one you now have is not your husband” (4:18). At this point she recognizes that she is not speaking to a normal man, but someone special. She exclaims, “Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet” (4:19), but she is evidently uncomfortable continuing a discussion about her relational issues because she redirects the conversation to a question over where God’s people should worship (4:19-21). She says, “Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship” (4:20). This change of subject does not distract or confuse Jesus, as he goes on to share,

The hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. (4:21-23)

She rightly sees that Jesus is speaking about the prophesied Messiah and that Messiah will make all known to his followers (4:25). Jesus then claims to be the Messiah she and all Israel had been waiting for (4:26). It appears that the woman was convinced of the truth of his claim to be the Messiah because he had known about her sordid past. John records that she went back to the town and spread the word that Jesus had told her everything she had ever done (4:29). As a result, “many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, ‘He told me all that I ever did’” (4:39). Jesus chose to stay for two days in the city and after that time “many more believed because of his word” (4:41).

At a first reading of this passage Jesus seems to arbitrarily toss out cryptic statements that are disconnected and off the topic of discussion. However, closer evaluation shows that Jesus was intentional about how he engaged the woman with each of his statements. First, he spoke to her. He could not have shared the truth that he was the Messiah without first speaking to her. Second, Jesus uses something immediately at hand to move the discussion into the realm of spiritual things. Third, he keeps the conversation on spiritual things even when the woman tries to change the subject. Fourth, he uses discernment, albeit supernatural discernment, to bring the conversation to addressing the true needs of the woman. By bringing up her past relationships Jesus shows the woman that she has been searching for acceptance and for something that would satisfy her deepest needs, but that she would never find it with human relationships. His offer of living water that quenches thirst forever meets the need she had been trying to satisfy through all the relationships. The thirst to belong and be loved likely drove her to pursue one relationship after another. When Jesus claimed to be the Messiah, the woman was now convinced and ran to tell anyone she met about this special man. Jesus's model of evangelism was to make a connection, move the conversation to spiritual things, keep the conversation on spiritual things, and offer salvation. This model can be used in personal contextual evangelism, even in the twenty-first century. The next section explores two instances when the apostle Paul engages in evangelism.

Paul Models Personal and Contextual Evangelism

Before his conversion on the road to Damascus, Saul was hell-bent on destroying the early church. He asked the high priest for the authority to arrest “any belonging to the Way, men or women” and bring them to Jerusalem (Acts 9:1,2). Luke recounts the moment when Jesus changed Saul's life. He writes, “Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’” (9:3-4). Paul responded, “‘Who are you, Lord?’ and he said, ‘I am Jesus, whom you

have been persecuting. But rise enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do” (9:5-6). After his conversion, Paul lived the remainder of his life on mission to spread the good news of the gospel wherever he went. In the book of Acts, Luke recorded the growth of the early church and reports on Paul’s missionary journeys. Paul’s mission took him across the known world engaging Jews and Gentiles wherever he went. The following section will evaluate two specific passages where Paul engages in personal, contextualized, and transformational evangelism.

Paul would enter a city, preach the gospel, and establish a church there. James Montgomery Boice explains, “Paul’s mission goals were to preach in a city, to plant a church there, and to use the church for further outreach.”²⁷ Acts 17 provides examples of Paul’s method of engaging unbelievers with the gospel. He would make contact with the people, find common ground, and then find ways to introduce the work of Jesus into the conversation.

In Acts 17:1-9, Paul and his companion, Silas, enter Thessalonica. Upon their arrival “as was his custom,” Paul entered the synagogue and “reasoned with them [the Jews] from the Scriptures” (Acts 17:2). Luke tells his reader that Paul regularly entered a city and immediately looked for a Jewish synagogue. If he found one, he would spend time there engaging the people with the good news. Boice notes that Paul’s first point of contact would be in the synagogue with the Jews and other God-fearing individuals.²⁸ Paul used the Old Testament as common ground with the Jews meeting at the synagogue. Luke tells that Paul “reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, ‘This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ’” (17:2-3). In his Gospel, Luke related the story of Jesus on the Emmaus Road when Jesus explained to the two followers that all the Scriptures pointed

²⁷ James Montgomery Boice, *Acts: An Expositional Commentary*, paperback ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 286.

²⁸ Boice, *Acts*, 286

to him as the Messiah. Luke writes, “Beginning with Moses and the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:27). John Stott suggests that this approach was likely the standard method of engaging Jews with the gospel:

This was the standard Christian apologetic towards Jewish people. The precedent for it was set by Jesus, as Luke himself has recorded. During his public ministry he kept predicting that the Son of Man must suffer, die and be raised (Lk 9:22). Then after his resurrection he first rebuked his Emmaus disciples for their slowness to believe the prophetic witness, which he traced through “all the Scriptures,” that the Christ had to suffer before entering his glory (Lk 24:25-27), and secondly re-emphasized the teaching of the Old Testament and of his earlier ministry that the Christ must suffer and rise (Lk 24:44-46).²⁹

Paul employed this method in Thessalonica and some of his listeners, Luke reveals, were convinced by Paul’s argument and believed, but some Jews (likely religious leaders) were jealous of the attention Paul received and so plotted against him (Acts 17:4-9). Those who believed the message Paul and Silas preached joined them and likely established the church in Thessalonica that Paul would later write to in his epistle. Those who opposed them went on the offensive. Paul and Silas were sought for questioning based on the false accusations that they were responsible for creating a mob. The religious leaders dragged a man named Jason before the city officials “shouting, ‘These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also, and Jason has received them, and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus’” (Acts 17:6-7). The accusations were proven false and in the end, Jason was released after paying some sort of bond.

After leaving Thessalonica, Paul and his companions traveled to Berea and then on to Athens. While in Berea, Paul followed his pattern of behavior visiting the synagogue and teaching there (17:10-11). His ministry in Berea was so successful that many of the Jews there believed and “not a few Greek women” also believed (17:12).

²⁹ John Stott, *The Message of Acts*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1994), 270.

Word even spread back to Thessalonica and the Jewish leaders decided to pursue Paul and Silas. David Peterson explains that this reaction by the Jews in Thessalonica was remarkable: “The extraordinary antagonism of *the Jews in Thessalonica* is illustrated by the fact that they *learned that Paul was preaching the word of God at Berea* and took the trouble to travel some forty-five miles to continue their opposition there.”³⁰ This opposition made it necessary for Paul to leave Berea and travel all the way to Athens, which, as Peterson points out, “was a considerable journey by land or by sea (approximately 222 miles [357 km] by land).”³¹ Paul left instructions for Timothy and Silas to join him in Athens as soon as possible.

Athens was one of the most famous cities in the ancient world. It was a known as a city that produced great works of art, beautiful architecture, and world changing philosophers. Richard Longenecker writes, “Intellectually and culturally, Athens retained its superiority for centuries, with such philosophers as Socrates (ca. 470-399 BC), Plato (ca. 428-348 BC), Aristotle (ca. 384-322 BC), Epicurus (ca. 342-270 BC), and Zeno (ca. 340-263 BC) living and teaching there.”³² The city was conquered by the Romans in 146 BC and had fallen from prominence.³³ Longenecker points out, “When Paul came to Athens it had lost much of its political importance and wealth. Its population probably numbered no more than ten thousand. Yet it had a glorious past on which it continued to live. Its temples and statuary were related to the worship of the Greek pantheon, and its culture was pagan.”³⁴

³⁰ David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 485, emphasis original.

³¹ Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 485.

³² Richard N. Longenecker, *Acts*, in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 10, *Luke-Acts*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 980.

³³ Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 488.

³⁴ Longenecker, *Acts*, 980.

Luke tells that Paul was waiting for his companions in Athens but that “his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols” (17:16). Longenecker writes, “Paul, with his Jewish abhorrence of idolatry, could not but find the culture of Athens spiritually repulsive.”³⁵ Stirred in his spirit, Paul entered the synagogue and the public markets seeking to win over the lost people of Athens. As is the case wherever the gospel is preached, some people accept it, some people reject it, and some people are intrigued but unchanged. Luke writes that some people believed Paul was preaching about a foreign deity and they decided to show him their collection of deities (Acts 17:18). Perhaps they were interested in adding a new deity to their collection.

Luke 17:19-20 says, “And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, ‘May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? For you bring some strange things to our ears. We wish to know therefore what these things mean.’” Luke adds a comment that may suggest that these Athenians were not as interested in the gospel as they were in hearing new ideas: “Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new” (v. 21). “This verse,” Peterson acknowledges, “adds to the impression, created by vv. 19-20, that the main concern of those who took Paul to the Areopagus was to gain information and enlightenment.”³⁶

As Paul entered the Areopagus he looked around and saw the plethora of idols and altars. Longenecker explains Paul’s decision to engage the Athenians differently than he had the Jews:

Paul does not begin his address before the council by referring to Jewish history or by quoting the Jewish Scriptures, as he did in the Synagogue at Pisidian Antioch (cf. 13:16-41). He knew it would be futile to refer to a history that no one knew, or to argue from the fulfillment of a prophecy that no one was interested in, or to quote from a book no one read or accepted as authoritative. Nor did he develop his argument from the God who gives rain and crops in their season and who provides

³⁵ Longenecker, *Acts*, 980.

³⁶ Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 493.

food for the stomach and joy for the heart as he did at Lystra (cf. 14:15-17). Rather, he took as his point of departure and his feature of contact an altar he had seen in the city with the inscription *Agnosto Theo* (“To an Unknown God”).³⁷

By addressing the altar to the unknown god, Paul points out that the Athenians were still searching for the true God, implying that the many other altars around the city were worthless. Peterson writes, “In their anxiety to honour any gods inadvertently ignored, the Athenians had displayed their ignorance of the one true God.”³⁸ Paul points out that the Athenians worshipping an unknown god reveals their ignorance of the True God (Acts 17: 23, 24). He goes on to proclaim that the True God does indeed exist and does not dwell in manmade temples or need to be served by his worshippers, rather he made everything and gives life (17:24-25). Boice presents an outline of Paul’s preaching: “He has a short but brilliant introduction, followed by four clear point: (1) God is the Creator of all things; (2) God is the sustainer of all things; (3) God is the ordainer of all things; and (4) we should seek him. Paul concludes that we should repent since we have not sought God as we should.”³⁹

Paul explains that God created all things and does not need to be served by man. This view of God would have been in stark contrast to the deities the Athenians worshipped. Paul then explains that not only does God not need man; rather, God directs the affairs of man. He is the Father of all nations and determines the dwelling places of people and how long they will live (vv. 25-26). Paul says that God’s purpose is so that some might follow him. Paul goes on to explain that God has done all of this for relationship with mankind and that God provided the way to redemption from the coming judgment (vv. 29-31). And as is the case in evangelism, some accepted Paul’s message, some rejected it outright, and some were intrigued and wanted to hear more. Luke writes, “Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said,

³⁷ Longenecker, *Acts*, 983.

³⁸ Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 494.

³⁹ Boice, *Acts*, 296-97.

‘We will hear you again about this.’ So Paul went out from the midst. But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them” (vv. 32-34).

Conclusion

Jesus commissioned his followers to take the gospel to every nation and people group. He modeled engaging lost people with the truth of the gospel throughout his ministry. In his interaction with Nicodemus, Jesus used the common ground of Old Testament teaching as the context for challenging Nicodemus’s understanding of what is required for eternal life. When talking with the Samaritan woman at the well Jesus caught her attention and established common ground about the water then revealed himself as the Messiah. Paul followed a similar process when engaging Jews in the synagogue. He established common ground in the Old Testament and showed that the Messiah must suffer and be raised from the dead and that Jesus is the Messiah. When he engaged the Athenians, Paul connected with them over their openness to religious ideas and showed them that the Jewish God was the only true God, who created everything, orders the lives of men, and adopts them into his family.

When engaging people with some level of biblical literacy, evangelists can establish common ground on the Scriptures and show that Jesus is the way to eternal life. When engaging unchurched individuals, evangelists should find common ground with them and look for opportunities to introduce the gospel into the conversation. Evangelism that involves entering someone else’s context and relating to them mirrors God’s act in the Garden. Evangelism that is personal, transformational, and targeted to the context of the hearer follows Jesus’s and Paul’s example.

CHAPTER 3

EVANGELISM: DEFINITIONS, BARRIERS, AND TOOLS

In the two thousand years since Christ commanded his followers to “make disciples of all nations” (Matt 28:19). The mission has not changed, and yet, throughout the history of the church the commitment to evangelism has ebbed and flowed. From the white-hot fervor of the first century church to the zeal of Luther and Calvin, there have been generations that have embraced the call to make disciples. But from the Dark Ages to the present day there have been other generations where the proportion of the believing population has declined, year over year, for decades. This chapter will explore current views on evangelism practice, offer a survey of definitions of evangelism, common barriers to and motivations for evangelism, and lastly evaluate a few models of evangelism tools.

According to researchers at Barna, in a 2022 study, “two in three of all U.S. Christians (63% ‘no’, 5% ‘not sure’) say they have not heard of the Great Commission.”¹ In the same study Barna found that “Christians tend to believe mission is a calling for some (51%), not a mandate for all (25%). On the other hand, the vast majority of pastors (85%)—regardless of denomination (82% mainline, 85% non-mainline)—says missions is work that all Christians participate in.”² A different poll reveals,

While more than nine out of 10 practicing Christians agree that part of their faith means being a witness for Jesus (96%), and eight out of 10 strongly believe that the best thing that could ever happen to someone is for them to come to know Jesus’ (79%), one-quarter *also* believes it is “wrong to share one’s personal beliefs with someone of a different faith in hopes that they will one day share the same faith” (27%). Among Millennials, the percentage is nearly half (47%).³

¹ Barna Group, *The Great Disconnect* (Ventura, CA: Barna, 2022), 19.

² Barna Group, *The Great Disconnect*, 20.

³ Barna Group, *Reviving Evangelism* (Ventura, CA: Barna, 2019), 46.

These types of statistics can be overwhelming and discouraging. But, if taking the gospel to the lost is one of the core responsibilities of Christians, then there must be a change. These studies also point to the need for clarification regarding what evangelism means and what it looks like.

Evangelism Defined

The first definition for consideration comes from Timothy Beougher, who defines evangelism as “the compassionate sharing of the good news of Jesus Christ with lost people, in the power of the Holy Spirit, for the purpose of bringing them to Christ as Savior and Lord, that they in turn might share him with others.”⁴ Beougher begins with compassion because of Christ’s example in Matthew 9:36. He moves forward in his definition explaining that “sharing involves both our verbal and nonverbal communication; it involves both talking and listening, and it is both an act and a process.”⁵ He stresses the importance of this two-way process in evangelism, emphasizing, “If you will learn to ask good questions and then listen, most people will open up and talk about their life and their beliefs.”⁶

Beougher further explains that communicating the good news of the gospel to lost people is central to evangelism. Preaching the gospel to a room full of believers may bring encouragement, correction, and glory to God, however, evangelism involves bringing that same message to those who do not yet have it. Beougher points out the significance of reliance on the Holy Spirit in the process of evangelism, noting the biblical examples set by the apostles Paul, Peter, and John. Next, Beougher explains that two important parts of evangelism are to bring the lost into relationship with Christ and

⁴ Timothy K. Beougher, *Invitation to Evangelism: Sharing the Gospel with Compassion and Conviction* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2021), 9.

⁵ Beougher, *Invitation to Evangelism*, 11.

⁶ Beougher, *Invitation to Evangelism*, 11.

prepare them to win others for Christ.⁷ These two aspects of his definition differentiate this approach from “friendship evangelism” or other attempts that focus simply on proclaiming the good news, without an anticipation or expectation of a response.

In *Evangelism: How the Whole Church Speaks of Jesus*, J. Mack Stiles offers a concise definition of evangelism and then an “amplified” version. This definition states, “Evangelism is teaching the gospel with the aim to persuade.”⁸ His “amplified” version reads, “Evangelism is teaching (heralding, proclaiming, preaching) the gospel (the message from God that leads us to salvation) with the aim (hope, desire, goal) to persuade (convince, convert).”⁹ Stiles’s definition can be a corrective to those who might wish to simply share their faith as though it were merely their opinion, as one perspective, without wishing to offend others. His amplified definition makes it clear that evangelism seeks to compel the lost person to change his worldview and accept the truth of the gospel.

Randy Newman suggests that though there are many approaches to conducting evangelism, there are three skills necessary for the task: declaring the gospel, defending the gospel, and dialoguing the gospel. When he writes about declaring the gospel, he means the act of articulating the message of the gospel, which can be done using a “tool” or sharing one’s own personal salvation story. Declaring the gospel involves explaining the message of the gospel and bringing the listener to a point of decision. The person can choose to accept the declaration of the gospel he has just heard or reject it.

Defending the gospel includes being prepared to respond to common questions or concerns about Christianity and the gospel. It involves, as the apostle Peter urges, “always being ready to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Pet 3:15). In the book of Acts, Luke shows how Paul regularly entered

⁷ Beougher, *Invitation to Evangelism*, 15-16.

⁸ J. Mack Stiles, *Evangelism: How the Whole Church Speaks of Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 25.

⁹ Stiles, *Evangelism*, 26.

synagogues and reasoned with the people gathered there. Luke writes, “And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead” (17:2-3).

Dialoguing about the gospel is about having real conversations about the gospel, and after the gospel has been explained, allowing the unsaved person the space to ask questions.¹⁰ Newman sees dialoguing about the gospel as a lost art but argues it is an essential tool: “Often neglected, difficult to master, but absolutely essential, this skill of giving and taking—asking questions and bouncing ideas back and forth—might be just what our postmodern audience needs.”¹¹ Each of these skills can bring depth and nuance to gospel conversations.

In his book titled *Evangelism for Non-Evangelists*, Mark Teasdale provides a disclaimer that also serves as a definitional statement. He claims, “Evangelism is a bias for the good news.”¹² He goes on to explain some of the reasons behind using this simplistic formula noting how this definition can be somewhat provocative. He explains,

First it uses the word “bias,” which is almost never construed as a positive thing. In the case of evangelism, it raises the specter of all the judgmental evangelists who make us uneasy. “Evangelism” is a word that ends with the suffix “-ism,” though and just like any other word that ends in “-ism,” it denotes a bias in favor of one thing and against another.¹³

Teasdale argues that evangelism is different than other types of “-isms,” because instead of “promoting one group of people over another, it declares one message over all other

¹⁰ Randy Newman, *Questioning Evangelism: Engaging People’s Hearts the Way Jesus Did* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2017), 18-19.

¹¹ Newman, *Questioning Evangelism*, 19.

¹² Mark Teasdale, *Evangelism for Non-Evangelists: Sharing the Gospel Authentically* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2016), 5.

¹³ Teasdale, *Evangelism for Non-Evangelists*, 5.

messages. It declares that there is supremacy to ‘good news,’ and it rejects all other forms of news as deficient.”¹⁴

The second reason Teasdale’s definition of evangelism is provocative “is that it does not assert what this good news is. This is by design. It allows space for Christians from a variety of theological backgrounds to approach evangelism.”¹⁵ There is, however, danger in throwing wide the gates of theological tradition and allowing each Christian to determine what the core, central issues of the gospel are in their view. Teasdale recognizes that there has been a wide array of beliefs about what must be included in the gospel message: “Most of these agree that gospel at least deals with God’s good nature, the human need for God’s goodness, and God reaching out through Jesus Christ to invite people into God’s goodness.”¹⁶ While this treatment of the core things of the gospel may seem charitable and inviting, it would be wise to remember Paul’s words to the Corinthian church: “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve” (1 Cor 15:3-5). Paul believed that essential to the gospel message was the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Any definition of the core issues of the gospel must explicitly state these truths.

Teasdale notes that the gospel does not reject anyone who genuinely wants to believe. This assertion opens up his definition from exclusive to inclusive. He goes on to state his personal belief in what the gospel must include, but makes the point that this is merely his personal definition:

My own view of the good news accepts the incarnation, death and bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and looks forward to Jesus returning to

¹⁴ Teasdale, *Evangelism for Non-Evangelists*, 5.

¹⁵ Teasdale, *Evangelism for Non-Evangelists*, 5.

¹⁶ Teasdale, *Evangelism for Non-Evangelists*, 5.

establish the kingdom of God in glory. Until then, I believe that God is redeeming the world through Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and that we are invited to participate in that redemption process. I write this not to convince you that this is the only way to articulate the good news but so that you understand where I am coming from in this text. . . . Whatever your definition of “good news” may be, construct it in such a way that no person is on the negative end of the bias it entails. Evangelism should reject that which is harmful and hurtful to people but never people themselves.¹⁷

Lastly, Teasdale sees his definition as provocative because it rules out simply sharing the good news and hoping for the best. He writes, “To define evangelism as a bias means that those who accept the good news must be formed by the good news.”¹⁸ Teasdale is arguing for ongoing discipleship and spiritual formation. He is making the distinction between evangelism as an activity, something a church or individual engages in for the purpose of mere proclamation. He is advocating for a commitment to growth in the lives of those who are won for Christ. In this, Teasdale lines up with Jesus’s commands in the Great Commission, where the church is charged with making disciples, and with “teaching them to observe” all that Christ commanded (Matt 28:20).

The gospel emphasizes Christ’s finished work on the cross and the individual’s response to that gift.¹⁹ Teasdale’s definition brings some level of urgency to the discussion of evangelism. If evangelism is a bias toward the good news as proclaimed in the Scriptures through the gospel, then believers ought to be diligent in clarifying for the lost their current state.

Douglas Cecil offers a comprehensive definition that also serves to summarize the previous definitions well. He writes, “Evangelism is the communication of the good news of Jesus Christ—that he died for our sins and rose again—with the intent of inviting the listener to trust Christ. Evangelism is telling the Good News for the purpose of inviting

¹⁷ Teasdale, *Evangelism for Non-Evangelists*, 6-7.

¹⁸ Teasdale, *Evangelism for Non-Evangelists*, 7.

¹⁹ Teasdale, *Evangelism for Non-Evangelists*, 5-7.

the sinner to salvation.”²⁰ He argues, “Evangelism has two main parts: Information and Invitation.”²¹ Cecil describes evangelism as a moment, an event. It takes place when the good news is shared and an initiation to accept it is extended. Without the information of the gospel being shared there is not evangelism. Without the invitation to accept, there is no evangelism. He also argues that evangelism is an invitation to a life of discipleship.

Cecil goes on to emphasize the importance of a careful definition for evangelism: “If I define evangelism very broadly, the danger is that everything in life becomes ‘evangelism,’ and the message may never be communicated. However, evangelism in Scripture focuses on the proclamation of the Good News. How you define evangelism will affect how you carry out the task that has been assigned to every believer.”²²

At times it is helpful to consider what something is not, to better understand what it is. Mark Dever provides five things that evangelism is not, in *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism*. First, he explains that the gospel is not imposing Christian beliefs on others. He addresses the common question, “Isn’t it wrong to impose our beliefs on others?” Dever explains that the good news of the gospel is not an opinion, but rather a fact. He points out that the gospel is not an imposition “any more than a pilot can impose his belief on all his passengers that the runway is here and not there.”²³

Next, Dever suggests that a person’s individual testimony is not evangelism. Certainly, one’s testimony can be used in sharing the gospel in an evangelistic conversation, but as Dever points out, a testimony must explicitly include the message of the gospel and not just the factual events that lead to conversion. A testimony that does not

²⁰ Douglas M. Cecil, *The 7 Principles of an Evangelistic Life* (Chicago: Moody, 2003), 36.

²¹ Cecil, *7 Principles*, 36.

²² Cecil, *7 Principles*, 37-38.

²³ Mark Dever, *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 70.

share the content of the gospel can be an encouragement to a believer who hears the story but does not have the saving power of the gospel present unless that gospel is shared explicitly.

Third in Dever's list of not-evangelism is social action and public involvement. Involvement in the public arena, even in humanitarian activities, is not evangelism. Social activism often looks like the gospel. Social activism often engages in helping those unable to help themselves, fighting against injustice, overthrowing oppression, and many other evils. However, social justice or activism can often bring together people from various, often competing worldviews. Social activism fails to look like or be related to gospel ministry when it arrives at different solutions to ultimate problems, typically solutions to problems or causes of those problems that explain away sin and mankind's culpability. Dever points out, "Being involved in mercy ministries may help *commend* the gospel . . . but such actions (the good deeds) are not evangelism. They commend the gospel, but they share it with no one. To be *evangelism*, the gospel must be clearly communicated, whether in written or oral form."²⁴ Social involvement is not something to be avoided, but as Dever points out, "Societies are challenged and changed when, through this gospel, the Lord brings individual men and women together in churches to display his character and to pursue their own callings in the world."²⁵

Next, Dever addresses apologetics or the defense of the faith. He warns that while apologetics can be helpful and beneficial, it is easy to become so enamored with the task of defending the faith and knowing the answer to potential questions and that one forgets to explain the gospel and offer of salvation. He writes, "By far the greatest danger in apologetics is being distracted from the main message. Evangelism is not defending the virgin birth or defending the historicity of the resurrection . . . [it] is the positive act of

²⁴ Dever, *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism*, 75.

²⁵ Dever, *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism*, 76.

telling the good news about Jesus Christ and the way of salvation through him.”²⁶

Finally, Dever notes that evangelism is not the result of evangelism. Evangelism is not the conversion of an unbeliever to Christianity. Confusing evangelism with the fruit of evangelism misses the intended point of evangelism. The point of evangelism is to proclaim the good news of the gospel to the lost, which is the responsibility of the faithful believer. The Holy Spirit is responsible to bring forth the fruit of evangelism in the life of the unbeliever. Dever summarizes his explanation of what evangelism is not:

Evangelism is not an imposition of our ideas upon others. It is not merely personal testimony. It is not merely social action. It may not involve apologetics, and it is not the same thing as the results of evangelism. Evangelism is telling people the wonderful truth about God, the great news about Jesus Christ. When we understand this, then obedience to the call to evangelize can become certain and joyful. Understanding this increases evangelism as it moves from being a guilt-driven burden to a joyful privilege.²⁷

With a better understanding of what evangelism actually is, this chapter now turns to barriers to evangelism and the motivations that can help believers overcome those barriers.

Barriers to and Motivations for Evangelism

Many resources provide explanations for why someone might hesitate to share the gospel with a friend, loved one, or acquaintance. This section will briefly examine a few of these sources. Alvin Reid presents fear as the main barrier to overcome to get believers involved in evangelism. He identifies two primary fears which must be overcome: fear of failure and fear of rejection.²⁸ Reid explains that a misunderstanding of the task of evangelism leads to the fear of failure. This statement is like Dever’s point about confusing the fruit of evangelism with evangelism itself. Scripture calls the believer to faithfully

²⁶ Dever, *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism*, 78.

²⁷ Dever, *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism*, 82.

²⁸ Alvin Reid, *Evangelism Handbook: Biblical, Spiritual, Intentional, Missional* (Nashville: B & H, 2009), 248.

proclaim the good news of the gospel. Reid writes, “Faithfulness is our measure of success. Our Lord Jesus did not win every person with whom he shared. We are ambassadors. Ambassadors do not speak on their authority but for another. We must remember that God holds us accountable for obedience, not perfection.”²⁹

The fear of failure may reveal more about the one who desires to share the gospel than it does about anything else. If one fears to share the gospel, then they are likely placing too much pressure on themselves, or worse, they are counting their involvement as on par with the Holy Spirit, relying on their ability to persuade and convince rather than relying on the Holy Spirit’s power. Reid also identifies fear of rejection as a barrier to sharing the gospel. Here again, there is a misunderstanding on the part of the believer, this time however the error is in the realm of expectations. Believers should not expect that every gospel conversation will lead to conversion. Sometimes this means the individual will never come to faith in Christ. Sometimes it means that the believer’s role was simply to plant the seed. Paul alludes to this reality when he writes, “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth” (1 Cor 3:6). When a believer is rejected, sometimes it is caused by something he has done. Other times, a person has had bad experiences when talking with other believers and they take out that frustration on an unsuspecting target. Reid also points out that a Christian is “never more like the prophets or Jesus than when we are rejected . . . a characteristic of a true prophet was that people often didn’t like what he said.”³⁰

The gospel is confrontational to the lost, so believers ought to anticipate that the good news will sometimes be rejected. Though, Reid warns that the believer should have a greater fear of the Lord than of rejection by man: “The apostle Paul declared that we must all appear before the judgment seat, the *bema* seat, the rewards seat of Christ

²⁹ Reid, *Evangelism Handbook*, 248.

³⁰ Reid, *Evangelism Handbook*, 252.

(see 2 Cor. 5:10). . . . Paul says, knowing therefore the *terror* of God, we persuade men (see 2 Cor. 5:11).”³¹ A healthy fear of the day of judgment will help motivate believers to overcome a fear of rejection.

Another resource that evaluates common barriers to evangelism is Beougher’s *Invitation to Evangelism*. In the chapter titled “Overcoming Barriers to Witnessing,” he lists fear as the greatest barrier that must be overcome in sharing the gospel. Beougher suggests two ways to overcome this obstacle: recognize that fear is a common struggle and name the fear that is truly causing the obstacle. He also recognizes ignorance as a hindrance to sharing the gospel. Beougher acknowledges that often when a person expresses concern over their ignorance as a barrier to sharing the gospel it means one of two things: the person lacks an appropriate understanding of the message of the gospel, or they lack a method to express the gospel. Both barriers can be overcome with careful discipleship. To the one who needs a better understanding of the message of the gospel, a guided time of study could provide the understanding necessary. To the one who lacks a method, many tools can be learned to assist in this area.

Beougher points to apathy as a significant barrier present in the church today. Apathy in sharing the gospel flows from a heart that is self-centered and cold toward those who will ultimately face an eternity apart from Christ. Apathy grows from a heart that has no compassion. Overcoming an apathetic heart involves developing a compassionate heart, one that reflects the heart of Christ. Beougher shares ten Scripture passages that provide spiritual motivation for evangelism. From 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:8, Beougher points out that an “eternal perspective” is helpful as a motivation. Paul exhorts the church in Corinth to “walk by faith, and not by sight” (2 Cor 5:7). Beougher comments,

If we walk by sight, we will never become effective witnesses. . . . If we do not look at that which is seen but that which is unseen, we realize that in an eternal sense the unseen world is more real than the world that we can see. The world that we can see

³¹ Reid, *Evangelism Handbook*, 252, emphasis original.

is temporary and passing away. Therefore, to be effective witnesses we have to learn what it is to walk by faith and not by sight.³²

In walking by faith a Christian will be open to the eternal realities of those around him. Being sensitive to and aware of the eternality of the people around us will motivate believers to share the gospel.

Beougher looks to 2 Corinthians 5:9 for another motivation for evangelism, where Paul writes, “So whether we are home or away, we make it our aim to please him.” Beougher adds, “Some people in Christian circles criticize ambition. The reason for this criticism is obvious: many people are ambitious for the wrong things. . . . Paul says, ‘I have an ambition, I have a goal in life, and that goal is to be pleasing to the Lord.’ That is an ambition worth living and dying for.”³³ This ambition to please God should motivate every believer to seize every day with a focus and drive to accomplish all that God has placed before them.

Beougher points out that in 2 Corinthians 5:10 all humanity will stand in judgement before God to give an account of their actions. Paul writes, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.” Beougher notes, “If we have trusted Christ as our Lord and Savior, we will be judged not for our salvation but concerning our stewardship—how we have lived for him, and how we have used the talents and resources he has given us to serve him and further his kingdom.”³⁴ Every believer will give an account; this ought to motivate each person to be actively pursuing the lost around them.

In 2 Corinthians 5:11, Paul points to a recognition of God’s holiness as a motivator. Beougher explains,

Because we understand God’s holiness, we seek to persuade men. Some people are claiming that people today already know they are sinners—all they need to know is

³² Beougher, *Invitation to Evangelism*, 114.

³³ Beougher, *Invitation to Evangelism*, 115.

³⁴ Beougher, *Invitation to Evangelism*, 116.

how to be saved. That assertion is simply not true. A lot of people understand something is wrong, but they do not see themselves as guilty under condemnation from a holy God.³⁵

It is incumbent on believers to embrace God's holiness and perfection and recognize that sin is an abhorrent violation of God's holiness. Understanding this truth and the implications of not believing it, Christians should be motivated to share this reality with their loved ones and neighbors. Only through saving faith in Jesus can a person be reconciled to God and live in his presence in heaven.

Continuing in 2 Corinthians 5, Beougher points to a love and concern for others as a motivation. Paul writes, "We are not commending ourselves to you again but giving you cause to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer those who boast about outward appearance and not about what is in the heart. For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you" (vv. 12-13). Paul was not concerned about what people thought of him. He was willing to look crazy for the sake of winning some to Christ. Beougher writes, "As we honestly face the truth that people outside of Christ are destined for hell, it will motivate us to reach out. People who live and die without knowing Christ are lost. They are lost now, and they will be lost for all of eternity."³⁶ The reality of hell should motivate every Christian to attempt to spare as many people as possible. Christians have the only hope for humanity; if this does not soften hearts toward others, then they may not actually understand the gospel.

Next, Beougher looks to verse 14 where Paul writes, "For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died." Beougher explains, "The love of Christ 'controls us' or 'constrains us.' We do not persuade others because we want to win an argument or because we think we are better than anyone else. We persuade others because the love of Christ flows through us, giving

³⁵ Beougher, *Invitation to Evangelism*, 117.

³⁶ Beougher, *Invitation to Evangelism*, 118.

us compassion for the lost.”³⁷ Believers ought to regularly reflect on what Christ has done for them, how undeserving they are, and how without Christ’s grace and mercy all people would be without hope. Holding this truth close should motivate Christians to take that love of Jesus to others.

Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:15, “And he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.” In this verse Paul establishes that anyone who has received the gift of salvation should live for Christ and no longer live for themselves. Beougher argues that submitting one’s lives to Christ will open them up to the work of the Holy Spirit and a love for others will grow. “To keep reaching out,” Beougher writes, “the key is that we no longer live for ourselves; we live for God. Many Christians do not enjoy the fullness of Christ because they are living for themselves. We reach out because of the lordship of the resurrected Christ.”³⁸

Next, Beougher looks to 2 Corinthians 5:16-17 where Paul writes, “From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” Beougher sees in these verses a hope that even the most dysfunctional, reprobate sinner is not beyond the reach of the gospel. “We believe,” he writes, “the gospel can transform the life of any person who hears it and responds to it, no matter how sinful that person currently may be. As we share the gospel, we realize this is a life that can be changed.”³⁹ Believers share the gospel with hope in their hearts that God can save the most wretched on earth.

³⁷ Beougher, *Invitation to Evangelism*, 119.

³⁸ Beougher, *Invitation to Evangelism*, 120.

³⁹ Beougher, *Invitation to Evangelism*, 120.

In 2 Corinthians 5:18-20, Paul expresses awe at God's plan of using broken people to take his gospel to others but embraces the calling:

All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

This ministry of reconciliation starts with a grateful heart toward God for first pursuing humanity and bringing reconciliation. Next, as the reality of reconciliation takes root, Christians should be motivated to bring that reconciliation to those who are far from God, as his ambassadors. Beougher writes, "What does an ambassador do? An ambassador does not invent a message. He or she faithfully reports the message that he or she has been given. God gives us the privilege—a privilege not even angels experience—of sharing the good news of Jesus with lost and needy sinners."⁴⁰ Knowing the call believers have received should motivate them to pursue the lost as Christ's ambassadors.

Lastly, Beougher looks at the mystery of Christ's sacrificial death as a motivation for evangelism. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:21, "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." For the believer who trusted Christ long ago, there is a danger in growing complacent about the wonderful gift of salvation. Paul holds up the voluntary sacrifice Christ made on the cross, and in looking at it he marvels at the weight of the sins of the world being placed on the sinless son of God. This truth must be ever present in the devotional life of Christians. Beougher writes, "There are many individuals that have been Christians for decades, but there is no real excitement, vibrancy, or love for Christ."⁴¹ This must not be the case for Christians who desire to share the gospel with a lost world.

⁴⁰ Beougher, *Invitation to Evangelism*, 122.

⁴¹ Beougher, *Invitation to Evangelism*, 123.

Another barrier to evangelism that Beougher writes about is the barrier of introspection. This barrier reveals itself in statements like, “I am not ready to share my faith, I have too much I need to grow in,” or “I am not consistent in my walk, I should fix that before I share my faith.” This barrier could also be called “fear of imposter syndrome.” This barrier sounds noble at first, but it ignores the command of Christ to make disciples. It also implicitly assumes that only individuals who have reached complete sanctification are qualified to share the gospel. Clearly these are false assumptions and unhelpful perspectives. Beougher reminds his readers that evangelism requires faith. A believer must trust that Christ can and will redeem the lost despite the broken, weak, and flawed instruments that convey the gospel to others.

Next, Beougher addresses the barrier of busyness. He rightly points out that a person who is too busy for evangelism has a wrong perspective of eternity: “Time is one of God’s most precious gifts to us. Life at its longest is brief. James 4:14 (NIV) says our life is like ‘a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.’ Job 7:6 refers to the passing of time as “swifter than a weaver’s shuttle.”⁴² When believers fail to keep a proper perspective on time, they risk treating the unsaved with indifference. God gave mankind eternal souls. God calls Christians to bring the good news of the gospel to the lost. This call requires believers to seek to find balance between personal fellowship with other believers and the missional call to be in the lives of unbelievers for the sake of presenting the hope of the gospel to them.

Lastly, Beougher points to giftedness as a barrier to gospel conversations. He helpfully points out, “Evangelism is not listed as a spiritual gift in the three major lists of spiritual gifts in the New Testament (i.e., Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:8-10, 27-31; Eph. 4:11).”⁴³ I was sharing with a friend once that I did not have the gift of evangelism, to

⁴² Beougher, *Invitation to Evangelism*, 137.

⁴³ Beougher, *Invitation to Evangelism*, 138.

which my friend responded, “Well, I don’t have the gift of mercy, so get over it.”⁴⁴ His point was that the command to make disciples applies to all believers regardless of their gifting. Beougher would agree with my friend. He concludes his chapter by reminding the reader that all believers are called to take the gospel to the lost wherever God leads them. He urges readers to take seriously the responsibility to be faithful disciples of Christ in whatever arena of society God plants them.⁴⁵

There could be many motivations for an individual believer to share the gospel with a friend, loved one, or coworker. One obvious motivation would be that our Lord commanded that his disciples make disciples of all nations, which would include one’s friends, loved ones, and coworkers. This motivation can be rooted in several elements of the Great Commission. First, the command: make disciples. An obedient disciple will do as he is commanded. So, at its root, this motivation is more closely associated with a desire to obey rather than a desire to see souls won for the kingdom. While a desire to be obedient is honorable and right, it may not be the kind of motivation that can stand up against rejection and discouragement.

Another motivation that can be derived from the Great Commission might be the inspirational call to be part of a movement that transcends the individual. Christ’s commission was given nearly 2,000 years ago. To think that Christians today can take their place among the multitudes of disciples down through the generations carries a sense of belonging, a sense of duty, a sense that Christians today can be part of a world changing mission. The gospel is indeed world changing and the call to join the millions of faithful believers of the church can stir strong emotions. However, this motivation is likely rooted in an emotionalism that might quickly lead to pride in one’s evangelistic

⁴⁴ Mikal Kildal, conversation with author, Dayton, OH, 2011.

⁴⁵ Beougher, *Invitation to Evangelism*, 125-40.

effectiveness, or to despair and self-doubt when one struggles to see fruit. Both errors smack of pride.

There may be a problem with a simplistic, singular motivation for sharing the gospel. Any motivation that is not fully grounded in the whole counsel, the whole narrative and self-revelation of an infinite God, may lack the power to be inextinguishable in the face of failure, opposition, and human weakness. Perhaps the most resilient motivation for sharing the gospel embraces all the possible motivations and holds them all loosely (or tightly), allowing the spirit to stir and impress upon the heart the necessary motivational factor. For example, if an average Christian has always felt that a proper motivation for evangelism flows from the Greatest Commandment, love God, love neighbor. Reuben A Torrey writes,

You must have a love for others and a desire for souls to be brought to Jesus. The person who desires real success in bringing people to Christ must have a love souls. He must have a longing for the salvation of the lost. If we have not love for souls, our efforts will be mechanical and powerless. We may know how to approach people and know what to say to them, but there will be no power in what we say and it will not touch the hear. But if, like Paul, we have a great sorrow and continual pain in our hearts for the unsaved (Romans 9:2), there will be a sincerity in our tone and manner that will affect those who are the least concerned about their souls.⁴⁶

Methods for Evangelism

Chapter 2 of this project looked at the examples of Jesus and the apostle Paul in engaging individuals with the gospel. When Jesus was talking with Nicodemus, he started by identifying a place where Nicodemus's thinking was incomplete, then Jesus corrected him, leading to an opportunity to share the good news. When Jesus was with the woman at the well, he took the universal need for water and provided an illustration that allowed him to offer hope of faith in him. Jesus did not use a formula or scripted presentation in these examples. Although, obviously, he was God and so did not need to

⁴⁶ Reuben A. Torrey, *How to Bring Men to Christ* (Abbotsford, WI: Aneko, 2018), 2.

rely on a strategy or tool to help him explain the gospel. For the rest of us, sometimes using a format or tool can be quite helpful.

One of the tools available to Christians for sharing the gospel is using gospel tracts or booklets. A tract is a small, often pocket-sized book, that provides a presentation of the gospel. Though, Beougher offers a warning about tracts: “Some tracts are not sound theologically, and others use a bait-and-switch approach.”⁴⁷ Tracts helpfully layout the gospel message with prompts and narrative to guide the conversation with the unbeliever. Bill Bright of Campus Crusade for Christ (Cru) wrote a tract called “Have You Heard of the Four Spiritual Laws?,” which has been used by many people throughout the years. Beougher recommends “Experiencing God’s Grace.”⁴⁸ Tracts can give confidence to the sharer who may be nervous or uncomfortable.

One of the most popular tracts is the *Bridge to Life* by the Navigators, first published in 1969. The message of this tract is so simple and effective that it can be shared without the use of the tract. Many have learned how to draw the illustration out on a piece of paper, or even a napkin. The Bridge Illustration starts by establishing that there is a separation between God and mankind (usually identified as the individual being evangelized). This separation is illustrated by a horizontal line drawn with a wide chasm between where God is and where the person is. The person sharing the tract would offer John 3:16 and John 10:10 to explain that God has a design for relationship with the lost person. God’s holiness and character can be explained briefly. Next, the sharer would draw a stick-figure, representing the lost person, on the opposite side of the paper and explain using Romans 3:23 and 6:23 the problem of sin and consequence of death. The presenter would then point out that the universal problem of sin is what separates humanity from God.

⁴⁷ Beougher, *Invitation to Evangelism*, 197.

⁴⁸ Beougher, *Invitation to Evangelism*, 197n.

At this point, the reality of eternal separation from God in hell can be introduced pointing to Hebrews 9:27. The presenter then should point out that God is aware of this separation and the hopeless state of mankind and explain that God provides a solution to this immense problem. Ephesians 2:8 and 9 are used to explain that nothing we do can save us, it is not by our works but only through faith in Jesus that can save. The presenter would then draw a cross with the crossbeams resting on either side of the chasm between the unsaved person and God. Romans 5:8 is used to explain that God demonstrated his love for sinners by sending Jesus to die on the cross.

The presenter then explains that the unsaved person must simply place their faith in Christ's death, burial, and resurrection to move from death and separation from God to life with God. The Bridge to Life tract includes a few simple steps that provide a guide for a positive response to the presentation of the gospel. The three-step process is (1) admit you are a sinner in need of a Savior, (2) believe that Jesus died, was buried, and rose again, providing victory over sin and death, and (3) commit your life to follow and obey Jesus Christ. The Bridge to Life tract/illustration is a simple clear explanation of the gospel.⁴⁹

The Bridge to Life can be effective to explain the gospel in many situations. Another tool for explaining the gospel is to use the wordless book. This small booklet contains several pages of different colors with no words in the book at all, as the title indicates. This book, first introduced by Charles Spurgeon, originally only contained three pages, a black page, a white, a red page, and a white page.⁵⁰ The black page represents the sinfulness that all humanity is guilty of committing. The red page represents the precious blood of Christ, shed for the forgiveness of sins. And the white page represents the righteousness imputed to believers who have now been "washed . . . whiter than snow"

⁴⁹ The Navigators, "Bridge to Life," tract, 2021.

⁵⁰ Charles Spurgeon, "Sermon Number 3278" (sermon preached at The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington, England, January 11, 1866), https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/spurgeon_charles/sermons/3278.cfm.

(Ps 51:7). Since Spurgeon, others have added a few pages to the book, giving an expanded explanation of the gospel message. Green and blue pages represent growth in the Christian's life and baptism in obedience to Scripture. This tool can be used with children very effectively, but it also could be effective in gospel conversations with adults.

One of the biggest factors in evangelism is being ready to share when an opportunity presents itself. One way to be prepared for these conversations is to be praying that conversations would happen. Another way is to make the conversations happen by intentionally looking for ways to move a conversation from an everyday, casual conversation to one that is about the gospel. Jimmy Scroggins and Steve Wright wrote *Turning Everyday Conversations into Gospel Conversations* as a training guide for churches to equip their members to have these gospel conversations. Their method, called the Three Circles, can be demonstrated with nothing more than paper and pencil.

They begin by recognizing that there is brokenness in the world, experienced through violence, pain, sickness, and death. Next the presenter points out that God's design for humanity is a stark contrast to the brokenness in the world. A circle is drawn on the left side of the paper with the words "God's Design" written inside. Then the presenter explains that when sin entered the world through Adam's failure, humanity began to experience life outside of God's design and thereby they experience brokenness. A line is drawn across the page moving left from the first circle with the word "sin" written above the line. The presenter then would draw a circle connected to the "sin" line with the word "brokenness" written inside, then the presenter would give examples of the effects of sin manifested in the brokenness of the world; brokenness that people often seek to fix. These attempts to fix the brokenness are represented by arrows moving away from brokenness but not back toward the "God's design" circle. Because, when broken people try to fix brokenness in their lives in their own power it simply leads to more brokenness.

The presenter then would explain that God, in his love for the world, chose to provide a remedy for the brokenness of the world. This is where the gospel is explained

explicitly, and a third circle is drawn below the “sin” line with the word “gospel” written in it. The presenter shares how through repentance and belief in the gospel an individual can experience new life and salvation. A line from the “brokenness” circle to the “gospel” circle is drawn with the words “repent and believe” written next to it. The presenter explains that through the gospel people can be restored to God’s design and empowered to recover and pursue God’s design for humanity. The presenter next draws a line from the “gospel” circle up to the “God’s design” circle with the words “recover and pursue” written under it. Finally, the presenter would lead the listener through several questions about what to do next and what the gospel means for everyday life.⁵¹ Examples of some next steps include a new believer’s class which discusses the importance of being part of a church, getting involved in a small group where discipleship is practiced, and baptism. Other next steps could include teaching the new believer how to read and study the Bible, the importance of daily devotions for growth, and accountability. WHBC has a class titled Heights 101, which covers many of these topics and introduces attenders to the structure and programs at Washington Heights.

Relational, Transformational, and Contextual Evangelism

Evangelism that changes lives will have several elements present. These elements combine to create opportunities and awareness for having gospel conversations with others. Other vital elements could be added to this list, but for the sake of this work, the elements to be discussed are relational, transformational, and contextual.

Evangelism is relational. This is not to discount the work of preaching the gospel to strangers or passers-by, but to emphasize that God has placed lost people in lives of Christians, so that the Christians might win them to Christ. Rosaria Butterfield wrote a wonderful book called *The Gospel Comes with a House Key*. In it she describes

⁵¹ Peter Scroggins, Steve Wright, and Leslee Bennett, *3 Circles: Life Conversation Guide* (Alpharetta, GA: North American Mission Board, 2014), 73-84.

“radically ordinary hospitality” as how she and her family engage their neighborhood. She also argues that God commands his people to be hospitable and to care for their neighbors. Christians who are hospitable toward others give space for the unsaved to observe them. When unsaved people encounter Christians who share their lives and homes with them, they get a behind-the-scenes look into the real lives of the believers. This access allows the impact of the gospel to be evident. When unsaved persons see a life changed by the gospel, it will draw them to ask about the difference they see. Hospitality provides a place for these observations to happen.⁵²

Relational evangelism gives an unsaved person a chance to witness the life of the believer. Jesus told his disciples that the world would know they were his followers because they loved each other (John 13:35). This behavior is so counter cultural (in the first century, as much as it is in the twenty-first) that when a watching world sees Christians loving each other well, it points to Jesus. Though, for the world to witness Christians loving each other, they must have relationships with Christians. Relationships provide a powerful context for evangelism. When unbelievers look into the lives of Christians, they can catch a glimpse of what a life redeemed by the gospel looks like.

When unbelievers are close friends with Christian families, they have a front row seat to how the gospel shapes the relationships inside of a family. When Christian families work to apply Ephesians 5 to their relationships, the gospel will affect how husbands love their wives, wives submit to their husbands, and children honor and obey their parents. Coworkers can witness the way a Christian employee submits to the authority of their employer, even when there is no obvious gain. When unbelievers are invited to observe the real lives of Christians, then the gospel will be on display.

Every human being has a desire to be known and accepted. This desire motivates people to pursue relationships that offer the chance to be known. Of all people, Christians,

⁵² Rosaria Champagne Butterfield, *The Gospel Comes with a House Key: Practicing Radically Ordinary Hospitality in Our Post-Christian World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 11-14.

who are fully known by God, are positioned to love others well by knowing the deepest and most eternal need of every human. Christians must seek to build authentic relationships with non-Christians for the sake of sharing the hope of the gospel. Once a relationship has been established and the Christian has a chance to observe an unbelieving friend, the believer can begin to look for ways the truth of the gospel could be applied to the life of their friend. This leads to transformation. Of course, if a Christian meets a complete stranger and the Spirit prompts a gospel conversation, then the faithful Christian should step forward in faith, trusting the Spirit to guide and provide the words to share the gospel. Spontaneous evangelism has won many to Christ since Pentecost and the method here does not preclude that form of evangelism or frown upon the results achieved. However, in the daily course of life, Christians would do well to spend as much time pursuing the people God has placed in their sphere of influence as they do with complete strangers on the street corner.

Transformational evangelism involves getting to the heart of the gospel. The truth of the gospel is good news to a broken world. Christians must look for ways that the gospel can be applied to the pain and brokenness in others. It is not enough to be a good neighbor or to live a godly life before others. Christians must seek to invite the lost to accept the truth of the gospel and be transformed by its power. The gospel does not offer “self-help” strategies or “relationship hacks.” The gospel is “the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes” (Rom 1:16). This power can only be experienced when the gospel truth is offered and accepted.

But what does it mean to accept this offer, and what must be believed? Paul writes in Roman 10:9-10, “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart, one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.” In these verses Paul shares the truth that belief in and confession of the work of Jesus brings justification, the moment when God declares a believer right in his eyes. Paul also teaches

what must be believed, in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4: “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.” These truths are the core of what one must believe to be saved.

Finally, the last element of evangelism for consideration is contextualization.

In his helpful book *Contextualization in the New Testament*, Dean Flemming writes,

Contextualization has to do with how the gospel is revealed in Scripture authentically coming to life in each new cultural, social, religious and historical setting. At one time, discussions about contextualization tended to be confined to circles of missiology and intercultural studies. But as reflection on the matter has entered its second generation, they have moved more and more into the theological mainstream. We have increasingly realized that it is not cross-cultural missionaries alone who must grapple with these issues. Every church in every particular place and time must learn to do theology in a way that makes sense to its audience while challenging it at the deepest level. In fact, some of the most promising conversations about contextualization today (whether they are recognized as such or not) are coming from churches in the West that are discovering new ways of embodying the gospel for an emerging postmodern culture.⁵³

As Flemming points out, contextualization is the process by which the Christian, with personal knowledge of the texture of another person’s life, applies the truths of the gospel to the broken places in the life of the unbeliever. Christians that engage in evangelism that is relational and transformational will be positioned to contextualize the gospel to the life of the unbeliever.

Contextualization in evangelism applies the gospel to the specific brokenness, pain, disfunction, and circumstances of a person’s life. The gospel offers hope and healing to so many areas of the human experience. The gospel is relevant to marriages, parenting, conflict in relationships, money, insecurities, doubts, failures, expectations, work, sex, stress, and so much more. Jesus spent his earthly ministry pointing out that the kingdom of Heaven was based on different priorities and principles. The gospel is the bridge from the realities of a Genesis 3 world to the kingdom of Heaven. When Christians

⁵³ Dean Flemming, *Contextualization in the New Testament: Patterns for Theology and Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2005), 13-14.

intentionally apply gospel truth to their lives the world will take note. When Christians apply the gospel and share it with unbelievers then relational, transformational, and contextual evangelism takes place.

Conclusion

Many believers are not regularly engaged in evangelism. For the church to grow and have an impact this trend must change. Christians must take seriously the call of the Lord Jesus to “make disciples of all nations” by engaging the lost people God has placed near them. Christian churches must work to properly define, and therefore properly prioritize, evangelism from other forms of outreach. Feeding the hungry, clothing the poor, and serving the lost are all wonderful acts of compassion and care, but without the intentional explanation of the gospel with a challenge to respond, these activities fall short of gospel transformation.

It is vital for pastors and leaders to equip the believers in their care to overcome barriers to sharing the gospel. This chapter discussed several tools that can help overcome barriers by providing a framework or pattern for having gospel conversations. Though, these tools are not enough on their own. Christians who want to see their friends, family, coworkers, and neighbors come to know the Lord must build relationships where conversations about spiritual things happen regularly. In these relationships there will be opportunities to have profound and impactful conversations that, hopefully, will lead to life transforming faith in Jesus.

CHAPTER 4

DETAILS AND DESCRIPTIONS OF THE PROJECT

Washington Heights Baptist Church (WHBC) of Dayton, Ohio, must train its members and attenders to engage the lost with the gospel. As noted in chapter 2, Scripture provides the command to make disciples (Matt 28:18-20) as well as the model for personal evangelism. Jesus’s interactions with Nicodemus (John 3:1-15) and the woman at the well (John 4:1-43) give the New Testament church a model for how the Lord engaged two different people with the truth of the gospel. Luke’s record of Paul in Acts 17 interacting with the Jews in the synagogue and the Greeks in the Areopagus give another set of examples and challenge WHBC to train the people to reach the lost.

It is incumbent upon all churches and pastors to “equip the saints for the work of ministry” (Eph 4:12). That work of ministry necessarily includes evangelism. WHBC has been committed to world missions since its founding in 1957.¹ This commitment is noteworthy and commendable; however, it must not replace a commitment for the people of WHBC to actively engage their friends, neighbors, coworkers, and families with the gospel. Annual statistics at the church point to a lack of personal evangelism taking place by members and regular attenders. If WHBC is going to continue to “Live Jesus, across the street and around the world” then the people who call WHBC their church must be equipped to reach the lost wherever God places them.²

¹ Financial records at WHBC indicate that before the church was even formally organized there was a commitment to a missionary family of monthly financial support.

² Live Jesus, across the street and around the world, is the unofficial mission of WHBC. The phrase was coined by Lead Pastor David Kisner in 2022. The second part of the phrase has been part of the culture at WHBC for decades.

This chapter will describe the preparation, implementation, and content overview for the completion of my doctoral project at WHBC. The purpose of this project was to train individuals to effectively share the gospel with unsaved people they know. To accomplish this, four goals were established. The first goal was to assess the current evangelistic practices of individuals at WHBC. The second goal was to develop an evangelism training course for a group of individuals at WHBC. The third goal was to equip the individuals who attend the training course to share the gospel in their community. And the final goal was to develop a ministry plan to intentionally engage community contacts in gospel conversations.

Preparation

The preparation for teaching the evangelism training course began when I started the research for chapters 1, 2, and 3 of this project. During “Foundations of Teaching,” taken January 2022, I began to write the specific course objective, lesson outlines, lesson plans, and rubrics for evaluating the lesson plans. All these materials were evaluated at some level as part of the requirements for the class. After I received approval of chapter 3 from my advisor, Timothy Beougher, I began to work with each of my lesson plans and objectives to fine tune and enhance them from their draft states. I spent several hours working with each of the lessons to prepare them for teaching.

As I was nearing completion of the lesson plans, I presented a few ideas to the rest of the pastoral staff at WHBC to determine the best timing and location for teaching the class. After much discussion about the trends, we had observed and looking at the teaching calendar, we decided to ask two ABFs to participate in the course.³ The Bereans and Homebuilders were selected for the target groups. The Bereans class is made up of men and women, mostly married couples, who are generally in their mid to late sixties.

³ WHBC leadership have observed (non-scientifically) a significant decrease in the attendance at studies and/or courses that extend past four or five weeks. The decision to hold the classes on two consecutive Sunday mornings proved effective in retaining attendance across the entire course.

Many of these individuals have known me since I was a young boy. The Homebuilders class is composed of men and women, mostly married couples, generally in their mid to late fifties. Both ABFs agreed with enthusiasm. One month before the first session I went to each of the ABFs during their normal class time and explained the plan and asked if the class members had any questions for me. I returned to each class to remind them of the upcoming course in the next two weeks.

WHBC's Sunday morning schedule is structured with two services, one at 9:00 a.m. and the other at 10:30 a.m. During both of those services ABFs meet for teaching and fellowship. The Bereans meet at 9:00 a.m. in room E150 while the Homebuilders meet in the same room at 10:30 a.m. For the two weeks of my course, members of both classes were asked to arrive at E150 at approximately 8:45 a.m. and stay in the room for the duration of the morning. This allowed me to teach four lessons each morning. I broke the morning into two sessions and taught two lessons during each session.

In the weeks leading up to the first session, I met with the two members of my expert panel, to review lesson plans and receive feedback. These meetings fulfilled the second goal for the project, which was to develop an evangelism training course for a group of individuals at WHBC for personal evangelism training. This goal was measured by a panel of experienced evangelists who utilized the rubric to evaluate the biblical, theological and applicability of the curriculum.⁴ The first evaluator is a lay leader from WHBC who is a proven evangelist and the second evaluator is a career cross-cultural missionary and church planter serving in China and Thailand. The panel was provided with the course outlines and a rubric for evaluation of the curriculum. Both panelists provided helpful feedback that changed some of my preparations for the sessions. The first evaluator suggested working to find practical points of application during some of

⁴ See appendix 2.

the lessons. The second evaluator suggested using a visual aid when explaining a particularly complex concept in lesson 1.

After making the appropriate changes based on the feedback I received, I revisited the Personal Evangelism Inventory (PEI) to make sure that my statements and lesson plans still supported each other. I determined that no changes were necessary, so I printed 35 copies of the PEI to distribute to the class.

Implementation

On Sunday, October 29, I arrived at church before 8:00 a.m. with donuts and coffee to serve as refreshments for the training participants. As students began arriving for the first session, I passed out the PEI and gave instructions for completing it. This step was part of the first goal of my project, which was to assess the evangelistic practices of a group of individuals at WHBC.

Before the students began completing the PEI, I pointed out the importance of the four-digit identification number for each participant and its relevance to my ability to interpret the post-seminar data. I made some suggestions of possible easy-to-remember codes that the attendees could use (such as the month and last two digits of their birth year or the last four digits of their social security number) to help remember the number. After giving some several minutes to complete the PEI, I collected them and placed in a folder.

In lesson 1, I introduced the idea of a grand arc of history observed in Scripture using Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Glory or New Creation as the key components of the arc. I stressed the concept that God pursues lost people to bring reconciliation and redemption to them. In lesson 2, I discussed the importance of preparing and using a personal testimony in evangelistic conversations with unbelievers. In lesson 3, I taught on the significance of the Great Commission for the life of every believer. The topic of discussion of lesson 4 was the importance of prayer related to evangelism. As lesson 4 ended, I asked the class to spend some time praying for God to bring unbelievers to mind

and then to pray that he would give them an opportunity to share the gospel with that individual. After this time of prayer, I dismissed the class.

During the week I analyzed the PEIs completed during lesson 1. The results of this analysis led me to make a few modifications to my lessons for the next week. A few respondents noted a low level of understanding regarding the content of the gospel. And a few others indicated some question over the applicability of the gospel to everyday life. I modified some of my lesson plans to specifically address those survey results.

Sunday, November 5, I arrived at church before 8:00 a.m. with donuts and muffins. In lesson 5, I used two examples from the life of Christ and the ministry of Paul as examples of how to engage someone in a gospel conversation. In lesson 6, I presented several gospel tools which can be used to evangelize an unbeliever. In lesson 7, I returned to the concept of the arc of Scripture and spent time applying gospel truths to some specific scenarios a person may encounter when engaging in evangelistic conversations. And finally, in lesson 8, I summarized all the teaching of the course and then took questions or comments from the individuals. This time was extremely profitable as many participants shared personal testimonies. One participant shared the story of their grandfather who faithfully pleaded with a local store owner to hear a message of the gospel for years. Eventually the grandfather passed away without ever knowing the spiritual state of the store owner. The granddaughter (participant in the class) shared that ten or fifteen years after the grandfather passed away, the store owner came to the son of the grandfather and shared that the continued pleading and love shown to him had eventually won him over. The granddaughter shared that hearing this faithfulness and story of the gospel was extremely influential in her own life and salvation story.

Another participant, a lifelong, devout Jew shared how after attending WHBC for some months with his wife, hearing the clear preaching of the gospel through the book of Luke, and experiencing the love of his church, he gave his life to Christ at the age of 84.

He shared that he is currently a volunteer in transporting shut-ins at a local retirement home, where he looks to introduce the gospel whenever he can.

At the end of this session, I distributed the post-training PEI and gave the students time to complete them. Later that week, I took all the post-training surveys and entered them into the excel spreadsheet with the pre-training responses.

Content Overview

This section will give a summary of each lesson in the course. In lesson 1, I taught the idea that God has revealed through Scripture a grand arc of history. This arc begins with creation. I stressed that when God finished creation all things were in right relationship. The relationship between humanity and God was right, as Genesis 3:8 says, “and they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves.” They knew instinctively that the relationship they had before the fall had been broken and so they hid. The relationship between Adam and Eve was right: “Then the man said, ‘This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.’ Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed” (Gen 2:23-25). Everything between humanity and creation was right before the fall, and the relationship between God and creation was right.

The next portion of the arc is the fall. When Adam and Eve were deceived by Satan and sinned, brokenness entered the world. I showed from Genesis 3 that in the curses on Adam, Eve, and the serpent, each of those relationships was broken. I spent time explaining in detail many of the ways this brokenness plays out. In the curses listed in Genesis 3, one can see how the relationship between God, human offspring, and the serpent became confrontational: “I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your offspring and her offspring” (v. 15a). And one sees the ultimate confrontation revealed in what Jesus accomplished on the cross: “He shall bruise your head, and you

shall bruise his heel” (v. 15b). This curse upon the serpent foreshadows the death of Christ and his resurrection defeating sin and death.

The curse upon Eve reveals that from that point forward there would be conflict between husband and wife (Gen 3:16b) and that there would be pain in childbirth (Gen 3:16a). The curse on Adam also shows how the brokenness of sin changed everything in God’s created world. Work, which was given to Adam before the fall, would now be painful and hard. I discussed how even good things God commanded for humanity to do are now tainted by sin. God told Adam to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth” (Gen 1:28).

I led the class in discussions on how sin and brokenness distort God’s good gift of sex and reproduction. Sinful desires corrupt what God intended as a beautiful picture of his love for the church and the submission he calls us to in these kinds of relationships (Eph 5:22-33). I taught how sin has affected the command to subdue the earth and have dominion, activities that involve building up cities and creating governments for the good of the people who have multiplied over the earth. This brokenness is systematic, complete, and corrosive. Sin affects every aspect of life.

The next part of the arc is redemption. I traced through Scripture several examples of the foreshadowing of the events of the cross, including statement in Genesis pointing to the victory Jesus claimed by crushing the serpent in defeating death, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel” (Gen 3:15). I developed the theme that all through Scripture God is shown to pursue people, from the time he called out to Adam after he sinned, to his pursuit of Cain, to his charge to Abram, and ultimately in the life of Jesus. To complete the arc, I taught about glory, specifically, the glorification believers will experience when Jesus returns and the events involving the new creation. I talked about how in the New Creation, believers will experience perfect relationships

with God, other humans, and with this New Creation. All evidence and effect of sin will be wiped away and believers will walk in the perfection God created them to experience while in his presence glorifying him for eternity. I showed how this expectation of final glory, and the reality of eternal judgement should motivate Christians to join with God in pursuing people.

In lesson 2, I introduced the importance of being able to share one's personal testimony with others. I called this testimony a "Gospel Story." I challenged participants to work to write out their Gospel Story and to be prepared to share it if the opportunity presented itself. I taught the class five elements that should be included. A "Gospel Moment" is the first element, it should be a specific moment or experience when the truth of the gospel impacted your life. The second element is the influence of Scripture on your life. The next element is the influence of other people in your life, leading to life change, which is the fourth element. I suggested the students try to explain how before the Gospel Moment their life or thinking was one way, and then after the Gospel Moment their life or thinking was a new way. I described a few different ways to shape the Gospel Story. I shared that believers can talk about a moment in their life when some aspect of the gospel became real. I shared a time when I was reading Leviticus 17 as part of a Bible reading plan. I was thinking about the role of sacrifices in the life of an average Hebrew when I read "If any one of the house of Israel . . . eats any blood, I will set my face against that person . . . For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life" (vv. 10-11). I shared that even though I knew Jesus had to die for the atonement of sins, I had never made the direct connection between the sacrificial spilling of blood in the Old Testament in quite such a significant way before that day. I shared that I remember being moved to tears, thinking of all the years of sacrifices made by the Israelites, all in anticipation of the final Lamb to be sacrificed.

Another way to frame the gospel is to talk about the significance of a passage of Scripture. I shared that often when I am discipling young men, I ask them to memorize 1 Corinthians 10:13, which says, “No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.” I tell them that this verse can provide such great strength in the face of temptation because Paul reminds the reader of several things: (1) God is faithful; (2) God will not let them be tempted beyond their ability to resist; and (3) if the temptation feels like it is too much, God will provide an escape so that they can endure the trial. I tell my guys that if they memorize this verse and keep it fresh in their minds, the verse itself can become the way of escape as the truth that God is faithful and will not let them be tempted beyond their ability to fight, but when they feel they cannot fight anymore, the way of escape can be this very verse. I shared that using Scripture in this way strengthens one’s reliance upon it and can give a person a testimony to share with others of how this “ancient collection of outdated writings” can be imminently relevant.

I shared that believers can use stories of the impact others have had on their lives to introduce the gospel. I talked about my grandfather who passed on to me the love for whitetail deer hunting, which has had a profound impact on my life. But the thing he passed on that has shaped me even more is a love for Jesus, the Bible, and his church. He passed on to me life lessons out in the woods. He passed on a deep appreciation for the Scriptures, and he taught me the importance of sharing God’s love with others. I also suggested that Christians can also use examples of how before they were saved, they acted/thought/behaved/believed one way and now after salvation, they act/think/behave/believe another way.

I then taught the class two models for writing your personal Gospel Story. The first was developed by the Navigators and is used in the Colossians 2:7 coursework.⁵ This method discusses, among other things, the trajectory of the personal testimony. It specifically explores reasons an individual may want to tell their story “out of order,” meaning not chronologically. Individuals who follow the method laid out in the 2:7 curriculum will end up with a succinct presentation of their testimony which includes a decision point where the speaker asks if the person, they are evangelizing would like to hear more about how to embrace the gospel.

The second tool is called a Life Map. I was first introduced to this tool and was told it was a Cru, formerly Campus Crusade for Christ, tool. After some research I found the resource on the website of Watermark Church.⁶ This tool uses five keywords to build a framework for developing a testimony. The keywords are Heritage, Heroes, High Points, Hard Times, and the Hand of God. Each of these relates to an area of life where reflection can reveal how God has worked in a person’s life. I have found, in my own life as well as conversations with others, that we often do not stop to reflect on how God has worked in our lives. I found that the process of examining how God has worked through each of these areas the keywords represent is extremely fruitful. When people consider their own heritage often, they can often see how God had orchestrated parts of their “heritage” to bring them to a place of faith. Remembering believing grandparents who chose to break from sinful generational behaviors may have led to faith in the life of grandchildren. The “heroes” we look to can reveal God-moments when we saw someone we admire walk by faith through difficult circumstances or some other hardship, only to have their faith strengthened.

⁵ Ron Oertli, *Colossians 2:7 Deepening Your Roots in God’s Family: Strengthened in the Faith as You Were Taught* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2019), 61-77.

⁶ Watermark Church, “Life Map Guide,” accessed November 1, 2023, <http://cms-cloud.watermark.org/Lifemap-Guide.pdf>.

God has used some significant moments (High Point) in my life to draw me to himself. The birth of each of my five children stand as reminders of God's mercy in my life and his precious gifts to me. Most believers have experienced "hard times" that tested their faith and pushed them to follow Christ more closely. And many can point to a moment that can only be explained by belief in a God who intervenes in our lives in a special way (Hand of God). Each of these keywords and the experiences they remind us of can be used to write out our testimony in powerful ways. The exercise is also a special encouragement during times when we feel like God is not working.

After selecting examples of each of these the Life Map tool guides a person through compiling these components together to create a presentation by which they can share their faith with someone else. To finish up this lesson I asked the class to take some time to reflect on their own stories and consider using one of these tools to prepare their personal gospel story.

The next lesson, lesson 3, covered the Great Commission as found in Matthew 28:18-20. I taught my way through the passage pressing in on each phrase to unpack the significance of each related to the whole point of the passage. I emphasized that Christ began this section of Scripture by pointing to his authority, and the class to discussed how Christ's authority drives evangelism. I taught that Christ has authority over his church, over death, over all creation. I asked the class to discuss how Christ's authority gave him freedom to call disciples, cast out demons, and empower others. I also asked the class to consider the command to "go, and make disciples," and how Christ's authority demands obedience. I pointed to the command to "teach all that I have commanded you," and asked the class to list some of Christ's commands. The class then considered how Christ's statement, "Behold, I am with you always," and to reflect on how this statement ought to motivate believers to share their faith boldly. I chose not to spend significant time discussing baptism during these sessions. At WHBC we have an annual baptism class for the junior department. When the baptisms take place, we take the full service to talk

about baptism and encourage any who have not been baptized to come forward in obedience. Given the amount of material I needed to cover during these sessions I chose to spend more time motivating the class to engage in evangelistic conversations.

To finish this lesson, I asked each class member to write down on a handout the names of three to five individuals that they know do not know Christ—friends, neighbors, family members, or coworkers. I titled the handout, “My People.” I challenged the class to consider that God may have brought those people into their lives so that they might hear the gospel and believe. I closed with several minutes of prayer for these people.

In lesson 4, I taught about the importance of prayer to the act of evangelism. I began this lesson by looking at statistics regarding evangelism practices of professing believers as reported from Barna. These statistics, also discussed in chapter 3 of this project, paint a stark and sad reality. Few Christians are regularly engaging in sharing the gospel. I took several minutes to ask why this might be the case. Several class members shared reasons they hesitate to share their faith with others. We talked about common barriers to evangelism such as fear of rejection, feeling unqualified, and not having a sense of urgency about the need for evangelism. The second half of this lesson focused on prayers for evangelism found in Scripture, including Matthew 9:35, John 17:20, Romans 10:1, Ephesians 6:19, and Acts 4:29. Each of these passages shows that prayer was viewed as an essential component in evangelism. I ended the session talking about a posture of evangelistic praying, meaning prayers should have a regular focus on asking God to use us to reach the people he has brought into our lives. I closed by praying that God would use me to reach others, change them through his Spirit, and show me who he has placed in my life that needs to hear the gospel. The class was then dismissed for the week with the encouragement to look for opportunities to share the gospel.

This concluded the first four lessons of the course. My original lesson plan would have picked up lesson 5 with a discussion of Gospel Tools, however, after completing the first four lessons I felt it would be helpful to start with four passages of

Scripture that give examples of Jesus and Paul engaging in evangelism. I also entered the PEI results into an Excel template. Eighteen Individuals completed the pre-lesson PEI. Two of the eighteen indicated some level of disagreement over statement 3, “I believe that those who do not trust in Christ will suffer eternal judgment in hell.” Because of these responses, in several places during lessons 5 through 8 I decided to emphasize the significance of eternal separation from God as a consequence of rejecting the gospel.

Lesson 5 addressed four passages of Scripture where we are given examples of Jesus and Paul, each respectively, evangelizing others.⁷ I started the lesson by making a distinction between how one evangelizes a person with a church background from evangelizing a person without a church background. The gospel does not change, but the application and presentation of it must. I explained that sharing the gospel with a person who has exposure to the teachings of the church allows one to start the conversation at a different point since there is some common ground and shared knowledge. When evangelizing someone who has no concept of biblical things, one must start from a different perspective. I then directed the class to John 3. I led the class through a discussion of Jesus’s conversation with Nicodemus and showed that Jesus started with a complex spiritual discussion and revealed to Nicodemus where his understanding was incorrect. Next, I asked the class to consider John 4, where Jesus interacts with the Samaritan woman at the well. In this passage, Jesus initiates a conversation with the woman by establishing common ground—both were at the well for water. I then pointed out that Jesus moves from the common ground of their shared experience to spiritual things and shared the gospel with her.

The second portion of this lesson went to Acts 17 where Paul engages two separate audiences with the truth of the gospel. In verses 1-4, Paul enters the synagogue in Thessalonica and engages Jews with the gospel by showing them how Jesus, the

⁷ For a fuller treatment of these passages and my handling of them, see chap. 2 of this project.

Messiah, had to die. He corrected their understanding of Scripture and revealed to them the gospel. I pointed out that later in the chapter Paul is in Athens and enters the Areopagus and starts to address those gathered. Paul begins by creating common ground with the Greeks, acknowledging their pursuit of spiritual things, but then he shows them how the gospel is different from their beliefs. I then led the group in a discussion about the significance of being aware of someone's background when sharing the gospel. I also challenged the group to think about times when someone they were engaging with gave them an opportunity to share the gospel.

In lesson 6, I presented several gospel tools, which are simply resources for “packaging” the message of the gospel. I reviewed the Romans Road, which many in the class were familiar with. I then demonstrated how to use the “Bridge to Life” illustration, developed by the Navigators.⁸ I began by stating the God created the world with the intent of living among men in perfection. I used John 3:16, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life,” to establish that God loves the world and wants to spend eternity with his people. I introduced the problem of sin by quoting Romans 3:23, “For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God,” and then shared Romans 6:23, “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Having explained that God wants a relationship with sinful man, but that sin separates man from God, I shared the solution God offers by quoting Romans 5:8: “but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Next, I shared that this free gift requires a response. Will we accept the gift or reject it? I quoted John 1:12, “But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,” to show what kind of response God wants. I shared the “A, B, C’s” of the salvation message, which are accept (that I am a sinner in

⁸ The Navigators, “The Bridge to Life,” accessed November 1, 2023, <https://www.navigators.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/navigators-bridge-to-life.pdf>.

need of a Savior), believe (that Jesus died and rose again for me, victorious over sin and death), and confess (your control of your life and will to Jesus's authority and trust in his plan for you). Finally, I introduced the "3 Circles," developed by Jimmy Scroggins and Steve Wright.⁹

After explaining each of these tools, I spent time showing how I would move from sharing my personal gospel story with someone then transition into using a gospel tool, such as the "3 Circles." I shared a real scenario from my own life; however, it is an example of failing to take an opportunity to share the gospel. I talked about how John (name changed for his sake, but I doubt he will ever come across this text) and I worked out at the same time for over two years, and how over that time John would strike up conversation. One day John shared that he was getting married to his live-in girlfriend. In God's providence I was doing pre-marital counseling with a couple from our church. I shared with John that I do weddings and pre-marital counseling. When he asked why people need counseling before there are problems, I shrugged and said, "some people find it helpful." I shared with the class that if I had been prepared to share the gospel, I would have talked about the fact that brokenness will inevitably enter into the relationship. And the time to prepare for that challenge is before the battle. I should have shared how marriage is such a good gift from God and that entering into it lightly and unprepared leave us open to even greater challenges. I demonstrated how I could have talked about the brokenness experienced in marriage and the various empty ways we seek to fix it. But that only through returning to God's design for marriage, one that honors him and brings him glory, in repentance for sins, can we hope to experience marriage the way God intended it. This conversation could have been a wonderful opportunity to share the hope of the gospel with this acquaintance of mine, however, I was not prepared that morning. Sadly, over the years, I have seen John less and less.

⁹ Jimmy Scroggins and Steve Wright, *Turning Everyday Conversations into Gospel Conversations* (Nashville: B & H, 2016), 73-88.

We also discussed scenarios in which these gospel tools might be best applied and talked through several examples. I told the class that sharing the “Bridge Illustration” with someone who believes in subjective truth and no moral absolutes would likely be unfruitful. While sharing a personal testimony of how following God’s design for your life and relationships might provide the common ground for that person. I mentioned that talking with a person who still believes in a higher power opens itself to the Four Spiritual Laws, the Romans Road, and the “Bridge.” Conversations with neighbors and coworkers can quickly become gospel conversations if we are ready to share the “3 Circles” because any mention of struggle, fear, anxiety, or even happiness can be used to transition into a “3 Circles” conversation. An example I used started with a coworker sharing that a loved one was sick. I suggested that starting by asking to pray for the loved one opens the conversation. Then I asked the class to suggest next steps. They offered, “ask more questions about the loved one,” “offer tangible support,” and “ask if they know the spiritual condition of the loved one.” Any of these comments keep the conversation going and allow an attentive evangelist the opportunity to share the gospel.

In lesson 7, I led the class through discussion about how to apply the good news of the gospel to a variety of situations. I asked the group a series of questions like, “How does the gospel affect marriages? How does it apply parenting? How does the truth of the gospel affect how I deal with difficult relationships?” I presented a range of issues and scenarios where the gospel can be applied. I stressed the importance of thinking carefully about how the truth of the gospel impacts daily life. Spending time reflecting on this reality helps to prepare an individual to share how the gospel makes a difference in life. I also pointed out that we must be sensitive to the relational credibility we have with people we seek to share the gospel with. I ended this lesson by giving an opportunity for the class to share any gospel conversations they had had in the past week.

In lesson 8, I returned to the arc of Scripture taught in lesson 1. This time, however, I explained that this arc provides a worldview for Christians. I also pointed out

that everyone has a perspective from which they view the world around them and make sense of it. I explained that part of understanding how to go about engaging someone else with the gospel requires evaluating their worldview. I shared that a person's worldview helps them answer a set of basic questions. Where did humanity come from? Why is there pain and suffering in the world? What can be done to fix the problem of pain and suffering? What happens when you die? The way a person answers these questions reveals their worldview. I shared some examples of different worldviews and helped the class understand how a biblical worldview answers those questions differently. I pointed out that often conflict in marriage stems from selfish desires that are unmet and uncommunicated. I mentioned Ephesians 5:20-33, where Paul exhorts mutual submission to each other under Christ's headship and sacrificial love of husbands for wives paired with loving submission to a husband's faithful leadership. I taught about suffering, asking the class how to make sense of pain and death from a secular humanist point of view. I introduced the Christian concept of a broken world and the Bible's solution to this problem. I relied on several personal counseling interactions to create appropriately anonymous scenarios where the gospel was applied to the lives of others.

To end the lesson, I provided a brief summary of the course, challenged participants to continue praying for the people they wrote on their "My People" worksheet, and to look for opportunities to share the gospel in the coming days and weeks. I then administered the pot-test PEI. In the next chapter I will discuss the results of the PEI and give my reflections on the process of completing this project.

Conclusion

Scripture clearly illustrates that God intends to us his church to take the gospel to a lost world that needs to hear the gospel. WHBC must actively engage in personal evangelism to remain faithful to the task God has given to his church. My prayer is that this training would stir the people of WHBC to take up the Great Commission as a daily goal and that the Dayton area would be forever impacted by the faithful witness of this

church. I pray that the people of WHBC would take Peter's charge to heart that they would "honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you" (1 Pet 3:15).

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

In the winter of 2019, I began the journey to complete this project to equip individuals at Washington Heights Baptist Church to share the gospel in our community. Washington Heights has been committed to sending missionaries around the world since the church was founded. Local personal evangelism has not been a concerted focus of the church for many years. This project intended to address this deficiency.

Evaluation of Project's Purpose

The purpose of this project was to train individuals to effectively share the gospel with unsaved people they know. As discussed at length in chapter 2 of this project, Scripture clearly commands believers to engage the unsaved people around them. This project was conducted to bring evangelism and evangelism training into the forefront for the individuals who participated in the training course.

The training course was informed by the research conducted in the completion of chapters 2 and 3. Chapter 2 described the biblical mandate for evangelism as found in Matthew 28:18-20, in the Great Commission. Chapter 2 also explored examples from the life of Christ and Paul to illustrate the differences in how an individual might share the gospel given the specific context of the person they are engaging.

Chapter 3 presented several definitions for the word “evangelism,” barriers to sharing the gospel, motivations for sharing the gospel, as well as several methods for evangelism. The chapter ended with a description of relational, contextual evangelism that uses hospitality and awareness of others’ needs to bring about transformation through the gospel.

Evaluation of Project's Goals

The project was structured with four main goals aimed at equipping the individuals involved in the training course to be able to share the gospel.

Goal 1

The first goal was to assess the current evangelistic practices of individuals at WHBC. For this goal, the Personal Evangelism Inventory (PEI) was administered to a group of 18 adults at WHBC.¹ The Adult Bible Fellowships at WHBC serve as the Sunday morning adult education classes, and these two classes were chosen for the focus of my training. The Bereans class, which typically meets during the 9:00 a.m. Celebration Service (main preaching service) and consists of mostly couples in their late sixties to early seventies. Many of these individuals have attended the same class for 15-20 years. The Homebuilders Class consists primarily of couples in their late forties to late fifties. The regular attenders of this class are relatively new to WHBC, many having attended less than five years. These two classes were chosen for two primary reasons. The first was their familiarity with me as a life-long member and as a pastor. With eleven years on staff, I believed this group would be open to participating in the training. Second was the convenience that these two groups share the same teaching space, each respectively during the 9:00 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. service times.

This goal was measured by administering the Personal Evangelism Inventory (PEI) to a group of 18 adults at WHBC. This goal was considered successfully met when 18 surveys were completed, and data was analyzed to determine the current evangelistic practices of the individuals surveyed at WHBC.

Goal 2

The second goal was to develop an evangelism training course for a group of individuals at WHBC for personal evangelism training. This goal was measured by an

¹ See appendix 1.

expert panel who utilized a rubric to evaluate the biblical, theological and applicability of the curriculum.² I asked the first evaluator, a thirty-four-year member at WHBC and consistent evangelist and the second evaluator, a career missionary with the Association of Baptists for World Evangelism to evaluate my training materials and three-year plan. Both of them gave me valuable feedback.

The first evaluator suggested that I include more role-play and practice for the participants. I chose to include a few case studies and sample situations in lessons 6, 7, and 8 based on his recommendation. In lesson 6, I had intended to introduce the gospel tools and demonstrate them for the class. After the first evaluator's comments, I chose to present the tools then ask for volunteers to explain various parts of the "Bridge Illustration," and when they finished the explanation, I asked a follow up question, as if I were an unsaved person. This exercise was instructive as some individuals were able to answer the questions I posed well, and others faltered a bit. In lesson 7, in the discussion on diagnosing worldviews, I added content that led to dialogue concerning common challenges people face. I asked how the gospel applies to brokenness in marriage. From a Christian point of view, I pointed out that conflict in marriage often stems from selfish desires that are unmet and uncommunicated. I suggested looking to Ephesians 5:20-33 where Paul exhorts mutual submission to each other under Christ's headship and sacrificial love of husbands for wives paired with loving submission to a husband's faithful leadership. I also added content on suffering, asking the class how to make sense of pain and death from a secular humanist point of view. This exercise helped the class diagnose the reality that many around them have no hope and no explanation for pain and suffering. I was then able to introduce the Christian concept of a broken world and the Bible's solution to this problem. I made similar additions to role play scenarios for lesson

² See appendix 2.

8. I relied on several personal counseling interactions to create appropriately anonymous scenarios where the gospel was applied to the lives of others.

In comments from the rubric, the second evaluator encouraged me to clarify my terminology, specifically my use of the word “arc” in lessons 1, 2, and 7. In lesson 1, he suggested that I more clearly define the idea of an arc through Scripture. Taking his comments, I went into these lessons and more carefully worked through how to present this concept. I decided to cite key passages of Scripture that point to the various stages of the arc. For creation I used Genesis 1 and 2, emphasizing that God created everything in perfection, “and behold it was very good” (Gen 1:31). I added discussion around the Creation Mandate (Gen 1:28-30) and the naming of the animals (Gen 2:18-20) as evidence that work was created and commanded before sin entered the world. The reality of work as something that is good and designed by God for the goodness of humanity is significant in light of the curses laid out in Genesis 3:16-19. But before the curses are given, the fall is played out. I chose to spend time in the lesson plan explaining the events of Eve’s temptation and the consequences that immediately revealed themselves, even before the curses were leveled. I added discussion points about the shame Adam and Eve felt immediately when they clothed themselves. I talked about the fear they felt when God came looking for them, the blame they leveled against each other, the serpent, and even God himself. I had already developed the points on Redemption and Glory/New Creation, so did not need to add to those sections.

This goal was measured by an expert panel who utilized a rubric to evaluate the biblical, theological and applicability of the curriculum. This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criteria met or exceeded the sufficient level. After making the suggested changes to the three-year plan, each of the evaluation criteria scored exemplary rating or better, with only two criteria scoring sufficient ratings (both related to the training methods used).

Goal 3

The third goal was to equip the members and attenders to share the gospel in their community. Individuals attended an eight-session training course that focused on developing practices and techniques to equip them to contextualize the gospel in conversations with their unsaved contacts. This goal was measured by the pre- and post-training PEI survey that measured the individual's level of knowledge, confidence, and motivation to share the gospel with those in their community (neighbors, coworkers, acquaintances, or unsaved family).³ Out of the total 65 on the rosters of the two classes, 24 attended some portion of the training. Twenty-one individuals from the Bereans and Homebuilders ABFs took the pre-training PEI but three of these individuals were not able to attend all of the sessions. Two other individuals attended parts of the training sessions but did not complete a PEI since they knew they could not attend all of the training sessions. One couple who attended the first four training sessions was traveling during the remainder of the training. Several individuals were volunteering elsewhere at WHBC and so were not able to participate in all of the sessions but dropped in for some portion of the training. In the end, 18 individuals completed both the pre-training PEI and post-training PEI and attended all of the sessions.

When I developed the PEI, I choose to include two types of scoring for the statements. For most statements I followed a normal 1-6 Likert scale corresponding to a Disagree-Agree Scale, where “Strongly Disagree” is equivalent to a score of 1 and “Strongly Agree” is equivalent to a score of 6. While statements 6, 9, 10, 13, and 14 were scored with a reversed Likert scale where “Strongly Agree” is equivalent to 1 and “Strongly Disagree” is equivalent to 6. I was hoping that this reversal in scoring would prevent a response bias by the respondents. I will discuss the results below.

³ See appendix 1.

Beliefs. The responses to statements 1, 4, and 9 resulted in no change of average score from pre-training PEI to post-training PEI. Statement 1 reads, “I understand the gospel.” The average score was 6 for both the pre- and post-training PEI. Indicating that the participants in my training demonstrate a solid confidence of their understanding of the gospel and yet, they are not engaging others with the truth of the gospel. Statement 4 reads, “Scripture places the responsibility for personal evangelism on every believer,” and again, this result is encouraging because the average score for both pre- and post-training PEI was 6, indicating an appropriate understanding of the role of every believer in sharing the gospel.

Statement 9 reads, “I feel unqualified to engage in personal evangelism because of persistent sin in my life.” I also used a reverse Likert scale for the scoring of this statement. I thought offering this statement negatively might provide better results than if I had made the opposite statement, “I feel qualified to engage in personal evangelism because of the lack of sin in my life.” Written this way, the respondent might be uncomfortable claiming that they “Agree” they have a lack of sin, or that they “Agree” that they feel qualified to engage in evangelism. I believed that most people would not feel comfortable with either of these implications. In the end, the average score for the pre- and post-training PEI did not change. Both averaged a score of 5, or “Disagree,” indicating that the respondents do, in fact, believe they are qualified to share the gospel.

The responses to statements 3, 5, 10, 11, 12, and 14 all resulted in some change between the pre- and post-training PEI. Statement 3 reads, “I believe that those who do not trust in Christ will suffer eternal judgement in hell.” The pre-training PEI average for this statement was a 6, or “Strongly Agree,” while the post-training PEI average score was 5 or, “Disagree.” This change was confusing. In my teaching, specifically in lesson 1 (discussing the Grand Arc of History: Creation, Fall, Redemption, Glory/New Creation) and lesson 6 (discussing the Romans Road and Bridge illustrations), I spoke specifically about the need for salvation due to the future judgement that awaits the unrepentant. In

searching for a reason for this change, I discovered that one of the respondents did not provide a response to this statement in their pre-training PEI, but did provide a response in the post-training PEI and gave it a score of 6, or “Strongly Agree.” Also, another respondent gave this statement a 5 or, “Agree” on the pre-training PEI but a 1 or, “Strongly Disagree” on the post-training PEI. I am unsure of what may have caused this change, though I suppose that respondent did not carefully read the statement and therefore gave an inaccurate response.

Statement 5 reads, “I feel equipped to share the gospel with unsaved people I know.” On the pre-training PEI, this statement had an average score of 4, or “Agree.” On the post-training PEI this statement had an average response score of 5, or “Strongly Agree.” This change in average score from 4 to 5 on its own was very encouraging since the teaching was able to increase the feeling of preparedness to share the gospel through the training. Statement 10 reads, “I feel unqualified to engage in personal evangelism because of inconsistency in my walk with Christ.” This statement focused on the beliefs of the respondents, and it was also reverse scored so that a response of “Strongly Disagree” scores a 6 while the response of “Strongly Agree” scores a 1. In the pre-training PEI this statement scored an average of 4.5, so between “Disagree Somewhat” and “Disagree.” The change in score from an average of 4.5 in the pre-training PEI to 6 in the post-training PEI, reveals an improvement in the participants’ beliefs. This means that the participants grew in their understanding that how they feel about their walk with Christ does not disqualify them from witnessing to others. In one of my lessons, I discussed how God used Jonah to bring revival among the Ninevites in spite of Jonah’s sinful, racist attitude (Jonah 3 and 4).

Statement 11 reads, “The gospel is helpful for everyday life.” The pre-training PEI average score for this statement was 5.67 and the post-training PEI was 5.72. This marginal growth was still encouraging because it indicated that the class is more convinced of the everyday impact of the gospel for them. I point to lessons 7 and 8 as the source of

this improvement. Both of those lessons unpacked several real-world experiences and challenges while demonstrating how gospel truths can be applied to these scenarios.

Statement 12 reads, “I want to engage in personal evangelism consistently” and scored an average of 4.72 on the pre-training PEI, or between “Agree Somewhat” and “Agree.” On the post-training PEI the average score was 5.17, which is between “Agree” and “Strongly Agree.” This change of .45 in the average score shows growth in the respondents’ desire to share the gospel with consistency in their lives. This change in belief or desire on the part of the respondents is encouraging. On the whole, it seems as though the participants are more likely to regularly engage in personal evangelism.

Statement 14 reads, “I do not have time to invest in the lives of unbelievers” and as a reverse Likert scored statement the pre-training PEI average score was 4.61, which is between “Strongly Disagree” and “Disagree.” In the post-training PEI the average score was 4.89, which is closer to “Strongly Disagree” than to “Disagree.” This positive change in score indicates that the training impacted the participants’ view of the time they have available to invest in the lives of lost people.

Practices. Statements, 2, 7, 8, 13, and 15-20 related to the practices of the individual. Statement 2 reads, “I can articulate my salvation experience” and the pre-training PEI average was 5.4 while the post-training PEI average score was 5.3. This slight negative change is concerning. Much time was spent in lessons 2 and 6 on the topic of preparing one’s own personal gospel story. I plan to return to these classes this spring to revisit preparing a gospel story and reflecting on one’s salvation experience.

Statement 7 reads, “When I interact with people in the community I often wonder if they are Christians or not.” On the pre-training PEI this statement scored an average of 4, or “Agree.” On the post-training PEI the average score for this statement moved to a 5, or “Strongly Agree.” Seeing a full point change for this statement reveals that the training impacted how the students think about the people they interact with out in the world. This was an encouraging result.

Statement 8 is focused on prayer for unbelievers and reads, “I pray for opportunities to witness to unbelievers.” The pre-training PEI average score for this statement was 3.6, while the post-training PEI was 3. I assume this means participants were more generous with their own answers in the pre-training PEI, but after spending most of lesson 4 discussing the importance of targeted prayer for the lost and intentionally naming those lost people in their sphere of influence, the class may have adjusted to a more realistic scoring.

Statement 13 reads, “I rarely think about engaging in personal evangelism.” This statement used a reverse Likert scoring, and the pre-training PEI average score was 3.89, indicating that the respondents were between “Disagree Somewhat” and “Agree Somewhat,” a rather ambiguous place to be. The post-training PEI average score slid to 3.78. I believe this second result points to an honesty not present in the pre-training PEI. Having spent eight sessions talking about the urgency of the gospel, the requirement of all believers to be engaged in advancing the kingdom, and the consequences for all who do not believe, I believe the participants in the class were honest with their present activity.

Statement 15, which reads, “I have shared the gospel with an unbeliever in the last 12 months,” had a pre-training PEI average score of 4.22. While the post-training PEI average score increased to 4.78. This increase is encouraging, although it may not be an entirely authentic increase, since there were only seven days between the pre and post-training PEIs. And statement 16 reads, “I have led someone to receive Christ,” and the result of this analysis is bit confusing. The pre-training PEI average score was 3.89, while the post-training PEI improved to 4.39 over the course of the sessions. This is confusing because I asked participants during lesson 5, 6, 7, and 8 if anyone wanted to share an experience they had recently in sharing the gospel with someone else. I would have hoped that these individuals would be willing to share publicly if they had led someone to the Lord recently. A possible explanation for this improvement could be that, upon reflection,

some respondents were able to recall leading someone to Christ after filling out the pre-training and before completing the post-training PEI.

However, upon further examination, I concluded that this is definitely related to these two statements themselves. These statements are binary, either the individual has led someone to Christ or, shared the gospel or they have not. These statements are not appropriate for a Likert scale. If I were to do this research again, I would simply insert the statements, “I have led someone to receive Christ: yes or no,” and “I have shared the gospel with someone in the last 12 months,” and place it before statement 1 in the PEI.

Statement 17 reads, “I have an ongoing friendship with a lost person.” The pre-training PEI average score for this statement was 4.39, and the post-training PEI average score was 4.83. This increase in the average scores by .44 is significant, especially if this means participants chose to initiate a new relationship with an unbeliever. This increase may mean, however, that the participants reflected more carefully on their relationships and found that there were already people in their lives who did not know the Lord.

Statement 18 reads, “I look for opportunities to introduce the gospel into conversations with unsaved people.” The pre-training PEI average score for this statement was 4.06, while the post-training PEI average score was 4.72. This increase of .66 in the average score for this statement is significantly encouraging. I was encouraged by this result because I emphasized being sensitive to opportunities to share the gospel during the training. Lord willing, this intentional emphasis on looking for opportunities will produce many gospel conversions.

Statement 19 reads, “I have worked to build relationships with my neighbors for the purpose of sharing the gospel with them.” The responses to this statement resulted in an average pre-training PEI score of 3.44, while the post-training PEI average score was 3.89. This increase of .45 in the average score for this statement shows that the participants made intentional connections with their neighbors with the goal of sharing the gospel. I am excited about this increase since I spent quite a bit of time emphasizing

God's sovereignty in where people live (Acts 17:24-27). I argued that God has determined where and when people will live on earth for the purpose seeking and finding him, through the witness of his followers. These believers are also under his sovereignty which determines where they will, when, and for however long they live. So, each Christian ought to live knowing that God has placed them exactly where they are, for his purposes, not their own. And each Christian ought to look at the unsaved people in their sphere of influence as people God has placed in proximity to them, for God's purposes.

Statement 20 reads, "I have people in my life who hold me accountable to engage in personal evangelism." The comparison in average scores for the pre- and post-training PEIs for this statement resulted in the greatest increase. The pre-training PEI average score of 2.67 improved to a post-training PEI average of 3.78, meaning the increase was 1.11. This increase is significant, and I believe incredibly encouraging. The first evaluator who provided feedback on my lesson plan and three-year plan, shared that in his experience when students of evangelism training had a partner who regularly checked in with them for accountability in being consistent in evangelism, they were far more likely to regularly share the gospel. I am hopeful that the increase in evangelistic accountability will produce a harvest in the community.

The PEI statements were broken into two categories for analysis. Statements 1, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 14 related to the beliefs of the participant. When I analyzed the results isolating the statements on beliefs of the individuals the results of a *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive, statistically significant difference between pre- and post-training survey scores: $t_{(17)} = -3.092, p = .0033$. While statements, 2, 7, 8, 13, and 15-20 related to the practices of the individual. When I analyzed the results isolating the statements on the practices of the individuals the results of a *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive, statistically significant difference between pre- and post-training survey scores: $t_{(17)} = -5.161, p = .0001$.

This goal was considered successfully met when a *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post- survey scores. The goal was met when a *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive, statistically significant difference between pre- and post-training survey scores: $t_{(17)} = -5.489, p = .0001$.

Goal 4

The fourth goal was to develop a ministry plan to intentionally engage community contacts in gospel conversations. This goal was measured by a panel of two ministry leaders/missionaries who utilized a rubric to evaluate the functionality of the plan, communication processes, training elements, and the action steps.⁴ This goal would be considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators meet or exceed the sufficiency level. Initially, the 90 percent benchmark was not met, so the ministry plan was revised to meet the standard.

The panel consisted of two evaluators. Both men urged me to add to my three-year ministry plan. The first evaluator suggested that I incorporate “on the job training” as part of the three-year plan, meaning build into the plan outreach or visitation opportunities so that participants can go out and use the training immediately. He suggested pairing new trainees with individuals who have participated in the course previously for the purpose of visitation. These visits would be for guests who attend a service for the first time, those who inquire about how to grow in their faith, or people who use the church gym for various sports outreach activities.

The second evaluator suggested that I determine how many participants from WHBC should be trained so that I could accurately evaluate whether the three-year plan was successful. After considering his advice, I worked with Don Jones, the Sunday School Superintendent for WHBC, to determine the average attendance in the Adult Bible

⁴ See appendix 3.

Fellowships (ABFs or adult Sunday school). We found that an average of 175 adults are regularly in attendance at the ABFs. I was able to train eighteen individuals during my formal training course for this project. Jones and I are confident that I will have the opportunity to teach the material to each of the ABFs over the next three years, potentially training all 175 adults who are currently attending these ABFs by inserting my training into the regular teaching rotation. By acting as a guest teacher, I would be able to ensure that I teach the course systematically to all of the ABFs and provide a break for the regular teachers. This does not, however, address the reality that there will be some natural attrition in these class rosters. To mitigate this challenge, the evangelism training course will be offered as a separate class once per year.

As of this writing WHBC has a pickleball ministry with over 200 individuals entering the building for pickleball matches every week. Every session includes a “paddles down” break halfway through for the purpose of a five-minute devotional, presented by David Hornback (Director of Sports Outreach at WHBC), who shares a verse, its interpretation/application, and solicits prayer requests. My updated three-year plan includes actively pursuing these contacts made through the pickleball ministry.

WHBC also offers Upward Basketball and Soccer as a form of outreach. Each year nearly 200 children register for one of these sports leagues where every practice includes a devotion break, and every game features a halftime devotional speaker. During the 2024 basketball league, over 40 percent of the 100 families registered for the season do not attend any church. Historically, WHBC has not done enough to connect with the families who are not actively attending a gospel preaching church. The updated three-year plan includes using these contacts to give participants in the training course sources for real life evangelism opportunities.

Another regular opportunity for real-world practice in evangelism is Bill Glass’s Behind the Walls Ministry. This ministry, started by former NFL player Bill Glass, exists for evangelism. The ministry introduces itself with the following statement:

Founded in 1969, the ministry focus of Bill Glass Behind the Walls has always been evangelism. Our mission is come alongside local churches to reinforce evangelism training with their congregation and then taking them behind the walls of correctional facilities across the country to share the Good News of the Gospel with the “least of these.” Those equipped individuals will return home with a renewed desire to serve the church and newfound confidence to boldly share the Good News at home, at work, in their communities, and beyond.⁵

WHBC has been actively involved with Behind the Walls for over twenty years. Every year there are several opportunities for men and women to get involved by spending most of a Saturday going into a local prison, jail, or correctional facility to participate in a Behind the Walls event. Upon arrival, volunteers are led to an outdoor recreational area or other appropriate public space in the confines of the facility. At some appointed time, inmates are encouraged to enter the presentation venue. Many are simply looking for a change in their schedule, and some are genuinely curious about the crowd of people who have voluntarily submitted themselves to a day in prison. Once the crowd has been settled the “show” starts.

Behind the Walls events are coordinated by Behind the Walls staff and local supporters and the “shows” include “platform guests.” The platform guests are flashy, engaging speakers or “celebrities” who share their testimony or give an object lesson, introducing the gospel to the gathered inmates. Some platform guests have personal experience as a “guest” in similar correctional facilities. Other platform guests show off dazzling physical feats such as tightrope walking, motorcycle tricks, and basketball spinning theatrics to challenge the Globe Trotters. All of this is designed to draw the inmates in for the inevitable gospel moment. Often the speaker shares how the pursuit of fame, fortune, pleasure, or pride led to brokenness and emptiness, when at the end of their hopes, the gospel was presented, and hope became real.

After a presentation like this, inmates are directed to huddle around the teammates who volunteered to spend a day behind the walls of a prison. During these

⁵ Behind the Walls, “Who We Are,” accessed January 29, 2024, <https://www.behindthewalls.com/assisting-the-church>.

small groups of three or four, real-world evangelism takes place. The volunteers receive training in how to work through a gospel tract that Behind the Walls has produced. It is a simple tract, but it shares the gospel explicitly.

My three-year ministry plan includes leveraging opportunities with the sports outreach ministries at WHBC and Bill Glass Behind the Walls for targeted evangelism practice. After making the suggested changes to the three-year plan, both of the evaluators revisited the plan. All criteria scored sufficient or exemplary.

Strengths of the Project

This project had three primary strengths. The first strength was the conversations about evangelism that took place over the last few years as I prepared and researched for the implementation of the project. These conversations took place in the foyer and hallways of WHBC when people asked how my doctoral studies were going. I had so many opportunities to talk about what I was researching, and many people asked if they could be part of the evangelism training.

The second strength of the project was the “My People” lists created by the training participants. Everyone created a list with three to five names of people they know who need to hear the gospel. The purpose of creating these lists was to have a physical reminder of the unsaved people in their sphere of influence. Several training participants have shared that they are still using the “My People” list to pray for the individuals who came to mind during the training sessions.

The third strength of project is the fact that I have been part of WHBC for my entire life and that most of the participants have watched me grow up. This shared history allowed me to use examples from the past at WHBC to make a point. I was able to recall past evangelism efforts and differentiate that training from the training I provided. Specifically, I was able to point out that programs like Evangelism Explosion are often effective in pre-evangelized contexts because the questions used assume some shared beliefs about God, the afterlife, and the existence of right and wrong. In a post-Christian

society, one that widely embraced a Judeo-Christian worldview, but now rejects that worldview, there is no shared belief worldview. This reality requires evangelists to use a different approach, as discussed in the training.

Weaknesses of the Project

This project had three significant weaknesses. The first weakness was that halfway through my studies, the world was plagued by the COVID-19 pandemic. This worldwide disaster led to significant delays in the research and implementation of the project. As part of the pastoral team at WHBC, nearly all my time from March 2020 until March of 2021 was monopolized by the task of pastoring in the middle of a global health crisis. The pastoral team regularly met to determine appropriate health and safety responses with the goal of maintaining the safety of our people and continued practice of gathering for worship. These meetings and necessary distractions meant that my pursuit of this doctoral project suffered.

The second weakness of the project was the length of the actual training class. As explained in chapter 4, my original intent was to teach an eight-week training course. This length of time would have given opportunities for individuals to reflect on the teaching, practice the methods they were taught, and build habits of prayer and evangelism, while returning weekly for encouragement and support. In a post-COVID world, there was simply no way to expect enough people to attend all the required sessions. At WHBC we have observed attendance patterns change and have had to modify several of our programs to accommodate this trend. One such change was the decision to hold my training course over two consecutive Sundays. This decision allowed almost all the individuals to participate in all the sessions. However, without several weeks of study together we lost some of the opportunities that would have been realized had I taught under the original plan of an eight-week course.

The third, and possibly greatest weakness of this project is its author. I am not a naturally evangelistic person. One of my unstated goals for this project was to see

personal growth in my own evangelism practices and desires. At one point during my research, I was sitting at a local Panera. I had books open and spread out across a table, my computer was open, and I had several notepads with writing all over them. The man at the table next to me asked what I was working on. When I told him I was working on a doctoral research project he asked some more questions about the topic and focus. When I told him I was developing an evangelism training course, our conversation quickly turned to non-spiritual things. After the man left, I realized I had been given an opportunity for a gospel conversation, the kind of conversation I taught my class to anticipate and look for. But I missed it completely. I think an evangelism training course may be more effective if it were taught by someone who is a natural evangelist. Unfortunately for my class participants, that is not who I am.

What I Would Do Differently

I would change five specific things about the project and training course. First, I would avoid global pandemics. The disruption in my studies and the cultural changes that have occurred following the pandemic made this entire process more difficult. For example, many professional doctoral students are given access to the Boyce Centennial Library in the evenings while they are on campus for the various modules required to fulfill the requirements for graduation. During two of my on-campus modules, the library had extremely limited hours of operation due to COVID-19 restrictions of one sort or another. This meant I had very limited time away from work and home responsibilities to research and write. While I was able to complete all the work, these challenges certainly extended the duration of my program.

Second, both of my curriculum evaluators suggested providing opportunities for real world evangelism exercises. The first evaluator suggested taking students on visitation calls during the week between sessions. While I was unable to do this, I believe giving the participants experiences to practice the methods and tools I taught would likely lead to significant life impact for the student and the people they talk with. If I were to do

this project again, I would find a way to build some of these exercises into the course. Even if that means decreasing the content or number of sessions.

Third, with the benefit of the pre- and post-training results I would make some changes to my training course if I were to do this project again. For example, one individual agreed somewhat that those who do not trust in Christ will suffer eternal judgement in hell.⁶ And another individual simply did not answer that question. When I teach this training course again, I intend to emphasize the biblical teaching of judgment and connect that teaching to the urgency of evangelism for believers.

Another observation from the PEI is that the median score for statements 19 and 20 are extremely low. Statement 19 reads, “I have worked to build relationships with my neighbors for the purpose of sharing the gospel with them,” which had a median score of 3, which is “disagree somewhat.” And statement 20 reads, “I have people in my life who hold me accountable to engage in personal evangelism,” which had a median score of 2.5, which is between “disagree” and “disagree somewhat.” Both results point to areas I would focus on in future teachings of this course. If every Christian is commanded to share the gospel and make disciples, then every Christian should seek to build relationships with unbelievers and look to encourage their fellow brothers and sisters in Christ to do the same.

Next, I would teach the course over three or four weeks, instead of two. The cultural changes already discussed and calendar constraints for the broader church drove the decision to hold the training over two weeks with four sessions each week, however, giving more time between sessions for personal reflection would be beneficial. I would also take the additional time to modify the lesson plans between the sessions to emphasize a particular topic or respond to some question asked by a participant. The added opportunity for these things would have enhanced the experience for the students.

⁶ Statement 3 from the PEI.

Lastly, I would emphasize the impact of the gospel on daily life more. Specifically, the call to holiness and sanctification that is expected of every believer. In preparation for my defense hearing and based on comments in the hearing, I became aware that much of the discussions related to evangelism revolved around what the gospel does for the eternal state of humans, and relatively little teaching was devoted to developing believers who are being transformed more and more into the image of Christ. I believe that some of the hesitancy to share the gospel present at Washington Heights might be related to a lack of focus on the discipline of obedience in evangelism.

Theological Reflections

Several theological reflections come to mind at this point in the process. First, it is clear from Matthew 28:18-20 that all Christians are commanded to take the gospel to the lost. The reality that so few obey should cause church leaders and pastors to take stock of their ministry. God could have chosen any number of ways to take the gospel to the world, but he chose to use humans. In his plan, each Christian should be taking the gospel to lost people, who then get saved and take the gospel on to other lost people, who then get saved and continue that process. If every Christian actively engaged in evangelism in this way, the world would be turned upside down.

Second, as was discussed in chapter 2, there are different approaches to sharing the gospel depending on the background and context of the subject of evangelism. A person with no church background, with no concept of a biblical perspective on life will require a different approach than a person who grew up in the church but is not a Christian. We saw from Jesus's interaction with Nicodemus, in John 3, that he approached that conversation from a very different point than his conversation with the woman at the well in John 4. In Acts 17, at the Jewish synagogue, "Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, 'This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ'" (vv. 2-3). But with the Athenians he showed that

he understood they were religious people and then he shared the gospel with them (vv. 24- 31). Christians seeking to share their faith with friends, family, and others, would do well to remember the context and background of those people. A person's background and worldview shapes how the gospel can be shared.

Third, from the data gathered using the PEI and conversations with training participants, it seems that relatively few Christians actively build relationships with unbelievers with the purpose of sharing the gospel.⁷ This realization was shocking to me as a pastor. The median score in the pre-training survey was 3 (disagree somewhat), and while there was an increase in the median score on the post-training survey, moving to 4 (agree somewhat), these responses certainly reveal a lack of intentionality on the part of these individuals. As a pastor, I have begun to consider ways I can bring more attention to and teaching on the need for Christians to be actively building relationships with unbelievers.

Related to the last reflection is the fact that even fewer individuals have people who hold them accountable to regularly share the gospel.⁸ The pre-training survey median score for this statement was 2.5 (between disagree and disagree somewhat). There was some encouraging improvement in the post-training survey results, moving to 4 (agree somewhat), however, these results also point to a lack of emphasis by church leaders regarding the need for peer accountability toward evangelism among the people at WHBC.

Next, based on conversations I have had with the individuals who participated in the training, as well as conversations with others over the years, it seems as though people who get saved early in life and grow up as a Christian struggle to share their faith more than individuals who came to faith later in life. As a pastor, I am challenged to

⁷ PEI statement 19 says, "I have worked to build relationships with my neighbors for the purpose of sharing the gospel with them."

⁸ PEI statement 20 says, "I have people in my life who hold me accountable to engage in personal evangelism."

consider ways to help those who got saved early in life find the motivation to share the gospel with others. Addressing this may lead to higher rates of participation in evangelism.

Lastly, if the focus of evangelism is primarily on the forgiveness of sins and final destiny in heaven, then believers will likely be ineffective in creating growing disciples being transformed through spiritual disciplines. This lack of focus on change in a believer's obedience may be reflected in the hesitancy to share the gospel. One would anticipate that Christians who strive each day to conform more and more to the image of Christ would be progressively more likely to pursue those things that the Spirit leads them to. And as drawing lost souls to Christ is one of the Spirit's roles, evangelism would likely follow as an activity that would become part of the daily life of more believers.

Personal Reflections

As I think back over the last five years, I am grateful for the opportunity to complete this project in pursuit of the degree. Honestly, there were several points along the way when I wanted to give up and quit, but I glad that my God gave me the strength, and that my wife, and my church family encouraged me to continue. My faith has grown over this time and my ability to apply the gospel has been transformed.

I think back on all the hours spent researching and studying and I am grateful for the exposure to a breadth of theological perspectives on evangelism, missiology, and theology. I am humbled by the generosity of the people of Washington Heights for giving me the opportunity to pursue this degree program. I appreciate all the individuals who participated in the training course. Many of them have known me my whole life, and so it was a privilege to share the material with them. What started as an educational pursuit of a doctoral degree has ended as a significant life achievement and experience.

Conclusion

The purpose of this project was to train individuals to effectively share the gospel with unsaved people they know. The project fulfilled four goals that were measured

in various ways using a range of research methods. The project had various strengths and weaknesses and there were several ways in which I would change the training or the environment, but overall, the project was successful in equipping individuals to share the gospel.

The project was chosen because of my love for Christ and men and women who call Washington Heights their church home. I pray that this project and the continued training of people at WHBC will bring a harvest for God's kingdom for years and years to come. "And [pray] also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel" (Eph 6:19).

APPENDIX 1

PERSONAL EVANGELISM INVENTORY

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed: (1) to collect basic information about the participant, (2) to capture a personal evangelism background, and (3) to measure one's beliefs, practices, and experiences in personal evangelism. This research is being conducted by Justin L. Hoppe for purposes of his Doctor of Educational Ministry project at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.¹ In this research, you will be asked to complete the following survey twice, once at the beginning of the eight-session training and research period and again at its conclusion. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses.

Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

By your completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

General Information

I agree to participate: _____

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

I do not agree to participate: _____

¹ This survey is adapted from Kenneth Loren Rager with permission, "Equipping Personal Evangelists at Life Community Church in Owensboro, Kentucky" (DEdMin project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2019), 87-88.

Please use the following scale to indicate your opinion of your current evangelism beliefs, experiences, and practices.

SD = Strongly Disagree

D = Disagree

DS = Disagree Somewhat

AS = Agree Somewhat

A = Agree

SA= Strongly Agree

1.	I understand the gospel.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
2.	I can articulate my salvation experience.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
3.	I believe that those who do not trust in Christ will suffer eternal judgment in hell.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
4.	Scripture places the responsibility for personal evangelism on every believer.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
5.	I feel equipped to share the gospel with unsaved people I know.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
6.	The fear of rejection keeps me from engaging in personal evangelism.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
7.	When I interact with people in the community, I often wonder if they are Christians or not.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
8.	I pray for opportunities to witness to unbelievers.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
9.	I feel unqualified to engage in personal evangelism because of persistent sin in my life.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
10.	I feel unqualified to engage in personal evangelism because of inconsistency in my walk with Christ.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
11.	The Gospel is helpful for everyday life.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
12.	I want to engage in personal evangelism consistently.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
13.	I rarely think about engaging in personal evangelism.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

14.	I do not have time to invest in the lives of unbelievers.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
15.	I have shared the gospel with an unbeliever in the last 12 months.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
16.	I have led someone to receive Christ.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
17.	I have an ongoing friendship with a lost person.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
18.	I look for opportunities to introduce the gospel into conversations with unsaved people.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
19.	I have worked to build relationships with my neighbors for the purpose of sharing the gospel with them.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
20.	I have people in my life who hold me accountable to engage in personal evangelism.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

APPENDIX 2

CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC

Transformational Evangelism Curriculum Evaluation Tool

1 = Insufficient 2 = Requires attention 3 = Suffices 4 = Exemplary

Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The lesson is clearly relevant to evangelism training.					
The material is faithful to the Bible's teaching on evangelism.					
The lesson is theologically sound.					
The thesis of the lesson is clearly stated.					
The points of the lesson clearly support the thesis.					
The lesson contains practical points of application.					
The lesson is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the material.					
Overall, the lesson is clearly presented.					

APPENDIX 3

MINISTRY PLAN EVALUATION

Three Year Ministry Plan Evaluation					
1 = insufficient; 2 = requires attention; 3 = sufficient; 4 = exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Purpose					
This plan lays out a perceived need for evangelism in the community around WHBC.					
This purpose of this plan addresses the need for a transformational evangelism through individuals at WHBC.					
Action Steps					
The plan has clear steps of action.					
The action steps are achievable.					
The plan takes into consideration church limitations.					
Training Methods					
The training methods outlined in this plan are effective for teaching participants content.					
The training methods outlined in this plan are effective for equipping participants for practice.					

APPENDIX 4
EVANGELISTIC PRAYER LIST

My People

APPENDIX 5
LESSON PLANS

**Lesson Plan Outline for 80960
Evangelism Training at Washington Heights Baptist Church**

Lesson 1

Context

- Evangelism Training Course taught at Washington Heights Baptist Church
- Adult individuals at Washington Heights with a desire to learn how to share the gospel more effectively with unsaved people they know.

Content

- An eight-session course designed to train Christians to effectively share the gospel. This course will focus on: (1) The arch of redemptive history showing the plan of redemption through Scripture; (2) the role of prayer in evangelism; (3) the use of a personal gospel story in evangelism; (4) techniques and methods for introducing the gospel into conversations and life events.

Lesson Plan

- 1) **Lesson One: The Biggest Story part 1**
 - a) Lesson 1 will introduce the arch of redemptive history (Creation, Fall, Redemption, Glory) through a survey of texts of Scripture. It will be demonstrated that God had a plan to redeem humanity from sin and death from the very beginning. It will be demonstrated that the testimony of Scripture includes frequent foreshadowing of ultimate redemption in Christ's death and resurrection.
- 2) ***Learning Outcome: By the end of this session, students will be able to identify the arch of redemptive history the Bible.***
- 3) Outline
 - a) **Introduction**
 - i) This class is about introducing you to the Biggest Story in the world...
 - (1) It's about recognizing that since the opening pages of the Bible, God had a plan for mankind to spend eternity in his presence enjoying him.
 - (2) We see the world today and know that this is not our current state (i.e., in God's presence, enjoying him).
 - ii) We can identify a grand arch of history.
 - (1) From Genesis 1:1 – Rev 22:21 we can see four major acts in Redemptive History
 - (2) Creation; Fall; Redemption; Glory

b) Considering Creation

i) Creation Gen 1 and 2

(1) In the beginning God

(a) Existed before Creation

(b) Created all things

(i) What was created in Gen 1?

(ii) Is there anything special about mankind that makes us different?

(2) What was the nature of the world in Genesis 1 and 2?

(3) Relationships: right between God, Man, and Nature

(a) Discuss

(4) What did Adam and Eve do? What was the world like? Consider.

c) What Happened??

i) Fall – Genesis 3

(1) Now the Serpent – What is this? What kind of relationship to God, Man, Nature?

(a) What does the serpent do? Tries to convince Eve that God wants to hide truth from them. Tempts her with the promise of the privilege to know right from wrong. Questions God's goodness.

(b) Why did this matter? Why was it such a big deal if Adam and Eve knew the difference between Good and Evil?

(2) Consequences - Brokenness

(a) What breaks first? Innocence – Adam and Eve aware of nakedness, hide from God and try to cover over shame.

(b) What breaks next? Relationship – God seeks them, “Adam, what have you done?” Adam, “this is YOUR fault God, this woman, YOU gave me?” Eve, “The serpent...”

(c) What breaks next? Everything.

(i) Eve – pain in childbirth. Want to rule over your husband. Strife in relationship

(ii) Adam – ground is cursed. Work is painful. Death.

d) Things Fall Apart

i) Life in a Genesis 3 world

(1) The thoughts of man were always evil all the time. Gen 6:5

(a) Flood – wipe out sinful man – with a promise.

(b) Patriarchs – Abraham, life from death, beloved Son;

(c) Exodus – God's people in slavery. God sends a rescuer. Sets up system for atonement.

(d) Prophecy – waiting for the One.

(2) What is the nature of this time period?

(a) Relationships – God, Man, and Nature

(b) What hope is there?

e) Redemption

i) At the appointed time

(1) Through history God pursues people

(a) Adam, Cain, Noah, Abraham etc...

- (i) Adam – “Where are you?”
- (ii) Cain – “What have you done?”
- (2) Jesus brings redemption, but first
 - (a) He preaches coming judgement
 - (b) He preaches a way of escape
 - (c) He makes the way
- (3) What happens because of the Cross?
 - (a) Think about as many facets as possible
- (4) What did Jesus leave us on earth to do?
- (5) Hope in the darkness
 - (a) Curses hold hope – serpent cursed, first glimpse of snake-crusher; Eve – offspring will be the snake-crusher
 - (b) Shed blood – God made clothes from animal skin. What happened to the animal? Died to cover the shame of sin.

f) **What happens next? Glory**

- i) Jesus went to heaven
- ii) He left his followers here to pursue lost and broken people
 - (1) How long? What’s the point?
- iii) How then Shall we live?

g) **Summary Thoughts and Reflections**

- i) **What are the four parts to the arch of redemptive history?**
- ii) **What are the main consequences of sin in the world?**

Lesson 2

Lesson 2 Plan

4) **Lesson Two: The Biggest Story part 2**

- a) lesson 2 will consider the value of personal testimony in the conversations about the gospel. Techniques for preparing and crafting a personal testimony will be discussed. Special attention will be given to the importance of including transparency, specifically where contextually appropriate, when sharing one's personal story.
- b) ***Learning Outcome: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to relate the gospel through their personal testimony.***
- c) *Key Phrase – Where my story meets someone else's.*

5) Outline

a) **Introduction**

- i) How does God's Plan of Redemption through History impact your story?
 - (1) This class will consider the personal testimony of participants and provide a framework for students to prepare to write their story.
 - (2) Why is story telling compelling?
 - (a) Examples of stories that pull us in
 - (i) Commercials, Football stories about players, theater and movies
 - (b) Examples of stories that teach
 - (i) Home Alone – selfish spoiled kid turns into loving good kid
 - (ii) Toy Story – new kid on the block pushes out key friendship, end being great friends
 - (c) Humans attempt to make sense of the world through stories.

b) **What is a Gospel Story? As Christians we should be telling eternal stories.**

- i) What elements should be included?
 - (1) Gospel moment
 - (2) Influence of Scripture
 - (3) Influence of others
 - (4) Change from Old to New or Impact on life
 - (5) Ask for a response
- ii) Three Formats for consideration
 - (1) Straightforward beginning-middle-end
 - (2) Looking back from here Now-Beginning-middle-now
 - (3) Transformation – compare old and new
- iii) Example
 - (1) Justin Share story Ephesians
 - (2) Consider format and opportunities for using this

c) **Personal Testimony Tools**

- i) My Story (developed by Navigators)
 - (1) Tools they present
- ii) Evaluate Watermark Church – Life Map¹

¹ Watermark Church, "Life Map Guide," accessed November 1, 2023, <http://cms-cloud.watermark.org/Lifemap-Guide.pdf>.

- iii) Give time for discussion
- d) **Personal Reflection time**
 - i) Consider people in your story who need to hear the gospel. Make a list of people. Who has God placed in your sphere of influence that needs to hear the gospel? Engage with people of peace. Engage in relationships.
 - ii) Consider God's pursuit
 - iii) Change because of Gospel
 - iv) How does the gospel give you hope?
- e) Homework
 - i) Write out your story 3 times.
 - ii) Refine your story
 - iii) Practice your story

Lesson 3

Lesson 3 Plan

6) Lesson Three: The Greatest Commission

- a) Lesson 3 will focus on the call to take the good news of the gospel to the lost. Matthew 28:18-20 will be discussed, and the implications of this commission will be considered.
- b) **Learning Outcome:** *By the end of this lesson, students will be able to explain how the Great Commission guides the life of the believer.*

7) Read Matthew 28:18-20

8) All authority in Heaven and on Earth

- a) What does Jesus mean when he says all authority? How does this impact our evangelism?
 - i) He has authority to accomplish his plans
 - ii) He has authority to call disciples
 - iii) He has authority to heal
 - iv) He has authority to cast out demons
 - v) He has authority over death
 - vi) He has authority to forgive sins
 - vii) He has authority to hold all things together
 - viii) He has authority to judge
- b) How does Christ's Authority empower Great Commission?
 - i) discuss

9) Go and Make Disciples

- a) Baptize them – what does this mean? What is implied? That they will believe
- b) Teach them – what? “All that I have commanded you”
 - i) All of Jesus' teaching – The red letters?
 - ii) “You search the Scriptures . . . It is they that bear witness of me” - John 5:39-44 OT
 - iii) 2 Tim 2:16-17 – “All Scripture is profitable for...”
- c) What are these disciples supposed to do?
 - i) Wash, Rinse, Repeat

10) Behold I am with you Always!

- a) Even to the end of the age
 - i) What does this mean?
 - ii) How does this impact you?
 - iii) What does it mean for the work of making disciples?
 - iv) Discuss

11) Prayer for your people

- a) Any updates
- b) Any opportunities to build relationships?

12) Homework

- a) Continue to refine your story
- b) Pray for your people

Lesson 4

Lesson 4 Plan

- 13) **Lesson Four: What's the secret? Prayer launches evangelism**
- a) Lesson 4 will consider common barriers to sharing the gospel. Special attention will be given to the charge to “be prepared to give an answer for the hope you have” (1 Pet 3:15). The importance of prayer as the fuel for evangelism will be discussed. Evangelism prayer practices will be introduced.
 - b) ***Learning Outcome: By the end of this session, students will recognize how an intentional prayer life focused on sharing the gospel will bring opportunities for conversation.***
- 14) **Research from Barna and Lifeway – Books *Translating the Great Commission and Reviving Evangelism***
- a) What is the current state of evangelism?
 - i) How many Christians regularly share their faith?
 - ii) How often do people share?
 - iii) How are we doing? Survey results...
 - b) What are common barriers to sharing your faith?
 - i) Feeling unqualified?
 - ii) Feeling unprepared?
 - iii) Feeling no urgency?
- 15) **Breaking Barriers**
- a) We are all unqualified to receive the gospel...which is why we are perfectly qualified to share it!
 - b) What are common barriers? – fear of rejection, anxiety, feeling like I won't know the answers.
 - c) Equipping the saints for the ministry includes training in evangelism
 - d) He is coming back, there is no reason to wait.
 - e) We believe in judgement day
- 16) **Prayer as the source of motivation**
- a) How did prayer affect the evangelism efforts of the early church?
 - i) Jesus
 - (1) Matthew 9:35 – “Pray to the Lord of the Harvest”
 - (2) John 17:20 – “I pray, not for these only”
 - ii) Paul
 - (1) Romans 10:1 – “My hearts desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved”
 - (2) Eph 6:19 – Paul prays for the right words and boldness
 - iii) Acts
 - (1) 4:29 – “Grant your servants boldness” – in the face of persecution
 - b) Posture of Prayer
 - i) Are you praying that “people” will come to know Jesus?
 - ii) Are you praying that “your people” will come to know Jesus?
 - iii) Are you praying that Jesus would use you to lead Joe to saving faith in the gospel?
 - iv) Are these different? Why does it matter?
 - c) Intentional Prayer
 - i) Lord use me

ii) Lord change them

iii) Lord show me

17) Homework

a) Refine your story

b) Pray for your list by name, asking for opportunities

c) Engage in conversation

Lesson 5

Lesson 5 Plan

18) Lesson Five: What's your story? Invite others to share – hopes, dreams, fears

- a) Lesson 5 will consider the examples provided by Jesus (John 3, 4 Nicodemus and Woman at the well) and Paul (Acts 17 Jews and Athenians). The value of contextualized, personal interaction in evangelism will be evaluated. The importance of combining personal gospel story, gospel tools, and their story will be discussed.
- b) ***Learning Outcome: By the end of this session, students will know how to introduce the gospel into conversation by applying the gospel to life events of another.***

INTRO

Did anyone have conversations this week?

As we have been thinking about evangelism, we have considered a range of tools, approaches, techniques. Hopefully you've been considering people and opportunities for sharing the gospel with people in your life. Sometimes we may have conversation with a person that we have no background information or context with. Other times we have longstanding relationships with a person and then eventually have a gospel conversation.

We may also have conversations with individuals who are clearly church-ed or pre-evangelized. But other people we talk to may have no gospel awareness. Our approaches must be different in these two cases. In "Church-ed America" you could reasonably assume that most people had enough of an exposure to Christianity that the 4 Spiritual law could make an impact. That is not so today. We're going to look at 2 examples from Jesus' life and 2 examples from Paul's life.

19) Jesus and Paul give us examples

- a) Jesus
 - i) John 3:1-21 Jesus and Nicodemus
 - (1) Nico is interested in who Jesus is
 - (2) Jesus doesn't answer his questions right away
 - (3) Nico is confused
 - (4) Jesus presents the way to eternal life – spiritual reality, not physical only.
New Life=New Birth
 - (5) Jesus reveals that Nicodemus' current belief system was inadequate
 - (6) Jesus addressed the real issue preventing Nico from eternal life, not the questions Nico had
 - ii) John 4:1-45 Jesus and Woman at the Well
 - (1) Jesus was willing to talk to the woman
 - (2) Jesus asked for help (huge!)
 - (3) Woman started small talk
 - (4) Jesus moved the conversation to spiritual things
 - (5) Woman tries to avoid the issue
 - (6) Jesus reveals that he knows what's happening
 - (7) Jesus reveals who he is
- b) Paul
 - i) Acts 17 – Jews
 - (1) Paul entered synagogue
 - (2) Reasoned with the Jews

- (3) They objected
- (4) He reasoned
- (5) Some believed
- (6) Some didn't
- ii) Acts 17 – Gentiles
 - (1) Paul entered the city square
 - (2) Paul referenced the religious attitude of the people
 - (3) Paul revealed that he knew the “unknown” God.
 - (4) People questioned how this could be
 - (5) Paul directed conversation to explanation of God’s purpose and plan
 - (6) Shares the gospel
 - (7) Some believed, some mocked, and others wanted more.
- c) What do we learn from these examples?
 - i) People often leave open opportunities to pursue gospel conversations
 - ii) People tend to get distracted when you are making a gospel point
 - iii) Look for openings for bringing the gospel in
 - iv) T. E. skydiving story. Jumped from the plane without a parachute. If you are living life without Jesus, you’re not connected to the parachute he’s offered.
 - d) Can gospel tools help us if we see an opening? How?
- 20) Discuss times when someone left open a conversation?
- 21) Homework
 - a) Pray for your people
 Reach out and engage

Lesson 6

Lesson 6 Plan

22) **Lesson six: No Jesus Jukes**

- a) Lesson 6 will examine the methods and techniques for sharing the gospel with others. Tools (i.e., The Romans Road, 3 Circles, The Bridge) will be explained and demonstrated. Techniques for sharing the gospel will be evaluated for effectiveness in current culture. This session will be largely focused on practicing these tools and discussion.

23) ***Learning Outcome: By the end of this session, students will be able to share the gospel using a gospel tool with a classmate.***

24) ***Gospel Tools***

- a) What is a Gospel tool?
 - i) A simple way of packaging the gospel message for presenting it to others.
 - ii) Why not just share the gospel?
 - (1) We want to clearly present the gospel. These tools provide a framework for remembering and emphasizing the key aspects of the gospel.
- b) Romans Road
 - i) 3:23; 6:23; 5:8; 10:9-10
- c) The Bridge Illustration
 - i) <https://www.navigators.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/navigators-bridge-to-life.pdf>
 - ii) Uses bridge illustration to demonstrate separation from God and Christ's work on the Cross. Based on Romans Road
- d) 3 Circles
 - i) <https://www.namb.net/evangelism/3circles/>
 - ii) God's design
 - iii) Brokenness
 - iv) Gospel
- e) One Verse
 - i) Uses Romans 6:23

25) ***How to use tools***

- a) Understand the format and the purpose
- b) Be familiar with the tool
- c) Practice presenting it
- d) When do I use this?

26) ***Combine your story with one of these tools***

- a) How do the different tools blend with your story?
- b) Which tool lends itself to being used to follow up your story?

27) ***Practice***

- a) Pair up, share your story and introduce a gospel tool at the end

28) **Homework**

- a) Pray for your people
- b) Ask God to give you opportunities to share your story
- c) Practice one of these Gospel tools

Lesson 7

Lesson 7 Plan

29) Lesson Seven: How does the gospel apply here?

- a) Lesson 7 will consider what how the gospel applies to various life experiences. Special attention will be given to painful experiences in life. What is a Christian response to hurting people?
- b) **Learning Outcome: By the end of this lesson, students will know how to apply the gospel to life events in the lives of others.**

30) Revisit Creation, Fall, Redemption, Glory

- a) Discuss identifying worldviews and contrast how a biblical worldview answers the questions – Where did we come from? What’s the point of life? Where are we going next? What is the problem with the world?

31) Define the Gospel. Good news that Jesus came into the world to bring restoration to the brokenness in the world, through his sinless life, substitutionary death, and resurrection.

32) How does the Gospel apply to life experiences? This session will rely on Counseling materials and Scripture passages

- a) Marriage/Singleness
 - i) How does the gospel affect marriages? Is it God’s plan for me to be single? What does the gospel say about abusive marriages?
- b) Parenting
 - i) How does the gospel inform my parenting? What about when kids hurt us? Does God still love my kid who walked away?
- c) Difficult relationships
 - i) If you only knew my (boss, neighbor, mother-in-law, etc) you would understand why God can’t...I can’t... What does the gospel say about hard people?
- d) Challenging Life experiences
 - i) Where is God in my suffering? Why did God let my (mom, dad, son, daughter, etc) die? Where was God when...?
- e) We have to know that GOSPEL has made a difference to us if we are going to help others face these scenarios.

33) Key Considerations

- a) Do I have the relational credibility to share?
 - i) Have I been around? Do they know I care? Do I know how to share their burden?
- b) How can I love this person well?
 - i) What not to say...the power of silent presence.

34) Homework

- a) Pray for your people
 - i) Pray that God would allow you to engage one of them when they are sensitive to the Holy Spirit. Ask that they would trust you enough to share.
- b) Practice your story with a gospel tool.

Lesson 8

Lesson 8 Plan

35) Lesson Eight: The Biggest Story part 3

- a) Lesson 8 will focus on conversations among students. Role play scenarios will provide opportunities for students to practice skills developed over the 8-week course.
- b) ***Learning Outcome: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to effectively share the gospel with another using personal story, gospel tools and personal, contextual application of the gospel.***

36) Conversation among Students

- a) This session will be spent with students in conversation reviewing the course the material.

37) Case Studies discussions.

- a) How does the message of the gospel impact people's lives? How does it bring hope when facing these issues?
 - i) Marriage/Singleness issues
 - ii) Parenting issues
 - iii) Relationship troubles
 - iv) Life Experience hardships

38) Share the gospel story from Scripture

- a) What is the Arch? Creation, Fall, Redemption, Glory
- b) What is John 3:16?
- c) Romans 6:23

39) Share your Story

- a) A few students will share their 5–7-minute story and demonstrate a gospel tool.

40) Homework

- a) Keep praying for your people
- b) Complete the Post-Training Survey

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ABSTRACT

EQUIPPING MEMBERS AND ATTENDERS FOR EVANGELISM AT WASHINGTON HEIGHTS BAPTIST CHURCH, DAYTON, OHIO

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2024
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Timothy Beougher

This project taught the biblical, theological, and practical basis of how to equip believers to be engaged in transformational evangelism of select individuals at Washington Heights Baptist Church, in Dayton, Ohio, and provides a three-year ministry plan for intentionally reaching individuals in community.

Chapter 1 describes the purpose, goals, rationale, and research methodology for the project. Chapter 2 exegetes three New Testament passages and provides the biblical and theological background for personal and contextualized transformational evangelism. Chapter 3 discusses theoretical and practical issues related to transformational evangelistic relationships characterized by prayerful anticipation of God's working in the life of the unbeliever, generous hospitality, and modeled vulnerability. Chapter 4 outlines the process giving the Evangelistic Practices Survey to the select individuals, tabulating the results, preparing and presenting the evangelism training and giving the Evangelistic Practices Survey a second time to measure the difference in pre- and post-training. Chapter 4 also provides the three-year ministry plan. Chapter 5 evaluates the project as a whole. The purpose and goals of the project are examined, and personal and biblical reflections are offered.

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