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DEVELOPING AN EVANGELISTIC STRATEGY FOR
HARVEST COMMUNITY CHURCH IN
INDIANA, PENNSYLVANIA

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Presented to
the Faculty of
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
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APPROVAL SHEET

DEVELOPING AN EVANGELISTIC STRATEGY FOR
HARVEST COMMUNITY CHURCH IN
INDIANA, PENNSYLVANIA

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PREFACE

I am indebted to many who aided me in faith. Among them, George Sanders, who taught a new Christian to love the local church. Herb Rice proved by example that passionate, biblical preaching changes minds and hearts.

Educationally, I am indebted to the late Dr. Terry Hulbert, who taught me to put on the sandals of the writers of the Bible. Dr. Charles Young taught the discipline of writing manuscripts while preaching without them. Dr. Brad Mullen showed me that good theology is living and passionate. My thanks to God for these men.

Of course, I would be remiss if I did not thank the hard-working team at the Billy Graham School at Southern Seminary. The professors and support staff served me and my fellow students well. Among them, Dr. William Henard became to me not only a teacher and doctoral supervisor, but a co-worker and friend. I am thankful to God for knowing him.

My heart holds dear two local churches. First Baptist Church in Union, New Jersey, and Harvest Community Church of Western Pennsylvania. The elders at Harvest gave me the time and resources to study at Southern Seminary. I am thankful for their investment.

Finally, I thank God for my family, my safety in the storms, my delight in the joys of life, and my brothers and sisters in the household of our God. After Jesus Himself, they remain the greatest gift God has given me. All success is shared.

Mike Greiner

Slate Lick, Pennsylvania

December 2018

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Harvest Community Church in Western Pennsylvania has always known growth. The church is twenty years old with 1,000 weekly attenders across four campuses. None of the campuses has ever declined in membership or attendance, however, there is always the potential for decline. Some might ask, “Why focus on attendance?” At Harvest, our central strategy for sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ is to invite people to attend our events and services; at every event and service the gospel of Jesus Christ is presented.¹ Faith comes by hearing the gospel—we are dedicated to declaring it. Even though inviting people to church is a primary means of evangelism for Harvest, we are also very involved in outreach of various kinds. We desire to equip our people to understand and share the good news to everyone they interact with daily. Furthermore, we have ministries designed to target specific categories of unbelievers with the gospel.

Instead of resting on the status quo, the purpose of this project was to initiate a fresh outreach structure and process that increases the number of people invited to attend Harvest Community Church (Harvest) worship services in the city of Indiana,

¹ Although we constantly encourage our people to share the gospel to their friends, family, and co-workers, we also stress the value of inviting people to join them at church services, especially weekend worship. We do this for three reasons. First, we know that people sometimes struggle to explain the gospel, and we want to assure them that when they invite people to church events and services, those people will hear the good news presented clearly. The second reason we stress inviting people to services and events is that it compels our leaders to never forget to include the cross of Jesus in all we do. Finally, we know that one of the best ways to train our people to share the gospel to others is to share the cross regularly to them. The constant hearing of a simple gospel presentation helps the people to grasp the simplicity of sharing Christ with others. That said, we do not adopt the “invest and invite” strategy to the exclusion of more outreach-oriented ministry. Practically, when it comes to the attractional versus missional models, we take a both-and approach.

Pennsylvania, while also giving our people more opportunities to share the gospel in their communities.

Context

This project took place in the context of the Indiana Campus of Harvest, which has been in existence for four years. The congregation was formed by the efforts of the pastoral team of Harvest Community Church in Kittanning, with primary leadership from Scott Rising who now serves as the campus pastor. Initially, Scott met with dozens of people, invited many into his home and to Sunday worship, and organized volunteers to help with Sunday services. Scott has also been responsible for signage, advertising, and most of the community involvement required by the Indiana congregation.

In a little over a year and a half, God had blessed the campus with about 100 people. With the numerical increase came an increase in responsibilities for Pastor Scott, diminishing the amount of time and energy he devoted to outreach. Although he has help with the joyful burdens of routine church work, like setting up and overseeing children's ministry, managing Sunday worship services, developing and overseeing the worship team, attending to the financial processes of receiving offerings, developing a process for identifying guests, and assimilating new members, he desires to include more people in the outreach efforts of the church toward the surrounding community.

The town of Indiana is populated by 30,000 people from August until May. Every summer, the population is cut in half, as the local state university empties out after the spring semester. There are only a handful of evangelical churches in town, and none that could be called a mega-church, leaving a great need to reach the lost. The university provides an ever-changing population of students from around the state and around the world. Harvest has only begun to tap into the potential student ministries. Of course, in a college town, the backbone of the church requires a committed core of local people. What could be done to engage the homeowners and other full-time residents of Indiana? Pushing out beyond the town, at least 16 rural communities of 3,000 or less look to Indiana as the

nearest center for commerce and services (i.e., the mall, large stores, hospital, eateries, government agencies, etc.). Many people live in these small towns, like Shelocta, with a population of 110, or Marion Center with 451, and have very little to choose from in the way of evangelical churches. What sort of strategies could be used to reach out to this rural population? How does that differ from the strategies needed to reach the Indiana residents or Indiana University students? How can Harvest Community Church mobilize to bring the people in these areas into the church to hear the gospel? These are the kind of question that were considered during the work done for this project.

A team of volunteers was formed, tasked with studying the job of outreach in the region, in order to form a practical evangelical strategy. Harvest preaches the gospel of Jesus at every service, and is strong in hospitality; therefore, a simple approach to outreach, like inviting people to come to church, can be very effective. Such invitations can come about through a myriad of creative methods. What were the ways that Harvest could form a presence at favorite area locations or rural events? The outreach team explored all these possibilities and more.

Beyond inviting people to church events to hear the gospel, the culture of Harvest is rich in outreach efforts. We are known as a church that helps people when they are down and out. We have a team that regularly holds Bible studies for both men and women in the county jail. Many people receive Jesus in jail and, when freed, attend Harvest. We hold Bible studies in the local residential drug treatment program. We also work in several retirement homes, teaching about Jesus. We are involved in many “good deed” ministries that allow us to share the gospel regularly, like giving gifts to the poor at Christmas time, starting Bible study groups in the local veterans home, reaching out to public schools through the local pregnancy center, repairing homes for the poor, working with Special Olympics, etc. With this missional culture already established, imaginative ideas that increase practical evangelism outside of the church were naturally welcomed as a part of a new evangelistic strategy. The people called to serve on this team realized

their responsibility to work within their gifting and be as imaginative as necessary to reach their community.

Forming a team with a clear strategy can mobilize the entire church to engage in the needed evangelistic ministry to the community thereby fulfilling the Great Commission the church has been given.

Rationale

Now is the time for the congregation to be empowered and challenged to take on the responsibility for evangelism in the life of this church. “Strike while the iron is hot,” the old maxim goes. As a new and growing congregation, the Indiana campus of Harvest is alive with enthusiasm. They have begun finding ways to interact with the community through local holiday festivals and other local events. The Volunteer Outreach Team (VOT) that was created focused on new ideas and strategies for evangelism and outreach.

In Ephesians, Paul instructs the shepherds of the flock to “equip the saints for the work of ministry.” The outreach ministry of the church is not solely the responsibility of the elders of the church; rather, the biblical directive is for the elders to equip the saints to do the work of ministry (Eph 4:12). With an enthusiastic congregation, and the elders’ efforts to help train them, the time was right to form our VOT.

In John 9:4, Jesus reminded the apostles that they must work while it was “day” for the night was coming when “no one can work.” In like manner, the congregation of Harvest’s Indiana campus must seize the present moment to reach people for Jesus and grow the church. The Lord gives each individual, and each congregation, only so many days to do this work. The souls of men, women, boys, and girls are at stake. Forming a VOT did not guarantee that everyone in the region will hear the gospel nor that the church will grow, however, the odds of success in growing the health and size of the church have increased as a new outreach strategy came into being.

Purpose

In light of the current needs at Harvest Community Church, the purpose of this project has been to develop an evangelistic strategy for reaching the community that surrounds the Indiana campus with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Goals

Developing an evangelistic strategy for Harvest Community Church has been guided by three goals:

1. The first goal was to identify and enlist four team members to serve on the VOT.
2. The second goal was to equip team members in four primary areas related to evangelistic efforts through Harvest Community Church including the church's mission, biblical motivation, creative strategic planning, and gospel presentation.
3. The third goal was for the VOT to develop an evangelistic strategy.

Research Methodology

As stated, the first goal was to identify and enlist team members to serve on the VOT. To be initially eligible to serve, members had to have participated in church activities for at least three months, including regular attendance at Sunday worship and at a community group. Also, each member must be in good standing in regard to church discipline issues and in agreement with the statement of faith of Harvest.² The goal was be measured through an interview process³ with each potential volunteer in order to determine fit for the team. The interviews consisted of inquiry regarding willingness to serve on the team, historical experience with Harvest Community Church, and agreement with Harvest's statement of faith. Upon completion of the interviews, Scott Rising⁴ and I

² The statement of faith of Harvest is found in a booklet known as the "Heart of Harvest," which contains the statement of faith, philosophy of ministry, the details of its mission, and other similar data.

³ See appendix 1. This evaluation, as well as all instruments used in this project, were subject to SBTS ethic requirements and gained necessary approval from SBTS before use.

⁴ Scott Rising is the campus pastor of the Indiana campus of Harvest Community Church.

approved a list of recommended candidates. This goal was successfully met when four qualified volunteers had been invited to participate and have agreed to serve as part of the VOT.⁵

The second goal was to equip team members in four primary areas related to evangelistic efforts through Harvest Community Church, including the church's mission, biblical motivation, creative planning, and gospel presentation. The training was conducted during a one-day seminar that addressed these vital components. This goal was measured by administering a post-training evaluation⁶ that evaluated the team members' level of knowledge concerning the church's mission, biblical motivation, and creative planning processes. Additionally, team members' competency regarding evangelistic presentations was be measured using role-play exercises utilizing an evaluation rubric.⁷ The participants subsequently were observed as they shared the gospel in a live situation with the same evaluation mechanism applied. This goal was successfully met when each team member scored more than 80 percent on the post-training evaluation and demonstrated a rating of competent in presenting the gospel in the live one-on-one situation according to the evaluation rubric.

The third goal was for the VOT to develop an evangelistic strategy to expand the reach of Harvest into the geographic regions surrounding the Indiana campus. This goal was measured by a panel of three campus pastors from Harvest who utilized a rubric

⁵ I served on the VOT as an extra member. I did not count toward the four qualified member minimum, though I was available throughout the process to help when needed. Rising did not serve as a member of the VOT, but he voluntarily participated in the full-day training. He did none of the teaching. The aim was to develop a team that required his minimal participation in an ongoing manner. Even so, he was free to involve himself to the extent he felt necessary to fulfill his responsibilities as Campus Pastor. Going beyond the scope of this project, the next step is to form more teams that require minimal elder involvement, using what we have learned from this project as a foundation or a prototype.

⁶ See appendix 2.

⁷ See appendix 3. Feedback was provided after both the role-play and the live one-on-one gospel presentation experience.

to evaluate the practicality of the plan, assess the resources required for implementation, and to express a general agreement with the choice of action steps listed in the plan.⁸ This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of five of seven of all the rubric evaluation indicators met or exceeded the sufficiency level. Last of all, success was determined by gaining final approval of the strategic plan from the executive elders of Harvest Community Church. This approval process occurred in a regularly scheduled meeting and was recorded in the minutes.

Delimitations

This project was limited to a seventeen-week period. This timeframe was adequate to recruit and train the VOT, for them to develop the evangelistic strategy, and for that strategy to be approved by the executive elders of Harvest Community Church.

Conclusion

The Bible provides many examples of planned evangelistic efforts, especially in the life of Jesus and the apostles. Jesus, for example, targeted the regions of Israel and, for a brief while, Samaria. He thought about where He needed to go, when He needed to go there, and the audience He needed to reach at each stop. Likewise, Paul determined to reach the Gentiles for Christ by forming plans for mission trips. He knew when a work had finished in one area, and where he desired to work next. Completing God's mission on the earth requires planning. Forming a church-based team that develops a plan to evangelize locally follows the example of the New Testament. Next is an examination of the biblical and theological foundations of this project.

⁸ See appendix 4.

CHAPTER 2
THE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR
THE FORMATION OF AN OUTREACH PLAN

By the plan and power of God, the Bible demonstrates that the church expands through the evangelistic efforts of its members. These efforts consist of planned, strategic efforts, as well as spontaneous approaches to evangelism, in addition to a willingness to venture across cultural boundaries.

Examples of Evangelism Found in John 1 and 4

The early chapters of the Gospel of John provide examples of how evangelism occurred during Jesus' earthly ministry. In each case, God expands the number of Jesus' followers through both spontaneous methods and strategically-planned evangelism. In one case, evangelism required intentionally venturing across cultural boundaries.

Philip, Andrew, and Spontaneous Evangelism (John 1:6-51)

John 1:6 teaches two things about John the Baptist: he was sent from God, and his name was John. He was the first person mentioned in this Gospel who is not one of the members of the Trinity. John's importance was linked to his function: he came to declare the coming of another. "He came as a witness, to testify about the Light"(v. 7).¹ John did not come into the world to draw attention to himself, but to cast all eyes towards Jesus. Koestenberger establishes John's function:

This role of eyewitness is both vital and humble. It is vital because eyewitnesses are required to establish the truthfulness of certain facts. Yet it is humble because the eyewitness is not the center of attention. Rather, eyewitnesses must testify truthfully

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible.

to what they have seen and heard—no more and no less. The Baptist fulfilled this task with distinction. The last time he is mentioned in this Gospel, it is said of him that ‘all that John said about this man [Jesus] was true’ (10:41).²

John came to tell about another man.³ He also came to warn that the presence of the Messiah required individual preparation. “Repent and be baptized” was John’s common refrain—a message motivated by his declaration that the Savior was close at hand.⁴

In a way, John is not only the forerunner of the Messiah, but also the trailblazer for evangelists that would follow him. He shows that salvation does not come by the power the one who proclaims, but through the One who is proclaimed. Yet, the one who proclaims is needed from the very start. In the years that followed, the twelve apostles joined the initial witness of John, declaring Jesus to Israel, and, eventually, to the world. Consequently, thousands of contemporaries added their voices to the apostles, and went about preaching Jesus. History testifies that this simple pattern—Jesus’s followers declaring Him to others—continues on to this very day. John the Baptist, then, was the first link of an unending chain of witnesses.

² Andreas J. Kostenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 33.

³ Unlike the synoptics, John’s Gospel speaks little of the Baptist’s background and origins, leaving out the baptism of Jesus and the voice of God the Father speaking from above, and many other details. This chapter focuses on what John 1 makes primary: the witness of John, even more than his history, or his place in Jewish history, or his representation as the last prophetic voice before the arrival of Messiah, etc. Barrett claims that John, the Gospel writer, sought to emphasize Jesus as before and greater than the Baptist. John the Baptist’s function as witness is central. Barrett states that the Gospel writer’s motive in the first chapter was “the desire to concentrate attention upon the Person to whom the Baptist bore witness.” C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to John* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 171. For the purpose of this project, most of what the New Testament has to say about John the Baptist need not be covered. It is the example of how John verbally witnessed about the coming Messiah that is the concern of this work.

⁴ It is important to acknowledge that John not only pointed to Jesus as Messiah, but he also called people to repent and be baptized. I do not seek to leave out this important function of his ministry. Yet, even repentance and baptism are without meaning without the Messiah. Indeed, the motive to “repent and be baptized” is to prepare oneself for the arrival of the Messiah. Now that Jesus has finished His work on the cross and returned to the right hand of God, repentance and baptism remain as essential in the process of evangelism. Conversion that does not result in repentance and baptism is biblically incomplete, and, in the case of repentance, not even conversion. This chapter mainly examines the transmission of the message of Christ and, consequently, John’s ministry of proclamation, more than his ministry of repentance and baptism.

John the Baptist was unique among men—a one-of-a-kind man. Jesus testified as much.⁵ Yet, his simple method of declaring the Christ became the pattern for spontaneous evangelism to be followed by all, in any age. John pointed to Jesus, and he let the Savior do the rest. One need not copy the Baptist’s lifestyle in order to copy his method of pointing to the greatness of the Messiah.

John told all who came to him that the Messiah was on the way. When Jesus finally arrived, John made His identity clear. Many who heard John did not believe his witness, but it was not his ministry to convince his countrymen to believe in Jesus—only to point to Him.⁶ It was the job of Jesus to convince His followers to believe, as in the following example: “Again the next day John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked at Jesus as He walked, and said, ‘Behold, the Lamb of God!’ The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus” (1:35-37).

John, seeing Jesus, points Him out to two of his followers. Hearing the declaration that Jesus is the Lamb of God, these two changed their primary attention from John the Baptist, to Jesus. How would Jesus react to these two men following Him? Would He receive them or reject them? Would He require them to meet certain difficult criteria in order to follow Him? Jesus required nothing more than a willingness to join Him:

And Jesus turned and saw them following, and said to them, “What do you seek?” They said to Him, “Rabbi (which translated means Teacher), where are You staying?” He said to them, “Come, and you will see.” So they came and saw where He was staying; and they stayed with Him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. (John 1:38-39)

⁵ Jesus says, “Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist! Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he” (Matt 11:11). Only one person functions as the forerunner of Jesus as foretold by Isaiah. He is the “voice of one crying out in the wilderness.” No Scripture, neither in a prescriptive nor descriptive manner, supports a mandate to imitate John in his unique methods (abstaining from marriage, wine, and haircuts; eating bugs; etc.). That said, the idea that Jesus is to be declared by His followers should be axiomatic. As Jesus says to His followers in Acts 1:8, “You shall be my witnesses.”

⁶ John 1:10-11 foreshadows the rejection of Jesus by His own people, the Jews. “He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him” (John 1:11).

Although the Bible does not state what Jesus did and said that day to His new followers, it does reveal two important truths. The first is a pattern of evangelism that is repeated through the Bible and throughout the centuries. That pattern is that one person declares what he knows about Jesus to another person. That other person, if he or she believes, looks toward Jesus, and chooses to follow Him. Then, Jesus receives the one who follows Him. The Gospel writer seems aware of this simple pattern for he not only highlights the Baptist's role as a witness of the Light, but also Jesus' role in receiving all who come to Him: "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become the children of God, even to those who believe in His name" (v. 12). Jesus not only receives His followers, He adopts them into God's family! John the Baptist pointed to Jesus, causing two men to look to Jesus and follow Him.⁷ Next, those two men were invited by Jesus to continue with Him. This pattern of spontaneous evangelism was repeated, not only in the historical record of the New Testament, but in the larger record of history itself.

The other truth revealed about the two men following Jesus that day was that Andrew⁸ repeated the pattern and message of John the Baptist when, after spending a day with Jesus, he left to declare the identity of the Savior to his brother, Simon (John 1:41). Simon went to see Jesus for himself. Upon seeing Simon, Jesus said to him, "You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas" (John 1:42). Cephas (translated Peter), became a follower of Jesus in the same way that his brother did: one man told him

⁷ This chapter is not directed toward an examination of the calling of the twelve apostles. It should be acknowledged that commentators take the time when discussing John 1 to examine the synoptic accounts of the calling of the apostles. Yet, John 1 makes no reference to the formal calling of the apostles, so there is no need to deal with the issue here. Furthermore, one can acknowledge the possibility of this initial interaction with Jesus preceding other early events (like the great catch of fish), and other meetings with Jesus before the twelve left their livelihoods for good to follow Jesus. Finally, the purpose of this chapter is to look at the modes and methods of initial communication of the message of Jesus, beginning with John. That purpose need not concern itself with the matter of the calling of the twelve apostles.

⁸ John 1:40 shows that Andrew, the brother of Simon, is one of the men who followed Jesus. The other man, most commentators agree was probably John, the brother of James, and the writer of the Gospel of John.

what he knew of Jesus, then, upon seeing Him for himself, he chose to follow Jesus. The process was completed when Jesus received the new follower. Craig Keener writes,

Through the Baptist's witness, Andrew became a follower of Jesus (1:36-37, 40); through Andrew's witness, Simon became a follower of Jesus (1:40-42a); but in both cases, the inquirers became true disciples only through a personal encounter with Jesus for themselves.⁹

This pattern repeated itself almost immediately when Philip¹⁰ went to Nathaniel and said, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph" (John 1:45). Nathaniel's recorded response indicated skepticism or even cynicism. He wondered if any good thing could come out of Nazareth. Philip's simple response was an invitation to "come and see." Upon seeing Jesus for himself, Nathaniel believed and followed. Like Andrew and John the Baptist before him, Philip's evangelistic method required him to point another person to the Messiah. It was up to Nathaniel to look and see for himself if the testimony of his friend was true.

John 4 and the Woman at the Well

John 4 introduces the familiar Woman at the Well. This Samaritan woman's story demonstrates the same pattern of witness seen in John 1. Like Philip, Andrew, and

⁹ Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 1:475.

¹⁰ It should be noted that Philip's relationship to Jesus might also include him *in* the chain of witnesses. Although the New American Standard updated text says that Jesus went and found Philip, the Greek text does not mention Jesus by name in John 1:43. Rather, the verb ἠθέλησεν (John 1:43 Septuagint) is provided without a proper noun. This verb in the third person, aorist active indicative, is correctly translated "he" purposed to go, rather than "Jesus," as some translations say. But the American Standard translation uses a capitalized pronoun ("He"), thereby identifying the one who decided to go as being Jesus. It could be argued that it would be better go back in the text to the last mentioned proper name to identify who it was that decided to go and find Philip. By that method, it is Peter who found Philip. Carson suggests the possibility that Andrew is likely the one being referred to since v. 41 says that Andrew "first" went and found Cephas. If Andrew "first" went for Cephas, in v. 41, then he subsequently desired to go get Philip in v. 43. If this interpretation is correct, and it very well could be, then, as Carson writes, "Everyone else who comes to Jesus in this chapter does so because of someone else's witness; if Andrew is the subject, there are no exceptions." D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1991), 157-58.

John before her, the Samaritan woman hurried to tell those people near her about the Christ that she had met. She ran to the village after meeting with Jesus, declaring to the people of the town, “Come, see a man who told me all the things that I have done; this is not the Christ, is it?” (John 4:29). The people came out to see Jesus at her invitation. Seeing Jesus, they believed. The pattern of witness from John 1 was repeated with even more dramatic numerical results! As a group, the Samaritan towns’ folk believed in Jesus. The role of the Samaritan woman was not to convince her fellow citizens of the identity of the Savior, just to testify that she believed Jesus was the Savior. Remarkably, the townspeople saw this pattern of witness clearly for they declared, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world” (John 4:42).

What is not seen, either in John 1 or John 4, is a model of witnessing that excludes personal contact with Jesus. Of John 4:42, D. A. Carson connects the witness of the woman and the faith of the Samaritans: “It is not to disparage her testimony but to confirm it: they have heard for themselves, and have judged her witness to be true.”¹¹ The Samaritans saw the witness of the woman as a step that led them to the belief that ultimately comes from contact with Jesus. To paraphrase, it is as if they are saying, “You were right! He is who you said He was!”

The Master’s Method

More than displaying the pattern of evangelism of the Samaritan woman, John 4 shows Jesus initiating an evangelism event when He approaches the woman in the first place. Attention should be given to the way Jesus crossed a cultural boundary and contextualized His communication when speaking to the thirsty woman.

¹¹ Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 231.

The beginning of John 4 states, “And He had to pass through Samaria” (John 4:4). The Savior intentionally directs Himself to the outskirts of Sychar in Samaria. He testified elsewhere that all that He said was in obedience to the Father.¹² One can deduce then that the Father sent Him to this well at this hour.¹³

Upon meeting this woman, Jesus made a choice to cross a well-understood cultural boundary. He spoke to a Samaritan woman in a manner that their culture would call suspect, as the woman herself points out when she asks, “How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?” (John 4:9). The gospel writer, John, even adds editorially that the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus boldly crossed a cultural barrier in order to engage this woman in conversation.

By contrast, John the Baptist witnessed to Jews and the occasional Gentile that might wander his way. Andrew went to his brother, Simon, a fellow Jew. Even the Samaritan woman, after meeting with the Messiah, ran to her own people to declare the Savior. It is good and natural to share good news with people in one’s own culture, but Jesus demonstrated the strategy that would be necessary to complete the great commission, by venturing across cultural boundaries into the society of Samaritans from Sychar.

Not only did Jesus reach out to a Samaritan, but He contextualized His message to match the setting of the conversation. She confronted Him with a question about why a Jew would be talking to her. His creative response was to announce that if she truly knew who was asking for water, she would ask Him for a drink. He molded the message to match the moment. His strategy moved her from speaking of water for the body to speaking of

¹² “For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment *as to* what to say and what to speak” (John 12:49).

¹³ The reason Jesus had to pass through Samaria was most likely geographical. Both Kostenberger and Carson point out that this common route through Samaria was the efficient way for Jesus to travel. Yet both also allow that a God-ordained meeting might be intended by the language “He had to” pass through Samaria. It seems likely that Jesus obeyed His Father through the Holy Spirit as John 12:49 indicates, by speaking words that were divinely appointed. It stands to reason then that His audience was likewise divinely appointed. Kostenberger, *John*, 146; Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 215-16.

water for the soul. By contrast, He did not allow Himself to be drawn into an abstract discussion about the differences between Samaritans and Jews. He focused on the water for her soul.

In like manner, when sharing the gospel, this method of seeking to communicate strategically requires creativity and spontaneous thinking. Christians should seek to copy the example of Jesus by ensuring that the message preached is contextualized for the benefit of the one listening. In response to a query about his brashness in crossing a cultural barrier, Jesus brilliantly used the task of getting water as a link to the gospel message. His answer could be paraphrased, “Our cultural differences are small compared to the gift I have to offer you!” There is a lesson for all times found in Jesus’ approach.

For example, if a black urbanite approaches a white suburbanite in order to preach the gospel, the cultural barriers will initially be apparent to both. The one who preaches is wise to seek to quickly and creatively leap the cultural boundary and build a bridge to the Savior by contextualizing the message to the situation. The gospel message is so beneficial to the one hearing the gospel, that he would be wise to overlook the differences and hear the message.

As mentioned, upon being convinced of Jesus’ identity as the Christ, the woman went back to her village to tell others about the amazing man she had found. The reaction of this woman is consistent with the previous examples of John the Baptist, Andrew, and Philip. Upon discovering the identity of the Savior, all four of these people reacted by sharing this news with others close to them. By contrast, Jesus intentionally put Himself in the path of the Samaritan woman—someone who was geographically and culturally separated from the Jews—and then molded His communication to capture her attention. Though Jesus’ initial witnesses in the Bible show a rather spontaneous communication of the Savior, as the Samaritan woman does, they would add to their tactics more pre-planned and strategic approaches to evangelism after Jesus ascends to heaven. Jesus set the example of such strategic approaches here in John 4.

Peter, Cornelius, and God's Implementation of Strategic Cross-Cultural Evangelism

In Acts 10, God orchestrated a cross-cultural evangelistic event, showing an example of strategic evangelistic thinking that goes beyond the witness of Andrew to his brother or the Samaritan woman to her friends. In this case, a band of Jews brought the message of Jesus to a family of Gentiles with whom they were not previously associated. God engineered a scheme to bring them together for the furtherance of gospel. Certainly this is not a normative model of evangelism; however, the event expanded Peter's thoughts regarding evangelistic strategy, and it should likewise inform the evangelism strategy for the ages that follow.

Cornelius knew some things about the Jews. He sympathetically contributed to the poor, and was known for his fear of the Jewish God, and for his life of prayer. Yet, he was a Roman Centurion, an outsider to Israel. God interrupted his life with an angel instructing him to send servants to Joppa in order to bring back a man named Simon. God's angel did not preach Jesus to Cornelius, rather he initiated action that brought a man of Jesus to do the preaching. Why did God do this? Was it because He preferred that the declaration of salvation come from human preachers? Perhaps. Was it because He wanted to teach Peter to cross cultural boundaries with strategic evangelism? That is likely, for Peter was about to experience an encounter with the Centurion household that would not naturally occur in the course of his life. If God sent him to one Gentile household, was He not implicitly directing Peter to reach other Gentile households? Logically, the only way for a Jew living among Jews to reach Gentiles would be to form plans to create interaction with non-Jews.

Not only did God speak miraculously to Cornelius, He also contacted Simon through a thrice-occurring vision of a sheet being lowered from the sky, filled with unclean animals, with the instructions to "get up, Peter, kill and eat!" (Acts 10:13). Peter's initial response was to reject this suggestion from God on the grounds that he did not eat things that were common or unclean. God's response to Peter firmly instructed him to

change his habits: “What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy” (Acts 10:15). God did not say, “Peter, go and preach the gospel to this Gentile named Cornelius.” Unlike the message to Cornelius, which gave specific instructions to bring about a meeting with Simon, God’s message to Peter came in the form of a metaphor that had broader implications than simply one Gentile household. He was to kill and eat unclean food. The issue was not primarily about hunger, as the animals in the vision were removed when the vision ended.¹⁴

Initially, Peter was perplexed. Peter would not have to wait to discover the meaning of the vision as the delegation from Cornelius arrived at the house of Simon the Tanner, looking for Simon Peter. Still reeling from the vision, God instructs Peter to go with these Gentiles “without misgivings.”¹⁵ Peter explained to Cornelius when he arrived at his home that this was a great change in behavior for him personally:

You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him; and yet God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean. That is why I came without even raising any objection when I was sent for. So I ask for what reason you have sent for me. (Acts 10:28-29)

Either by direct communication of the Holy Spirit, or by his own reasoning, Peter had grasped the meaning of the vision. God taught Him that no man was unclean. The vision went far beyond dietary freedoms! God not only gave Jews access to pork chops, He gave them access to associating with Gentiles! This revelation was followed up by another: “I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, but

¹⁴ Larkin stresses the strength of this divine intervention: “Divine revelation is required if Old Testament revelation and the layers of ethnic prejudices built upon it are to be set aside.” William Larkin, *Acts*, IVP New Testament Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995), 158. God caused Peter to think deeply about what is common or unclean, versus what is acceptable for a Jew to eat. Not only that, God broke through the command to avoid previously defined unclean foods. This radical shift in the thinking of a Jew had to come from heaven. Apparently, this would soften Peter’s heart toward an appeal to come into a Gentile home, also considered unclean from Peter’s cultural history.

¹⁵ Acts 10:19-20 says, “While Peter was reflecting on the vision, the Spirit said to him, ‘Behold, three men are looking for you. But get up, go downstairs and accompany them without misgivings, for I have sent them Myself.’”

in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him” (Acts 10:34-35). God used a remarkable vision, and the vision of a Gentile, to change Peter’s point of view regarding how God views non-Jews.

Reaching those outside of one’s own culture requires intentionality. Although Jesus had commanded Peter to “make disciples of all nations” (Matt 28:19), Peter had stopped short of fulfilling this mission.¹⁶ God took Peter by the hand and walked him through the process of reaching a Gentile household.

Like Jesus, when He purposely crossed into the Samaritan woman’s path, the first subject Peter discussed was the cultural differences. Peter related to Cornelius the vision he had seen, and how that had prompted him to come into the Gentile home. Cornelius then informed Peter of his vision of an angel from God. Once each man had related his vision, and the cultural differences acknowledged by each, the path was open for sharing the gospel. Peter’s reluctance to interact with Gentiles was not a good reason to refrain from preaching the gospel to them. Likewise, the Samaritan woman’s discomfort of speaking with a Jew was not to be a barrier for the gospel. When a Christian seeks to share the gospel, cultural barriers are not gospel barriers. Indeed, cultural barriers can be the first subject discussed in a witnessing situation, allowing both parties to move on to a conversation regarding the gospel. Peter needed a miraculous event to break through his narrow view of Gentiles. Christians of all times and places will likewise find cultural boundaries that must be crossed.

Once Peter began to preach to Cornelius, the Holy Spirit fell down in a manifestation of tongues. As seen when John the Baptist pointed to Jesus, causing two men to see Jesus for themselves, so Peter presented Christ in the gospel, causing the household of Cornelius to believe. Although preaching the gospel may be preceded by

¹⁶ F. F. Bruce writes, “Apart from this present visit to Cornelius, Peter is not recorded as evangelizing Gentiles.” F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, The New international Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1988), 215.

intentional planning and crossing of cultural boundaries, when the moment of declaration comes, the role of the evangelist remains simple: point to the Savior, and let Him do the rest. Peter learned the intentionality of God in reaching the Gentiles, but the most strategic of all biblical evangelists was not Peter, but the apostle known as Paul.¹⁷

Paul: His Strategies of Travel and Preaching

Paul's three missionary journeys brought the gospel to the nations in the first century. His travels and work are well-chronicled in the New Testament. Rather than looking at the full scope of Paul's missionary activities, the purposes of this chapter are satisfied when focusing on a few examples from his work that highlight the points made thus far. Namely, Paul demonstrated intentional planning to cross cultural boundaries, while also being spontaneous in his methods so as to respond to changing situations, with the goal to point as many people as possible to salvation through the presentation of Jesus and the gospel message.

Paul the Planner

Paul's ministry is marked by planning from the start. In the words of Bock,

The account [of Paul's first missionary journey] describes the first step in 'missions' as the called-out and divinely directed activity of a group organized for this specific goal. This contrasts with the less-systematic work of individuals, which we have seen earlier. The church is becoming more organized and intentional about outreach.¹⁸

Bock sees the flow in the New Testament move from individuals preaching the gospel as opportunities present themselves, to the purposed targeting of geographical regions. This

¹⁷ Darrell Bock writes, "In a sense this scene is the book's turning point, as from here the gospel will fan out in all directions to people across a vast array of geographical regions, something Paul's three missionary journeys will underscore." Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 380. Though it is not the direct focus of this chapter, implicit in every event is the specific plan of God Himself. God sets the example of strategic, planned evangelistic outreach. Peter's visit with Cornelius is a pivotal and amazing short-term mission trip. The progress of the gospel, as recorded by Acts, moves largely to focus on the works of Paul, who is an exceptional planner. However, God is the One behind every planned move of the gospel.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 437.

pattern of the New Testament church is to be copied by the church today. Individual evangelism is the ongoing work of Christians, however, planned, intentional evangelism is to be part of the work of the church also.

The focus of this project is local evangelism, not missions. That said, many of the same principles underlie both forms of spreading the gospel. In both cases, the gospel is the message, relationships are formed that bridge people to Jesus, and specific plans lead to better results. Churches that seek to reach the lost around them must not overlook the example of Paul, in his strategizing, as well as his methods.

Beginning with his first missionary journey, being sent by the church in Antioch, by a prophetic word of the Holy Spirit, Paul's one intention is to bring the gospel to places it had not yet gone. This strategy of spreading the kingdom of God had been mostly unknown up to this point in history. The nation of Israel existed for centuries as God's unique possession planted in the midst of the nations of the world. The Old Testament is not a story of people seeking to go to the nations to bring them to the God of the Jews.¹⁹ In stark contrast, Paul's work is marked by purposeful attempts to reach every geographical region with the gospel. The first missionary journey begins as described in Acts:

While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia and from there they sailed to Cyprus. When they reached Salamis, they began to proclaim the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews; and they also had John as their helper. (Acts 13:2-5)²⁰

¹⁹ God accomplished the work of bringing the knowledge of Himself to the nations by scattering the Jews by way of the Assyrian invasion in 722, and the Babylonian captivity over a century later. Although these events scattered Jews throughout the nations, the strategy of the Jews themselves was not to reach out to the Gentiles, but to live faithfully among them. Indeed, the Old Testament shows a people who were seeking not to reach the nations, but to return to their own land. As the New Testament unfolds, one sees the wisdom of God as He uses these scattered ones and their synagogues as the starting places for the missionary Paul to use in spreading the gospel.

²⁰ This first missionary journey began as a work of the Holy Spirit with a local church. Today's local church must not abdicate the responsibility of raising up and sending church-planting evangelist missionaries to the nations. Mission agencies and parachurch ministries can be helpful parts of a missionary endeavor, but the process can also originate and be sustained by the local church, as seen in Antioch.

From Antioch to Seleucia is a journey due west, bringing Paul and his companions to a port city. From there, they travel west to Salamis, on the eastern end of Cyprus. They worked their way to Paphos, at the west end of Cyprus, journeyed west and north to the mainland of the north Mediterranean cities, and then traveled north over land. This geographical movement shows a logical and efficient travel plan. Chronicling the movements of this first journey would show that Paul traveled over land to a certain point, even turning east, and then, back-tracked and revisited the same places he had already gone (with the exception of Crete) before returning back to the church in Antioch. This is not accidental movement; this not a voyage of convenience. Paul has a plan.²¹ In like manner, the precedent is set for churches throughout history, and today, to give thought to where the gospel message is to be carried.

Beyond travel plans, Paul's evangelism strategy also included a wise thinking. He preached in the synagogues where the Jews were found among the Gentile cities.²² By beginning with synagogues, Paul was able to communicate the gospel with people who knew the Bible and were awaiting the Messiah. Additionally, he was also able to reach God-fearing Gentiles associated with those synagogues. Beyond this, any Jews from

²¹ Commenting on why Paul chose this particular route, I. Howard Marshall notes, "It may seem surprising that Paul and his companions then made their way to the somewhat out-of-the-way towns in the centre of Asia Minor. In fact they lay on an important line of communication." I. Howard Marshall, *Acts*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1980), 220.

²² Paul's often quoted words from Romans, stating that he is not ashamed of the powerful gospel because it brings salvation to the "Jew first," comes to mind when looking at his strategy to begin with synagogues. The plan of going to Jews first has practical advantages that are listed in this chapter. That said, Paul seems to be more motivated by a theological scheme than by a practical one. As he develops in Rom 9-11, Paul sees the rejection of the gospel by the Jews as instrumental in bringing salvation to the Gentiles. Later in the book of Acts, he seems to imply that his choice to begin with synagogues might be motivated by a need to have the gospel rejected by them before he can share with Gentiles: "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46 ESV). Larkin suggests that Paul's example of going to Jews first was needed, and that the church today should copy that example: "The priority was a matter of theological necessity, and it applies to the conduct of Christian mission today. We must make sure Jews are not overlooked but are a priority in any evangelistic thrust into an unreached-peoples area." Larkin, *Acts*, 206. Whether or not one agrees with Larkin that the pattern of going to Jews first should be maintained today, This chapter agrees with Larkin that churches should be intentional and strategic in their evangelism planning.

those synagogues who converted to faith in Jesus would be already familiar with local Gentile culture and language; they would become valuable co-workers in the gospel. While Paul never states that this is the reason he brought the gospel to synagogues first, the advantages of his strategy are easy to see. Paul obviously chose to reach out to Jews that he did not know in an orderly manner; he had an evangelistic plan. He did not rely simply on the relationships that he had already had, as the Samaritan woman did in John 4, or as John's disciples did in John 1. The church is wise to follow this example. Not only can today's Christians invite their friends to come and see Jesus, but they can and should consider how to take the gospel to places and people they have yet to meet. Paul's three missionary journeys demonstrate that he remained deliberate in his approach to reaching the lost. Churches today should likewise remain deliberate in planning to bring the gospel to people living in ignorance of Jesus. As for local evangelism, the same strategy works well. Neighborhoods and social groups that can be strategically targeted for gospel invasion surround every church.

Paul the Spontaneous

Paul's ability to think on his feet in order to preach the gospel is seen in Acts 21. Paul is in Jerusalem. Having stirred up a mob against him, some Jews were beating him soundly. The Roman tribune in the city got wind of this violence, seized Paul, and put him in chains in order to restore order. With the crowd shouting after them, Paul saw an opportunity as the soldiers carried him away. He asked the commander of the Romans if they could talk. The commander, who had mistaken Paul for a trouble-maker from Egypt, seemed surprised to know that Paul not only spoke Greek, but that he was a Jew. Paul requested the chance to speak to the Jews. The commander agreed to this request, as recorded in Acts:

When he had given him permission, Paul, standing on the stairs, motioned to the people with his hand; and when there was a great hush, he spoke to them in the Hebrew dialect, saying, "Brethren and fathers, hear my defense which I now offer to you." And when they heard that he was addressing them in the Hebrew dialect, they became even more quiet. (Acts 21:40-22:2)

Paul then delivered the message of Jesus, relating to the Jews how he had converted to faith in Christ. Remarkably, Paul had seen an opportunity for the gospel during a personally uncomfortable event. Having been physically beaten by Jews, Paul found himself rescued by being placed under arrest. These cannot be welcome circumstances for any evangelist. Rather than passively giving up as he was dragged away, he realized that he could now speak to the Jews without being beaten because he had the protection of Roman soldiers. Larkin writes,

Paul asks and receives permission to speak to the crowd. His courage and determination are at once remarkable and readily understandable. What would cause him to want to address a crowd that had slandered him, given him an executioner's beating and, only minutes before, so violently rushed on him and called for his death that Roman soldiers had to physically pick him up so they could make a hasty exit? . . . This perspective gives the gospel its integrity. It's a stance we must all adopt.²³

Furthermore, he spoke Greek to the Roman to get his attention, but when he turned to speak to the Jews, he spoke Hebrew. By speaking Hebrew, he leaned on his kinship with the Jews, as opposed to his Roman identity. This had the effect of hushing the crowd, who now wanted to hear from the one they had been beating.²⁴

Such clever thinking, reacting to the circumstances of the moment, allowed him the opportunity to preach the gospel. When churches today reach out to the lost, not everything can be planned. In fact, plans can go very wrong, as they did with Paul when the mob turned on him. Like Paul, God's people should adjust to the context of the situation so that the gospel can be preached.

²³ Larkin, *Acts*, 317.

²⁴ Bruce explains, "When they realized that the man whom they execrated as a renegade was addressing them in their vernacular, the silence which they had reluctantly accorded to his beckoning hand became deeper still, and they allowed him to go on." Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 414. Paul is adept at thinking on his feet, as this language change shows. Paul molds the message to the situation, showing again the need for evangelists to be spontaneous and creative.

Paul, the Man for all Nations

Acts 17 finds Paul in Athens, Greece, awaiting the arrival of his co-workers, Timothy and Silas. Not one to sit idly, Paul, piqued by the idolatry on display in Athens, interacted daily not only with Jews in the Synagogue, but with anyone in the marketplace who would listen. His daily conversing with the Greek philosophers of Athens led to an invitation to speak at Mars Hill. The Epicureans and Stoics were trying to figure out what he was saying, and what better way than to sit down and listen to him.

Like the Samaritan woman had done when meeting Jesus, Paul began this interaction by acknowledging the cultural characteristics of his audience:

So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, “Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects. “For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, ‘TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.’ Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you. “The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. (Acts 17:22-24)

Paul acknowledged that they had many objects of worship. As they would know, Jews did not worship multiple gods. Rather than minimizing the cultural barrier between him and his audience, Paul highlights the differences as a starting point.

Then, by turning to the “unknown God” of their culture, Paul finds his avenue to launch into a presentation of the good news of Jesus Christ. This event demonstrates Paul’s intentional method of crossing cultural barriers with the gospel. Not only did he seek out the Greeks in the marketplace, but he quickly acknowledged the cultural barrier to his audience. He then dispensed with the barrier quickly so that he could preach the gospel. “Paul’s speech is confrontational, but in a gentle manner,” writes Bock.²⁵

This pattern is seen with Jesus and the Samaritan woman. Jesus set aside the issue of why a Jew would be talking to her by pointing out that the issue of living water took precedence. Peter, likewise, when he visited Cornelius, pointed out that Jews did not

²⁵ Bock, *Acts*, 565.

normally enter Gentile homes, but that God had pushed him across that line. After briefly dealing with the cultural divide, Peter launched into the gospel, and many believed.

Churches must consider this simple strategy when seeking to share the gospel of Jesus. There is a need for sharing Jesus with friends and the people of the immediate culture; however, one must look directly at cultural boundaries, acknowledge the differences, and cross over with the gospel. The church of mostly black people must not see a white youth as someone to be ignored. The church of suburbanites should not see the gay community as off limits. All cultural barriers are to be crossed. Paul showed with his bold example how simple the process can be.

Evangelizing by Way of the Church Gathered

Until this point, this chapter has examined examples of evangelism outside of the worship events of the gathered church. It stands to reason that the church meets primarily for the benefit of believers rather than unbelievers. After all, if the lost came regularly to church worship gatherings on their own, the need for missions and evangelistic outreach would be eliminated. Nevertheless, through relationships with people in the church, or even by bold curiosity, a small number of unbelievers will often join in Christian worship events. Although it is outside of the scope to exhaustively examine the role of evangelism in a worship setting, there is an argument to be made from 1 Corinthians regarding the need to make the gospel understandable to unbelievers who join worship services.

Understanding Speech Is Essential to Edification and Evangelism in Worship

Paul felt it important to instruct the Corinthian church regarding the use of the gift of tongues in worship services because of strife over the issue. While maintaining the legitimacy of tongues as a helpful worship expression for individuals, Paul urged the church to consider speaking more words with public consumption in mind:

If then I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be to the one who speaks a barbarian, and the one who speaks will be a barbarian to me . . . I thank God, I speak in tongues more than you all; however, in the church I desire to speak five words with my mind so that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue. (1 Cor 14:11, 18-19)

Obvious from these verses is that coherence of message matters in the assembled worship service. The church gathers for the benefit of all, therefore, everything should be done for the benefit of all. Paul did not forbid use of tongues by believers, but he advised emphasizing understandable communication.

In explaining the proper use of tongues to the Corinthians, Paul revealed two surprising truths. First, he stated that unbelievers might be present in assemblies. Second, he instructed those who participate to speak in a manner understandable to unbelievers. First Corinthians 14:23 speaks directly to this issue: “Therefore if the whole church assembles together and all speak in tongues, and ungifted men or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are mad?” Paul expects that unbelievers will be in the midst of the assembly from time to time, and he does not want such a visitor to be intellectually confused during Christian worship.²⁶ The potential results for unbelievers in the assembly are made clear: “He is convicted by all, he is called to account by all; the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so he will fall on his face and worship God, declaring that God is certainly among you” (1 Cor 14:24-25). By understanding the words spoken during Christian worship, the unbeliever can potentially come to faith in God and join in worship. The church worship service then becomes a place of evangelism. Along those lines, just as in the ancient Corinthians community, modern church worship should consider the coherence of the message for the sake of unbelievers who may be present. Thiselton suggests,

²⁶ Though it moves away from the primary purpose of this project, it might be helpful to acknowledge that v. 22 points out that tongues are for unbelievers. That is followed by v. 23, where Paul claims that unbelievers cannot understand tongues, which is a hard turn of ideas. An exhaustive treatment of the issue can be found in D. A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit: A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12-14* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 108-17. In any case, the focus of this chapter is on the need to be comprehensible to unbelievers, not whether tongues should be used in front of them in a church context.

Any phenomenon that seems merely bizarre to outsiders, visitors, or other Christians risks making them feel uncomfortable and “not at home.” Such patterns of conduct require very special justification. Does any part of our church’s ethos, décor, or proceedings, or of our personal conduct, risk *alienating* outsiders or fellow Christians?²⁷

Realizing that there are many methods of helping unbelievers feel welcome in a worship context, all churches should unite on the value of inviting people to church as an evangelism strategy.²⁸ The church worship service is the place where God’s Son is to be exalted regularly. Therefore, there is no better place for an unbeliever to interact with the gospel.

Interestingly, when an unbeliever comes into a church service, he often enters a foreign culture—the culture of the church. This cultural barrier makes it unlikely that unbelievers will brave a church environment on their own. Inviting unbelievers, and then being prepared for them when they arrive is a necessary strategy if the church is to successfully maximize the evangelistic possibilities of a worship service.

When Andrew met Jesus, he went out and found Peter and brought him back to Jesus. Although bringing Peter to Jesus is not the same as bringing him to a worship service, the similarity is obvious. A Christian can go to a friend, invite him to a worship service, and say, “Come and see and hear about Jesus.” The church must not neglect this first method of evangelism in the Bible. Friends, loved ones, and even strangers can be invited to church spontaneously, or in a strategic manner. Welcoming unbelievers into the church can also be done in a spontaneous as well as a strategic manner. Motivated by the example of Paul, who used all in his power to reach the lost, the church must use all

²⁷ Anthony C. Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, A Shorter Exegetical & Pastoral Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2006), 242.

²⁸ There is a great deal of debate about how worship services can be used to reach lost people. Terms like “seeker-sensitive” and “seeker-friendly” have cropped up as people deal with this issue. This chapter is not intended to enter into this debate as it is vast; nevertheless, I take as axiomatic that worship gatherings are to be God-directed, with the goal of helping the Christian focus on Jesus through sermon, prayer, the Lord’s Supper, and praise. That said, no church service should be considered “seeker insensitive.” Newcomers and unbelievers participating in a Sunday service are important too.

means possible to reach the lost, both with planned outreach and spontaneous evangelism. The church gathered must be the cradle of all evangelistic efforts. People should be invited to church in order to come and see Jesus through the preaching of the gospel. The church should be prepared to receive unbelievers with love and hospitality.²⁹

Conclusion

The local church must copy what is seen in the New Testament examples presented in this chapter. Each church has the ability to organize members for outreach and send them out in an orderly fashion. Additionally, each church can instruct and exhort members to be opportunistic and preach the gospel spontaneously as occasions arise. Finally, the church should seek to invite unbelievers to join worship services where the gospel is preached. In all these efforts, reaching across cultural boundaries must be valued along with reaching the homogeneous population. The great commission sends Christians around the world, but the church must never neglect those within arm's reach.

²⁹ David Garland makes the fascinating observation that for the first-century church, the witness of prophecy in the local church convinced pagan unbelievers that they were in the presence of God, and this realization would have been startling since the church met in homes, not in temples with their statues and other objects of idolatry. That God could be present without the religious trappings convinced the unbelievers of the personal nature of God: "The purpose of worship, as Chrysostom recognizes, is not to astonish but to bring people to a sense of wonder. It should expose them to the divine presence." David E. Garland, *I Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 653. Garland's position strengthens the position of this chapter. Inviting people to worship services should be like inviting people to experience God's presence for themselves!

CHAPTER 3

THE ELDER'S RESPONSIBILITY TO SET THE EXAMPLE, TRAIN, AND CREATE STRUCTURE FOR OUTREACH

In order to expand the church, elders must set an example of evangelism, train church members to evangelize unbelievers, organize to do the same, and build a hospitable church environment. The elder can break down his responsibilities with regard to evangelism into three segments.

The first segment deals with the elder living his life in a way that others can copy to become more like Jesus. Additionally, the pulpit itself must be used to set an example of how to understand and share the gospel message. The second segment pushes leaders to consider how to equip believers to reach out. The elder must create opportunities for evangelism training and outreach, guiding the church outside of the building and into the world. The third segment has to do with organizing the church with an emphasis on hospitality and openness to visitors. If the elder desires to be effective when it comes to a strategy for evangelism, he needs to focus on all three segments.

Segment 1: Setting the Example

First Peter 5:3 declares that elders should not lead the church in a way that is “lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.” Like Jesus, the leaders of a church do not change the behavior of others by pushing or coercing; rather, they are to demonstrate the behavior they seek to produce. Jesus taught this lesson explicitly, saying, “For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you” (John 13:15). The elder who seeks to lead the flock by means other than setting an example is unwise. Paul even hints that he fears teaching others without setting the example when he writes, “But I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I

have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified” (1 Cor 9:27). Harry Reeder explains,

Good leaders also influence others by personally embodying the truths that they teach. People learn by imitation. My observation over the years leads me to agree with the saying that most of what we learn is *caught* rather than *taught*. In other words, we learn at least as much by imitation as we do by instruction. The instruction is crucial, certainly, but it cannot produce the desired results if the people don’t have a model to follow. . . . So as a leader, you should be one who embodies the characteristics that you are hoping to produce in others.¹

Two obstacles continually confront the elder who seeks to set the example for outreach and evangelism. The first obstacle is immersion in a world that excludes unbelievers. The second hindrance is complacency; it is easy to be lazy about reaching out to unbelievers for the purpose of evangelism. Both of these temptations can be defeated with intentional action.

Modeling a Lifestyle of Outreach

When it comes to leading the church in strategic outreach, the pastor² must set the example through personal evangelism, prioritizing resources for outreach, and the use of the pulpit to clarify the gospel message.

If a church member is expected to use his home as a place for evangelistic outreach, then the pastor must demonstrate by using his home as a place of hospitality for unsaved friends and neighbors. Likewise, if a pastor hopes his church members will invite people to church, he would be wise to invite people himself. One simple method for modeling evangelism is to employ a strategy used by Scott Rising. In his role as a pastor at the Indiana Campus of Harvest Community Church, he schedules several

¹ Harry L. Reeder III, *From Embers to a Flame, How God can Revitalize Your Church* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2008), 152-53.

² In this project, the term *pastor* refers to and can be used interchangeably with the term *elder*. Elders can be both vocational or non-vocational in their ministry in a local church. When a distinction between vocational elders and non-vocational elders is necessary, the distinction will be noted explicitly. Also, the term *leader*, although it can refer to any number of non-elder positions in a church, mostly refers to an elder in this paper. When there is an exception, it is noted.

evangelistic dinners and cookouts at his home every year. He invites unchurched neighbors to join his family for a meal. Likewise, he invites some members from his congregation. He instructs the members of his congregation to do no more than enjoy themselves. Then, as the evening progresses, Scott purposely engages the unchurched neighbors in vital gospel-centered conversations. As he does this, not only is he reaching his neighbors, but he is also displaying to his fellow believer an easily repeatable model of doing evangelism. After the event, he follows up not only with the unchurched guests, but with the church members, encouraging them to repeat the process in their homes, with their neighbors.

The wise pastor loves to have a church filled with people who reach out to their lost friends, preaching the gospel when they can, and constantly inviting people to church. The pastor, then, in his personal life, should set the example by giving his own resources and energies to various outreach efforts. For example, when a church member sees his pastor waiting at the door to greet the unbelieving friend that he has invited to the service, that church member might naturally follow that good pattern. Evangelism in the life of a church member is not accidental. It is not accidental in the life of a church leader either. For this reason, elders must intentionally plan and schedule opportunities to personally reach out to the lost. In short, each one should develop a lifestyle that focuses on outreach.

The Power of the Pulpit in Advancing the Gospel Outreach of a Congregation

Understanding the gospel is necessary if one is to preach the gospel. A church member will not share what he does not understand. Therefore, it makes sense that the gospel should be taught regularly from the pulpit, providing a pattern for the redeemed so that they can know how to explain the gospel to others.

While systematic theology can be complex and difficult to understand, the gospel message that brings life to dead sinners can be understood and presented quite

simply. Herb Rice, who pastored in central Pennsylvania for decades, would often include in his messages the simple prayer of the publican: “Have mercy on me a sinner.” Repeating this phrase frequently was his way of showing his people a picture of the simple response needed for the unbeliever who wanted to come to know Jesus. In a similar manner, Paul made the gospel message simple when he wrote, “It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all” (1 Tim 1:15). “Jesus came into the world to save sinners” is an eight-word phrase. Long sermons on the gospel are not needed on a regular basis in order to keep that phrase alive in the thinking of the church.

Although understanding that Jesus died for sinners is simple enough, the New Testament explanation of the gospel can be complex. Many questions arise, like: Who is Jesus? Why does His death suffice as payment for sins? How are sinners to understand this message? What must take place in order for a sinner to become a Christian? And what about ideas like justification, glorification, repentance, and so on? Are they not part of the good news? Pastors must teach the full doctrines of God; however, if a desire to be thorough causes one to forget the simplicity of the message that saves souls, he loses the forest for the trees. The pulpit can equip the church for evangelism by frequently giving direct and uncomplicated presentations of the gospel.

Preaching should also include a detailed description of the manifold beauty of salvation. Explanations of the ongoing effects of grace in the life of the believer not only help people to intellectually understand the simple gospel, but they also motivate people to share that message out of the joy they experience. Profundities and simplicity can live happily together.

Pastor and author J. D. Greear emphasizes the need for leaders to preach the gospel continuously so that their hearers overflow with motivation to evangelize:

Do you want to lead your people to become enthusiastic servants of the mission? Study the gospel—not like a seminarian studies doctrine to prepare for an exam, but the way you would study a sunset that has left you speechless, or the way a soldier longing for his fiancée studies her picture. Amazement at the grace of Jesus and

excitement for his return will produce a passion to go to the ends of the earth that can never be extinguished. Do you want to develop a sending culture at your church? Teach your people to delight in the glorious riches of what Christ has done on their behalf. Marvel in it every week. . . . Let it simmer in them until it sets their hearts on fire. And then, I promise you, they will figure out a way to reach their world. They will soar in mission—without any need for you to smack them into action.³

Greear’s exhortation to “marvel in [the gospel] every week” may or may not have the desired effect of causing everyone in the congregation to “soar in mission,” but it is likely to motivate many to share their faith more often. Yet, the absence of such immersion in the gospel will motivate no one.

Through the regular hearing of the gospel, the Christian learns to present the simple core of the message: Jesus died to save sinners. Hearing the gospel regularly preached also motivates the believer to preach out of love for the message itself. Ultimately, what the preacher preaches most is what comes across as most important to the congregation. A pastor who wants to promote evangelism in his church will preach the gospel with great regularity during weekly worship services.

Summing up the Value of Setting an Example of Outreach

The pastor and his family live life under a microscope. Although such examination may lead to a loss of privacy and uncomfortable criticism from time to time, Joseph Stowell urges pastors to look at their “fishbowl” life from a more positive direction:

While it’s easy to resent the visibility factor of shepherding, it is important for us to remember that it is our visibility that gives us viability in the work. Were God to grant us our wish to be invisible, we might be happier, but there would be no ministry. But when our visibility casts positive and compelling images, it is to our advantage since it platforms our capacity for effectiveness. In fact, that is exactly what Paul says to Timothy when he requires that he be an exemplary leader. One

³ J. D. Greear, *Gaining By Losing: Why the Future Belongs to Churches That Send* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 66.

has to be seen to be an example, and being a positive example is what respect is built upon.⁴

Living as an example for the flock is a vital responsibility in the life of a church leader, not a burden. Building a church that effectively reaches out requires leaders who build their lives around setting the right example. How important is sharing the gospel to the preaching pastor and other elders of the church? Few people in the church will have a motivation to reach out with the gospel that exceeds the leaders of the church. Paul said of the Thessalonians, “You also became imitators of us” (1 Thess 1:6). As Paul demonstrated, the outreach ministry of the church grows first out of imitation.

Segment 2: Training the Flock to Reach Out

Every Christian possesses some level of intelligence and skill for reaching out to the lost. Each person, by virtue of his humanity, communicates regularly with other people. The most effective communication is often the most organic and unrehearsed. In the beginning of John’s Gospel, Andrew went and found his brother Peter, asking him to come and see a man who might be the Messiah. Peter came and believed. Andrew “evangelized” his brother in the same way a man might invite another man to go to a see a movie. Likewise, the Samaritan woman, without prompting, went to the people in her life and persuaded them to come and see the man who had been able to reveal the secrets of her heart. The people came, saw Jesus for themselves, and believed. She needed no special training to accomplish her mission. Sharing good news is a skill possessed by all people who can talk. In God’s wisdom, the means of bringing salvation to the world requires only that humans tell good news to other humans.

That said, Jesus did not rely solely on the spontaneous relational evangelistic efforts of His followers. He also organized outreach events, like the one recorded in Luke 10, where Jesus sent 70 people out in pairs, giving simple but important instructions for

⁴Joseph M. Stowell, *Shepherding the Church: Effective Spiritual Leadership in a Changing Culture* (Chicago: Moody, 1997), 120.

how to go about taking the message to lost people. Greear writes, “A culture that values sending will naturally give rise to structures necessary to facilitate that sending.”⁵ If the culture of the church values reaching out to lost neighbors, then training opportunities must be developed to facilitate that outreach. As a missionary understands the simplicity of heading to another land and preaching the gospel, he first builds the structure of planning and networking with sending churches and organizations so that he is successful in his endeavors. So it is with the local church and evangelism.

Training need not be complicated nor difficult, for the task is simple at its center: get one person to share good news with other people. J. I. Packer defines evangelism as “just preaching the gospel, the evangel. It is a work of communication in which Christians make themselves mouthpieces for God’s message of mercy to sinners.”⁶ Although the message is simple, and although all methods come down to “just preaching the gospel,” for some people, intentional training will yield greater results than relying solely on the organic and natural evangelism of excited church members.

The Role of the Pulpit in Evangelism Training

As noted, the pastor can set the example of how to preach the gospel by presenting the salvation message simply and often during his sermons. Yet, the pastor can and should be deliberate in attempting to not only set an example, but to use the pulpit to train and instruct in evangelism. The Bible gives examples of people sharing the gospel, such as mentioned in Luke 10. When preaching such texts, the pastor has an opportunity to declare to the church the need to organize and initiate evangelistic endeavors. In fact, the pastor should maximize every opportunity that the Bible allows to motivate, instruct, and exhort his hearers to personal evangelism.

⁵ Greear, *Gaining By Losing*, 58.

⁶ J. I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1961), 45.

The Role of Focused Evangelism Training

When a church leader desires to train people specifically for evangelism, he has many curriculum and methods available to him. For decades, the Christian church has used numerous methods, like tract-based systems used by Campus Crusade for Christ, or the conversational training of Evangelism Explosion, or the small group approach of the Alpha course. Today, the internet has exploded the number of tools available for sharing the gospel message—from apps, to videos, to testimonies. Any of these options, and many more, can be used by the pastor to train his people in the delivery of the gospel message.

With such an abundance of methods available, it is possible to make the task of organizing for evangelism more complicated than necessary. It is important to remember that the gospel message is simple at its heart. Also, when the gospel is being presented to individuals, each exchange is different. The person presenting the gospel, filled with the Holy Spirit, can turn the conversation in different directions if needed to correct misunderstandings about the truth.⁷ Whichever method of training a pastor chooses to utilize, the educational exercise is useless, if not accompanied by a real opportunity to share the gospel with someone who does not know the Lord. As Jesus sent out the 70 to do the actual ministry, so the pastor must send out those he trains.

Perhaps the greatest challenge to training and sending out church members to do local outreach is the church culture itself. The typical American church is accessed through the Sunday morning worship service. If a person will regularly show up for weekend worship, and perhaps join some sort of small group or midweek class, he can safely assume that he is satisfying the church's requirements for involvement. As the months and years go by, if he volunteers to help on a Sunday or go on a short-term

⁷ If a pastor cannot find an evangelism training tool to his liking, he can write one himself. Ultimately, if someone is to train another person, he must first collect data into an organized fashion so he may present it.

mission trip, he may find himself nominated to be a deacon or elder himself. What is generally not required or expected is that he will increase the size of his church through personal evangelism or outreach. What can be done to remedy a non-evangelistic evangelical status-quo?

Answering the above question is the subject of this work on the path to the Doctor of Ministry degree at hand. Nevertheless, many are speaking out on how to make a church more effective evangelistically. One of those voices is Mack Stiles, who writes, “A strict diet of evangelistic programs produces malnourished evangelism. . . . So we should have a healthy unease with programs. We should use them strategically but in moderation, remembering that God did not send an event, he sent his Son.”⁸ Stiles argues that churches must develop a culture of evangelism, over an event-driven approach.

Similarly, Tim Chester and Steve Timmis, leaders of Crowded House Church in England, have a model of doing church that seeks to fully integrate the community lifestyle of evangelism into the rhythm of everything the church does. By doing so, they believe they are able to utilize the gifts of all members, even those who are least likely to reach out boldly in evangelistic campaigns. They write,

However, not all of us are eloquent or engaging. Not everyone can think on his feet. Some people are simply not good at speaking to strangers and forming new friendships. . . . By making evangelism a community project, it also takes seriously the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit in distributing a variety of gifts among his people. Everyone has a part to play.⁹

Chester and Timmis, as well as Stiles, speak to the need for a church to think through a regular practice of church life that leads to evangelism of the lost. Does this mean that modern churches should set aside organized evangelistic programs, like the Alpha course? Or should they set aside revival meetings and similar event-driven campaigns?

⁸ J. Mack Stiles, *Evangelism: How the Whole Church Speaks of Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 46.

⁹ Tim Chester and Steve Timmis, *Total Church, A Radical Reshaping around Gospel and Community* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 62.

There need not be a preference for any one strategy; however, it is the responsibility of the church leaders to develop a plan that involves both the equipping of the members and inviting them to join in the work.

Gary McIntosh and Charles Arn maintain that “churches that are effective in reaching their community train at least 10 percent of their people in friendship evangelism each year.”¹⁰ Whether the local elder adopts this rule of thumb or not, he is still responsible to tackle the same issue that McIntosh, Arn, Stiles, Timmis, and others are addressing: church members need to be trained by their leaders to reach their local area for Jesus. If the leaders do not commit to training the people, who will?

Segment 3: Organizing the Church to Create a Culture of Outreach

Eventually, a successful outreach effort leads curious yet uncovered individuals into the church worship services. Nothing makes a church-goer cringe more than realizing that the friend he has invited to the Sunday service is bored, ignored, or made unnecessarily uncomfortable by his experience. Many congregations realize that they need to grow in order to thrive. They may not so easily recognize that they have become inhospitable, with a blind eye and a deaf ear to the experience of outsiders on a Sunday morning visit. Attempts to update the worship environment can be seen as attempts to sell out the gospel to modern methods and seeker-driven compromise. Nevertheless, the tendency to stay the same as the decades go by has caused many churches to shrink away and die.

Suppose a church plans an outreach campaign, trains its members to participate, and then they successfully bring in more visitors and first-time attenders than they have seen in decades. Then, when the visitors come, excited about the inviting message of Jesus that brought them in, they discover boredom woven into the fabric of worship.

¹⁰ Gary L. McIntosh and Charles Arn, *What Every Pastor Should Know: 101 Indispensable Rules of Thumb for Leading Your Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 27.

They are expected to sing in musical styles they do not understand, dress as if they are in business meetings, and pretend that they are not bored while listening to dull sermons. If the culture of the church is not hospitable, then evangelism gains will be lost to the irrelevance of a worship environment that organically resists change.

What can church leaders do to build a hospitable environment that causes visitors to feel welcomed while maintaining the God-glorifying worship that believers should desire? The answer is two-fold. First, elders should value God's desire to build hospitality into the redeemed community. The Lord joined humanity on earth, and, before leaving, declared that He went away to prepare a place for His redeemed ones in His Father's house (John 14). Likewise, pastors developing programs and processes for God's people should prepare a place for believers and guests alike. Second, pastors should seek to be culturally relevant to the believers first. By doing so, they will naturally be relevant to visitors. In other words, unbelievers are not the only ones who stopped singing along to organ music of the 1950s. When yesterday's innovations in worship become today's nostalgic sacred cows, believers are the first to lose the beauty of worshipping God in a way that is natural to them. Since local evangelism involves reaching out to people from the same society in which believers live themselves, worship styles and practices that are culturally relevant to believers will make sense to their invited unchurched guests also.

First, Value God's Desire to Build Hospitality into the Redeemed Community

American church services are hardly exclusive events. Times of services are posted on signs outside of the building; advertisements appear regularly in newspapers, urging people to come to church. Whether through the internet, word of mouth, or roadside billboards, the evangelical church shows every sign that it desires visitors on Sunday mornings and during other worship times. Even so, when a visitor enters a church, he often finds his welcome less than appealing. He might respond to the

invitation to join on the church marquee, only to encounter sour faces on the way in the front door—if he has even entered by the correct door. Often, only regular attenders know which door is the best one to enter.

Going into the service, he might find he is underdressed, or, in modern times, even overdressed. He may not know where to sit. He may be required to stand and sing from a book, and, looking around, see that most of the men are not singing at all, but leaning lazily on the pew in front of them as they wait for permission to sit down again. He may listen to a message that has unexplained words, such as *sanctification*, *fellowship*, or *doctrines of grace*.¹¹ Following the service, he might be ignored as people talk to one another, and no one talks to him. He leaves wondering if something is wrong with him because he got nothing out of the time spent at church. Or, he might wonder if something wrong is with those people because they do get something out of that routine.

Houseguests are to be welcomed well. To be evangelical is to desire the growth of the church by seeing new people come to know Jesus and enter into fellowship. Christians have a message of good news, that God desires salvation for all people. God designed the church for growth. Jesus instructed His followers to go out and make disciples until the end of the age. Therefore, those who lead the church must create hospitable avenues into the community of believers. Hospitality must be incorporated into the warp and woof of the life of every congregation.

Andy Stanley's approach to welcoming visitors is well-documented in his many books, podcasts, and leadership talks. He diligently designs processes that have visitors in mind from the moment they drive onto the church property until the time they leave. His attitude of thoughtful hospitality is represented well in the following quote regarding opening words in a weekend service:

¹¹ An unbelieving visitor will likely be patient with learning new things. After all, he is entering a religious environment. He presumably would expect to see things that are different and unique. The issue being addressed here focuses on elements of his experience that are unnecessarily off-putting.

[We] begin with the welcome. This is not announcement time. We call it a welcome because that's what you do when people arrive at your home. You welcome them. We don't expect guests in our homes to let themselves in while we converse with our families. Nor do we meet people at the door and begin dispensing random information. When guests arrive at our door, we give them our undivided attention. We do whatever we can to make them feel . . . *at home*. We want them to feel *comfortable*. In our world, the welcome is all about the new folks, not the home folks. Staying with the 'visitor at the door' motif for just a moment, I've been to way too many churches where I had to let myself in the door, find a place to sit, and then listen to the church family talk to each other. So we treat the guests in our church the way we would in our homes.¹²

Stanley has become a controversial figure to some and loved by others; however, anyone can learn from him the value of having guests in mind when planning worship services.

The seeker-sensitive movement of the 1980s and 1990s, best exemplified by Willow Creek Church in Illinois, led to a great deal of discussion, thought, and debate regarding the role of the worship service in engaging unbelievers and visitors. The position presented in this paper is not that the worship service should be "seeker-sensitive," nor even "seeker-friendly"—although much can be learned from those who approach church in such a manner. Rather, the view of this paper holds that every church, when functioning properly, works to design the congregational processes so that hospitality is valued at all times.

Second, Seek to be Culturally Relevant to Believers

When Christians gather as the church to worship God, the agenda is fairly simple: prayer, praise, communion, offering, baptism, Bible reading, and preaching are the elements that make up most every worship time. What is the goal? James MacDonald argues strongly that the goal is to meet with God.¹³ There is no need to change that goal simply because visitors are present. An open service of worship is just that: worship. The

¹² Andy Stanley, *Deep and Wide: Creating Churches Unchurched People Love to Attend* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 213.

¹³ James MacDonald writes, "No personal quiet time, no Christian book, no community or small group or service can substitute for the absence of God coming down to meet with His church corporately. And it's about time that we stopped accepting substitutes." James MacDonald, *Vertical Church: What Every Heart Longs For, What Every Church Can Be* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2012), 20.

question should not be, “What should be the focus of the service so that we can reach unbelievers?” Rather, it should be, “How can Christians worship God authentically while offering culturally relevant access for unbelievers to understand what is said and join in as they come to believe?”

Christians have a way of tolerating worship services where they are bored and disconnected from the music and even the preaching. What a relief it is to many when the song leader announces, “We will only be singing the first and fifth stanzas of the hymn!” How dreadful it can feel to drone on for five full stanzas of a boring presentation of a song that is unattractive to most people of modern culture.¹⁴ Often, the singing is followed by a sermon that is easily ignored and quickly forgotten. If this is the case, of course unbelievers will not enjoy their time in church. Why should they? Even the people who invited them did not enjoy their time! The temptation by the seeker-sensitive mind might be to redesign the service to appeal to the unbeliever primarily. This mistake takes the focus off of God and worship and places it on the unbeliever. To fully commit to a seeker-focused mentality throws out Christian worship in favor of what amounts to an hour-long evangelistic tract. There is no reason why a worship-focused sermon cannot draw unbelievers also.

A better approach is to examine the cultural relevance of services to the believers present. The typical Christian listens to a certain type of music. The music might be different for Christians living in Boston, from people living in West Texas. Nevertheless, the common culture of the United States makes many popular styles of music recognizable to the modern ear. What almost no one in the nation listens to, outside of church buildings, is old hymns played on organs. It would surprise very few people to find that those who feel most strongly that people should not bring drums and guitars into

¹⁴ At this point, some might object, pointing out, “Our church we love singing the hymns and we do so with gusto!” That is certainly true in a few churches, but is it true in the majority? Is it so in the hundreds of dying churches that dot this nation? My own experience with dozens of churches is that most people are bored with much of what goes on in a church service. I do not think my experience is unusual.

the old church, for that would be selling out to the world, get into their cars after the service and turn on radio stations dominated by drums and guitars. Why? Because they like the styles of music they were raised listening to in their home culture. They listen to rock and roll or country in the shower and in the car and sing along joyfully. Then in church, they might insist on playing “In the Garden” to an organ sound that they do not find attractive in any other context. The result is that many Christians are bored, and perhaps even feeling guilty because they are not “getting anything out of worship.”

The solution is not to take sides on the worship wars of the past, but to ask, “Why do we all sing together in the first place?” This paper takes as axiomatic that the reason Christians sing when they are together is to focus their mind on the Triune God, celebrate Him, enjoy Him, and contemplate Him. God is to be worshiped, magnified, and marveled at as the gathered church sings together. With this perspective in mind, the best approach comes from seeking the musical style in which most Christians in the service can easily participate. If the people in the church will find it most natural to sing to an acoustic set, then give them one.¹⁵ If the community is in a retirement village in Florida, and a quieter set of music is most helpful for the worshipers, then quiet it is. The main point is that if the worship music is culturally familiar and enjoyed by the majority of the Christians in the church, it will likewise be understandable and accessible to the unbelieving guests because they are from the same culture as the Christians.

Christians who sing songs in a style they enjoy will find it easier to set their minds on the God being exalted in the songs. No doubt, King David, writing songs and calling for musicians to play well for the congregation, produced music that he enjoyed

¹⁵ I am using the example of music because it is common to just about every Christian church. The question of content of songs is being avoided here as it opens up a large and important subject that is not the focus of this chapter. The reality that many old songs have profound and good lyrics that exalt God means that such songs should be preserved and used by worship leaders when such a choice is effective. Likewise, many new songs have good content and should also be used. In all styles and all times there has also been weak lyrical content. Such songs that do not magnify God are best set aside. I have no interest in persuading the reader to like or practice old music or new. The intent here is to show that culturally understandable music is necessary to help Christians worship God.

himself. Likewise, it is unlikely that this music was not also familiar and attractive in style to those who performed with him, and those who sang along. The music was culturally relevant to them because they produced it in the way that they were culturally shaped. In modern times, many young people want a coffee house atmosphere when they hear music. Many others like a concert setting, where the music is loud and singing along is easy, for one is not distracted by his own voice. A worship service is not a coffee house nor a concert; however, when the music starts, the modern worship leader will naturally produce music in tune with his own cultural mindset. Following him, the people who come to worship will understand and know how to sing along.

The worship service serves first the Christians. The church is to be a gathering of worshipers. What is often overlooked in the debates about music and seeker-sensitive churches is not the experience of the unchurched, but the boredom of the churched. Should churches dress casually so that unchurched people feel more comfortable, since the culture of most people avoids suits and ties, even at work? The reason to dress casually is not primarily so that unchurched people feel more comfortable. The reason to dress casually might be because in the town the church finds itself, most Christians do not wear suits unless they are getting married. Many do not even own a suit. These more formal clothes can be a barrier to worship for Christians as some might not own the same clothes as the minority of the lawyers and businessmen in the congregation. Indeed, many businessmen dress down to do business in modern times. Instead, if a church chooses to dress casually because it makes more sense for all the generations and socio-economic classes of people who come to worship, then it will automatically be more comfortable to unbelievers who might visit. Why? Because unbelievers come from the same culture as the believers.

This simple idea of being culturally relevant first to the believers solves the problem of cultural relevance for the unbeliever. When reaching out locally, people reach out to their own neighborhoods, jobs, families, and schools. They have the natural advantage of understanding their culture intuitively, for they share the same cultural

experiences. There may be exceptions to this approach. For example, a white church in a predominately black neighborhood that contemplates change will have to account for a culture drastically different from their own. Love and a sense of mission can overcome such barriers. Likewise, a surrounding culture may involve styles of dress and conduct that are not appropriate for believers. Not all things in any culture are to be embraced. Nevertheless, as a rule, if a church makes cultural sense for the believers who attend, then it will make cultural sense to the unbelievers who are invited guests.

People generally concede that churches can get stuck in repeating their traditions and customs, causing them to become time capsules to an earlier age. For instance, First Baptist Church in Union, New Jersey, had a bulletin from a Sunday service in the 1990s that matched, almost exactly, the order of service and song selection as a service in 1967. Even some of the musicians were the same. That congregation wanted so badly to grow again, and to return to the times when the church was full on Sundays. They needed to see that they were not only unattractive to unbelievers who might come in, but they were culturally irrelevant to their own children and grandchildren, many of whom stopped going to the church. Some went to newer churches, leaving loved ones to wonder what they had done wrong.¹⁶

Rainer describes a sign of a dying church being that the “past is a hero.”¹⁷ When the culture of a time since past defines the design and practices of regular worship services, the church can lose its ability to connect with both churched and unchurched individuals. The reverse is also true. A church that is culturally recognizable for most

¹⁶ This anecdote comes from my own experience as a pastor at the First Baptist Church in Union, NJ.

¹⁷ Thom S. Rainer, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church: 12 Ways to Keep Yours Alive* (Nashville: B & H, 2014), 17.

Christians in a specific geographical area is likely to be equally accessible to visitors from outside the church.¹⁸

The Wheel Has Already Been Invented

Organizing a church to be a place of hospitality for visitors requires insights that are already understood by everyone. No great expertise is needed to imagine ways that a guest likes to be treated. All that is needed is Jesus' rule that a person must treat others the way he would like to be treated. Every church leader can ask himself the questions needed to guide his actions in transforming the worship services into a welcoming, hospitable environment that helps Christians worship their God without cultural barriers, while at the same time being understandable and inviting for guests. What style of music will result in participation of the maximum number of Christians who attend Church? What words should the songs have in order to direct believers toward the gospel and the greatness of Jesus? How would I like to be greeted when I come into a church service for the first time or the tenth time? What questions would I have the very first time I come to visit a new place of worship? How orderly and clean would I make my home when guests arrive? Is the worship space also orderly and clean and inviting? How can I dress in a way that is both comfortable for the believers who attend the church, but is also respectful? The questions go on and on, but they are not hard questions to develop, nor to answer. The need is not for leaders to have profound insight when seeking to transform church buildings and practices into culturally appealing places for believers to thrive. The need is for leaders to ask simple questions. Churches need leaders who will implement the changes lovingly but without fear.

¹⁸ Without being too tedious, it must be pointed out that in a nostalgic way, a church can be irrelevant to its surrounding culture while relevant to those worshipers. In other words, the twelve octogenarians singing the songs they sang when they were twenty, wearing the clothes they wore in their prime of life, etc., are worshiping in a way culturally relevant to themselves. Yet, those twelve are there precisely because everyone who was not of the same culture had left the fellowship already. That is why they are dying as a church.

The same is true of organizing for evangelism and training. The skills required to share the good news of Jesus are not exclusive to a talented few. Anyone who has ever invited a friend to try a new flavor of ice cream, go to a sporting event, watch a particular movie, go to a party, or meet a new friend, has the communication skills needed to bring the gospel to a neighbor or to bring a friend to a church service where the gospel is preached. The Samaritan woman in John’s gospel did not need extensive training in how to persuade people to make deep changes to their religious orientation. She had communication skills native to most anyone. She said, “Come and see a man who told me everything about myself.” The same skill is required to say to a friend, “Come to this new coffee shop I found! It is so good!” The subject of the latter is not as consequential, to be sure, but the skill is the same.

Conclusion

Put simply, the content of the message of the gospel does not need to be complicated, nor improved. Whether one looks to one of Paul’s simple summaries of the gospel—like, “for the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus, our Lord” (Rom 6:23), or “there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim 2:5), or the simple telling of one’s own story, the ordering of an evangelistic conversation is not complicated.¹⁹

As the message of the gospel does not need to be complicated, neither does the method of communicating the message, nor the method of welcoming new people into the church’s community. The good news is a simple message, easily communicated by ordinary means, by loving and hospitable people.

¹⁹ This is not to say that evangelistic conversations do not cover complex matters. Each person, upon hearing the gospel, can react in any number of ways. For some, the simple message that God loves them and has sent His Son to redeem them is enough. For others, complex objections may arise. Difficult questions and situations can challenge a Christian. In such cases, that Christian will need to respond as he sees fit, including bringing in help if needed. Though, in all cases, the central thrust of the gospel message is stated simply in the Scripture. Jesus came to earth to ransom sinners at the cross. Trust in Him and a person can be saved.

The job of the elders in a church is to not only set the example, but to train church members in the simple message of the gospel, direct efforts for the dissemination of the message into the local culture, and organize church services so that they are culturally accessible and inviting to those who visit.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT DESCRIPTION FOR DEVELOPING AN EVANGELISTIC STRATEGY

The project to develop an evangelistic strategy for the Indiana campus of Harvest Community Church was completed in the spring and summer of 2018. The project lasted 17 weeks.

Three goals served as the foundation for this project. The first goal was to identify and enlist four team members to serve on the Volunteer Outreach Team (VOT). The first step to achieving this goal required that the Indiana campus pastor, Scott Rising, fully understand the project goals, timeline, and responsibilities. Once he knew these, he suggested candidates who were active members of Harvest and who participated in community groups.¹ From these candidates, four were chosen to serve on the VOT.

The second goal, equipping the team with the knowledge needed to form an effective evangelistic plan, required several steps. First, a full-day training curriculum was developed that focused on four important areas: Harvest's mission, the biblical motivation for evangelism, the role of creative strategic planning, and how to make a gospel presentation. The content of the curriculum was largely based on chapters 2 and 3 of this project. Once the curriculum was formed, a Saturday in March was set aside for the training. After the training, the members of the VOT were tested on their comprehension of the material by two measures. One was a volunteer training evaluation that required basic recall and short answers to demonstrate what was learned.² The second test of

¹ Rising used a simple three-question interview process to determine qualification and willingness to serve. See appendix 1.

² See appendix 2 for the evaluation.

learning required each person to practice making a gospel presentation that was measured by another member of the team.³ Following the training, the participants were required to share the gospel with an unbelieving friend. Again, the performance was measured by another team member.

The third goal of this project required the VOT to meet as many times as necessary to form an evangelistic strategy that reflected what they had learned in the training. Although the formation of the strategy allowed for many possibilities, the team was asked to narrow down their project to just one main plan with two extra ideas outlined in case the first was rejected. The outreach plan was then submitted to an expert panel of three Harvest pastors who used a rubric to evaluate the plan, requiring that at least five out of seven of the rubric indicators score at sufficient or above.⁴

Finally, the plan was submitted to the team of six executive elders of Harvest Community Church and was approved for implementation at Harvest's Indiana campus. This approval was recorded in the Executive Team Minutes for July of 2018.

Forming the VOT

As stated, the first goal was to identify and enlist team members to serve on the VOT. To be initially eligible to serve, members had to have participated in church activities for at least three months, including regular attendance at weekend worship and at a community group. Working closely with campus pastor Rising, identifying many members who met the minimum qualifications was a simple task. An additional step presented itself that was not anticipated in the planning stages of this project: How should the list of

³ See appendix 3. This same rubric was used when the participant shared the gospel to an unbelieving friend.

⁴ See appendix 4 for the blank rubric and appendix 8 for the results of the completed evaluations.

possible candidates be narrowed down to four?⁵ To solve this problem, the pool of possible candidates was restricted to those who held no official leadership positions. Next, it was determined that a positive disposition would be a preferred quality for team members. With that in mind, Rising identified several people who were known for their helpful and positive demeanor.

Finally, with the list reduced to approximately eight people, four candidates were chosen based on diversity of life experience. A young couple was chosen because they had no children, were of college age, and desired to one day go to the mission field. This project would allow them to develop and demonstrate their gifting for ministry and teamwork while giving the project a young adult perspective. A mom in her late twenties was also chosen, allowing the group to be influenced by someone who understood the culture of homeowners and families in the region. Finally, a man in what is often referred to as the “empty-nest” portion of life was chosen. He brought the perspective of someone with several decades of work experience and an understanding of different stages of life in a community.

These four people were invited to interview for the VOT⁶ and did so successfully. All four eagerly agreed to participate in the project. This first goal required four weeks, beginning in March of 2018.

Training the VOT

The training of the VOT took place on a Saturday at the Indiana campus of Harvest Community Church. The day began with an explanation of the project. The project

⁵ The number of four candidates was chosen for the VOT for practical reasons as well as for efficiency. Practically, since this project required several meetings and activities from the VOT, it was easier to manage a small group rather than a large group. As for efficiency, since the group was tasked with working together to produce a written product, the higher the number of people on the team, the less efficient the process might have been. The limit of four people allows for discussions involving all members giving maximum input.

⁶ See appendix 1.

was part of an academic pursuit of a Doctor of Ministry degree from Southern Seminary, however the VOT would be encouraged to go beyond the scope of the academic process by implementing the plan that they were making. The training, then, was not simply to “help someone get a degree,” but would impact the souls of people in the community.

After the introduction, the VOT was asked a series of questions designed to get each member to participate but also to measure their understanding of basic ecclesiology, evangelism, and church growth.⁷ This discussion led into a presentation of the idea that evangelism is part of a process that can be divided into two halves. The first half is giving people the opportunity to place their faith in Jesus. The second half is building a healthy church community that new believers want to join. This project emphasizes the importance of church services being culturally relevant to the Christians themselves, realizing that, by doing so, unbelievers who visit would likewise find the services to be culturally accessible. This concept was explained and discussed with the VOT. This segment of the training lasted around two hours and allowed for the presentation of the material found in chapter 3 of this project.

Harvest’s Mission and Previous Evangelism Efforts

In the next session of the training, the VOT learned about the beginnings of Harvest Community Church. Harvest began in 1997, with a very definite outreach strategy designed to draw attention to the church. The church began with creative energy based on planned acts of kindness in the community, and advertising. For six years, the members of Harvest worked to get people to visit their Sunday services. In that time, God sent about 350 people to make up the congregation. The founding pastor departed at that point. The next pastor brought a change in direction as the church moved from its planting stage to putting down roots. Church energy moved away from a singular focus on outreach to

⁷ See appendix 9 for the outline of the VOT training.

give attention to building the structures needed to maintain and grow the church. In the subsequent fourteen years, God blessed the church to grow to around 1,000 people with four campuses. Nevertheless, the church needed to think urgently about evangelism to prevent stalling. Giving this historical perspective to the VOT was important as three of the four members of the team had been attending Harvest for three years or less. Learning the story of their home church helped them see their own place in the progress of God's work. Also, the VOT could see that creative measures for evangelism were not outside the history and culture of their church. As members of a young campus in Indiana, they, in a way, were still in the planting stage for that particular location. Therefore, they should still be working to be known in the community and to bring in new people.

Next, the VOT needed to understand the mission of Harvest Community Church so that they could see how their efforts might play a part in fulfilling that mission. The mission statement that guides Harvest Community Church is, "We exist to increase the health and size of God's church, everywhere."⁸ This statement informs all that is done at Harvest. This statement contains the "two halves" of evangelism mentioned previously. The church must work to be healthy while it seeks to grow in size. With these things in mind, the leaders of Harvest measure all that is done by asking, "Will this action promote the health and size of God's church?" God's plan for evangelism is the local church. The VOT was taught that their efforts should focus therefore on building the health of the local church while seeking to help it grow. For instance, an evangelistic strategy that includes other members from the church will help build the relationships and ministry experiences of the congregation. This building up of church members is an important part of any evangelistic plan.

⁸ Since the time this project began, Harvest has changed its terminology. Harvest now refers to the *mission* statement as the *vision* statement. For the sake of consistency, this project continues to refer to this statement as the mission statement.

Likewise, the mission of Harvest also allows for evangelism strategies that primarily build up church members while making room for the inclusion of unbelievers. For example, a Bible study that helps people in the church struggling with addiction can be opened to unbelievers struggling with addiction.

The VOT were taught that Harvest Community Church preaches the cross of Jesus at every event that involves speaking or teaching of any kind, including weekend services, weddings, funerals, women's events, men's events, youth events, and so on. They were also taught why the cross is always presented: The proclamation of the death and resurrection of Jesus is the heart of the gospel that saves souls. With this commitment in mind, one of the strategies of the VOT can include getting an unbeliever to visit a Harvest event or weekend services, knowing that the gospel will be proclaimed. Likewise, any event they planned that might include speaking would have to include the cross of Jesus being proclaimed.

This portion of the training ended with lunch at a nearby restaurant, paid for by the host. This lunch was designed not only to give the VOT a much-needed reprise after a morning of classroom time, but also to encourage team members to share their testimonies of coming to Jesus. Knowledge comes in the classroom. True cohesion in teams normally involves food and good conversation.

Biblical Motivation for Evangelism

The next portion of training focused on an examination of the Bible texts outlined in chapter 2 of this project. The object was two-fold. First, the object was to observe the evangelism strategies and methods found in John 1 and 4, and Acts 10-11 and to observe Paul's evangelistic strategies. Second, the object was to observe the roles of the church gathered and the Word preached in the evangelism process.

As for the methods used, the VOT was directed to see how some evangelism is pre-planned, while much is spontaneous. They were likewise shown how simply Jesus and Peter addressed and crossed cultural barriers when sharing the gospel. Finally, they

observed that evangelism builds a bridge to Jesus for an unbeliever to cross. That bridge can be expressed as simply as, “Come see a man who told me everything about me.”

The VOT also needed to see that, although the church gathered to worship God, they were cognizant of the unbelievers in their midst. First Corinthians 14:23 supplied the example as Paul cautioned against the abuse of the gift of tongues lest unbelievers become confused.

Finally, the VOT was trained on Paul’s explanation of the necessity of evangelistic declaration for souls to be saved. Faith does not come by good works done by believers. Faith does not come by acts of kindness done by believers. “Faith comes by hearing,” says Paul. The message declared is to be the gospel of Jesus. The VOT, in all their strategic planning, had to remember that the goal is to lead people into a situation where they could hear the gospel of Jesus preached.

One-on-One Gospel Presentations

Each member of the VOT was trained to share the gospel and was given an opportunity to practice. The training began with a short lecture outlining a simple and easy to remember narrative flow of the gospel consisting of four parts: God, problem, solution, and response. The team members were encouraged to remember this simple outline so that they would be ready at any time to share the gospel. Then, the VOT learned that this four-part flow was at the heart of most gospel tracts. Next, it was pointed out that each one of them had his or her own testimony of coming to Jesus. This testimony could be valuable in bringing others to the Lord, as this was the tool used by the Samaritan woman, and Andrew, among others.

Then, by lecture, they were trained in using a gospel tract and in a simple one-verse method of sharing the gospel.

Following this lecture portion, each person was given a gospel tract and instructed to practice a gospel conversation with another team member. Afterward, their

partner in the conversation graded the presentation using a rubric provided.⁹ Having received this training, they were to use the same rubric to measure one another's performance in sharing the gospel with an unbelieving friend. They had two weeks to choose a friend with whom they would have a gospel conversation.

An examination of these results revealed that the training in the classroom was effective in getting the team members to walk through a simple gospel presentation.¹⁰ Each presenter was graded for quality and corrected if they missed anything. That said, the results of the rubrics after the members shared the gospel in a real-life situation presented slightly different results. One of the differences was the reticence to use a gospel tract by the three younger people in the group. One person reported, "The booklet was not used but the gospel was fully covered using the God-Problem-Solution-Response format." Another said, "Although not using the booklet, the whole Gospel according to the booklet was used." Finally, a third wrote, "Walked through the gospel with her but did not use the booklet." The only one to use the tract was the oldest member of the group. Although this group of four people does not represent a large enough sample to make a rule regarding use of tracts, it does raise the question if the use of tracts in our digital world is of much use.

The results also showed spontaneous as well as planned evangelism. One person had the rubric filled out by the unbeliever because the opportunity to proclaim the gospel came when his VOT partner was not around. The other three people shared the gospel in pre-planned situations. One of the presentations included an invitation to lunch. This process allowed for the person to hear the entire gospel presentation and even respond. One person did not give adequate time to the planning and received this comment from her VOT partner, "Interrupted. He assured Katy that they would continue the conversation as the two know each other from work."

⁹ See appendix 3.

¹⁰ See appendix 6.

The evangelism training met its goal in that all four learned how to share the gospel and did so in real life settings. They were likewise challenged to answer the question, “What role will one-on-one evangelism play in the strategic plan you form?” Ultimately, they would minimize one-on-one evangelism, choosing a plan that would create a context for such conversations but not demand them.¹¹

Measuring Learning

The VOT was assigned the task of forming an evangelistic strategy following the training. The elements of this strategy would be the best measurement of the effectiveness of the training. The day of the training ended with each member of the VOT taking about a half an hour to complete a training evaluation, which amounted to a short-answer test of their learning from the day. The evaluation was thorough, covering all the major points taught.¹² Although they were not permitted to speak to each other while completing the evaluation, they could use their own notes. The results were very encouraging as they indicated that all four team members were engaged with the training from beginning to end.¹³ The real test, however, laid ahead of them as they turned toward creating an actual strategic plan for evangelism.

Five weeks were required to achieve this second goal of training the VOT, including preparing for the class, conducting the seminar, doing actual evangelism in a live setting, and completing and returning the evangelism training rubrics. This goal was completed late in May 2018.

¹¹ The lack of planned one-on-one evangelism was not viewed as a necessary weakness in their plan. Their strategy, as will be seen, involved getting the church to be known by the very large Indiana University of Pennsylvania student body, realizing that such recognition and relationships can lead to church visits, event attendance, and small group studies, involvement in existing Harvest University groups, and so on.

¹² See appendix 2.

¹³ See appendix 5.

Strategic Outreach Plan

The VOT met several times on their own before presenting their Strategic Outreach Plan. They submitted both their plan and two alternate ideas in the event that their plan was rejected during the evaluation process.¹⁴ They called their plan the “Pancake Pass-Out.” The target of their outreach was the 15,000 university students of Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP). They planned to give out free pancakes at strategic times during the college year: move-in week, mid-term week, and finals week. The strategy included generous advertising that utilized every possible campus message board, downtown locations, and the church itself. By advertising in the downtown area as well as the campus, knowledge of the existence of Harvest would not be limited to the university.

The goal was to establish an ongoing pancake ministry with increasing student participation as the years go on. Getting Harvest known as the church that gives students free pancakes to help through finals and other times will yield higher knowledge of Harvest, higher attendance of students, and provide for many gospel conversations. Their plan also required the involvement of at least a dozen other church members, thereby involving more people in the mission of the building up of the church.

The strategic outreach event could be supplemented in many creative ways. The VOT expected to be flexible and add to the event as it went along. To begin, they intended to give away Harvest coffee mugs, filled with coffee, that the students could take with them. They would also pass out invitation cards during pancake weeks, make to-go boxes, distribute invitations to Community Group meetings on IUP campus, and maintain a Facebook page dedicated to pancake weeks. The plan for sharing the gospel during the Pancake Pass Out relied on servers being opportunistic. The VOT would staff the meals with servers who were on the lookout for strategic gospel conversations and prayer requests. The VOT completed this plan in four weeks (June 20, 2018).

¹⁴ See appendix 7.

This plan was submitted to three Harvest campus pastors who served as the expert panel. They evaluated the plan using a rubric prepared for that purpose. Their comments were both supportive and instructive. The pastors' feedback was considered successful if each of the pastors determined that at least five of the seven rubric indicators could be labeled sufficient or above. As it turned out, of the twenty-one possible indicators, all but two were determined to be sufficient or above. In that case, both commenters suggested the addition of more intentional sharing of the gospel message.¹⁵

The expert panel agreed that this plan would gain strength over time, allowing IUP students to know about Harvest. One commented, "Absolutely would help students know HCC exists." Another said, "This event is about building excitement and generating momentum. Done on a recurring basis it will accomplish both." There was general agreement that targeting the campus was a wise move at this time.

The expert panel expanded on some of the creative elements of the plan: "Coffee Mug is a great take-away, but not enough. A few more items in a package would have greater impact." Apparently, one of the pastors envisioned a large care-package for the students. Such suggestions would add to the cost of the event and may or may not be practical, but hearing such suggestions is an important part of improving the process that yields good events. On the same lines, another was more specific, "Is there a DVD that could be added to an 'Exam Rescue Package,' particularly suited for college students?" It is likely that most students do not use DVDs anymore. Nevertheless, the suggestion to give more rather than less should be considered.

Some of the comments bordered on critical and should be considered. For example, "What is the method of gathering names and contact info for follow up?" The question assumes that the VOT planned on getting contact info, but there is no mention of that in their plan. Perhaps there needs to be, suggests this pastor. Much could be done with

¹⁵ The specific comments can be found in appendix 8.

a list of names and text or email information, including on-line invitations to other events, and so on. Another pastor commented, “Sharing the gospel will require a 2nd step of returning to the church.” It might, but in some cases it might not. If those volunteers who serve are properly motivated and trained, they will have opportunities to preach the gospel during the meals. Even when they do not, this outreach was designed to produce a 2nd visit, either to an event or a Community Group, or even a weekend service.

In all, the comments by the expert panel were logical in light of any new project or ministry of the church. They reflected the pastors’ dual concern for practicality and for the gospel. The process of distributing copies of the strategic plan and the evaluation rubrics to the expert panel began in the last week of June. The expert panel completed their evaluations and returned them within two weeks, by July 6, 2018.

Two weeks later, as the final step, the Pancake Pass-Out was presented to the Executive Elder Team in their regular July meeting and they gave the strategic outreach plan their approval and entered their decision in the minutes of the meeting. That meeting was on July 18, 2018.

Conclusion

God has grown Harvest Community Church. Only God’s Word can bring faith. Only God’s Spirit can save souls. Only God can keep His church. He kindly commissions all who believe in Him to be His co-workers. This work should not be done haphazardly nor without theological guidance. God has guided Harvest even to this current project. Forming this strategy has and is proving helpful to the work of the church in several ways.

First, when a rural church grows to 1,000 people in twenty years, there is the temptation toward pride for those who work there. Pastors can easily forget the trials and difficulties that caused them to call on the God, who answered when it seemed the church was running aground. Pastors can begin to think that their methods or personalities or gifting have caused the success of the church. Pastors can even overlook the reality that their pride and mistakes may even have stunted the growth of the church in ways they

cannot know. This project reminded the pastors again of the power of the gospel by reminding them that all good church work is theologically driven. The Bible teaches the gospel and also shows the simple and natural ways it can be shared. The Bible teaches how planned evangelism and spontaneous evangelism both have their place in the work of God. The Bible teaches that a church must be marked by love, proven in kindness and hospitality. The Bible teaches that every member of the church can be a minister if they will only step out. This project was based on theology. The VOT was taught theology of evangelism, some ecclesiology, some soteriology, and a bit of practical theology. They responded by eagerly learning, preaching the gospel themselves, and developing a plan for reaching the people nearby. The church does not grow because pastors are brilliant. It grows because they obey and teach others to do likewise. The project reminded me, the lead pastor of Harvest, of this important truth.

Similarly, this project showed that the people who attend the church can be eager to learn things that their pastor studies in seminary studies. The VOT was not bored by a full day of classroom activity that summarized my recent seminary training. On the contrary, they were energized. The leaders of Harvest have a simple and repeatable process that yields fruit. Harvest has four campuses. Any one of them can easily duplicate this process as many times as desired. The Freeport campus of Harvest, for example, could recruit a four-member VOT of their own. The lead pastor could easily use the same curriculum to train that VOT. That VOT could then produce their own strategic outreach plan for Freeport.

Jesus instructed His apostles not just to go, but to teach others to observe, or to do, all that He had commanded them to do. Teaching disciples to do things means teaching them to reach out. Jesus taught the 70 and the 12. He sent them out by twos. He also taught by His example. The formation of this strategic outreach plan turned out to be an exercise in teaching four disciples on the VOT to attempt to do what Jesus did—reach the lost and grow the church.

CHAPTER 5

PROJECT EVALUATION

This project's impact on Harvest Community Church, on myself, and on the other participants in the project, will be seen in time. The project achieved its goals. There is an ongoing need for Harvest to remain dedicated to outreach and evangelism, resisting the temptation to rest on past successes. This project set my attention to mobilizing people in the church toward renewed outreach efforts.

This final chapter evaluates the project's goals, focusing on the strengths and weaknesses, along with thoughts on how the process could have been done better. I also consider the theological aspects of the project, as well as its impact on me personally.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The purpose of this project was to develop an evangelistic strategy for reaching the community that surrounds the Indiana, Pennsylvania, campus with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Such a strategy was successfully developed. The Volunteer Outreach Team (VOT) had the freedom to target their outreach toward the 15,000 year-round residents of Indiana, Pennsylvania, the 15,000 students of Indiana University of Pennsylvania, any of the small towns surrounding Indiana, or any of the subsets of people within these areas. They chose to aim for the college students. The VOT successfully formed a strategy that, if implemented successfully, should increase the number of college students coming to know Jesus and attending Harvest Community Church.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

Three goals were outlined in chapter 1 of this project. All three had their own mechanism for measurement of success. All three goals needed to be met for the project to be effectively accomplished.

Goal 1

The first goal was to identify and enlist four team members to serve on the VOT. Happily, this goal was easier to accomplish than expected. The goal required identifying positive-minded, active church members from the Indiana campus of Harvest. Each of the top four candidates chosen had no trouble with the interview process.¹ From the interview, through the training regimen and evangelistic instruction, to the completion of the steps needed to form the evangelistic strategy, all four members of the VOT were eager, hard-working, and prompt.

Goal 2

The second goal was to equip team members in four primary areas related to evangelistic efforts through Harvest Community Church, including the church's mission, biblical motivation, creative strategic planning, and gospel presentation. This goal included both a full day of classroom training as well as evangelistic experience in a live setting. The training was deemed successful based first on measuring the knowledge acquired during the classroom time. An evaluation was formed that asked for short answers to questions that covered each area of training. The students each answered every question accurately.² They had been informed beforehand that they would be tested on each section of the training. The team members took copious notes throughout the day.

¹ See appendix 1 for the interview format.

² Each of the VOT's answers can be found in appendix 5. As the instructor and grader of the answers, I could not have been more satisfied with their results. Each answer was adequate to be labeled correct.

The VOT was also measured on the mechanics of sharing the gospel message in a simple manner. After training in the classroom by sharing the gospel with one another in a role-play situation, each student was measured by his/her partner. Each one successfully shared the gospel.³ Next, each member was required to share the gospel in a real-life situation, again being measured by a peer. Although one of the VOT members, after sharing the gospel, was not able to ask for a response because of something that interrupted the conversation, the results show that all four successfully presented the good news as trained.

Goal 3

The third goal was for the VOT to develop an evangelistic strategy. Having been trained in seven specific elements that make up an evangelistic strategy,⁴ informed of Harvest Community Church's mission and history, and having studied evangelistic methods displayed in the gospel of John and in the Acts of the Apostles, the VOT was tasked with producing the end goal of this project: a strategic outreach plan for the Indiana Campus of Harvest Community Church. After several weeks, the VOT submitted their plan for a "Pancake Pass-Out." Their strategy focused on the local university, seeking to develop an activity that would keep students returning to Harvest Community Church for years to come. Their strategy was submitted to an expert panel of three of Harvest's pastors. Each one graded the plan as sufficient or above. The plan was then presented to the executive elders of Harvest Community Church. Finally, the executive elders approved the outreach plan and entered their approval in the official minutes of their regular meeting in July of 2018.

³ See appendix 6 for the results of both the role-play experience as well as the real-life sharing of the gospel.

⁴ See appendix 9, part 4.

Strengths of the Project

The greatest strength of the project was in demonstrating the rapidity with which a group of four people in the church could be trained, directed, and empowered to go from active members of the church to leaders in ministry. Although the four members of the VOT had no official titles in the church, by virtue of preparing a plan for outreach that aligned with the leadership of the church, and by virtue of being invited to implement their plan, these four people have the potential to lead a new ministry at Harvest. As they mobilize other members of the church to complete their plan, with the support of their campus pastor, they will be actively doing ministry that they created. It is hard to overstate the value of four church members being activated to service for evangelism. Without the need for a top-down program invented and initiated by one of the pastors or elders, a new outreach has been born, complete with people who own the vision for the ministry. Four people who were known for following the lead of their pastors by participating in services and doing what was asked can now be leaders also.

Most pastors want all members to view themselves as workers for the gospel. Most pastors are also frustrated at times by how hard it can be to motivate people to actually get out of the pew (or, in current times, cloth-covered chairs) and actually do something to build the church. These four individuals energetically tackled the project. They understood the need to involve others and formed a plan that would fulfill that need. In other words, without using the word “leadership,” they plan on leading others into ministry. Perhaps they realized that they were becoming leaders by making this plan, but perhaps they did not. They had been told that they were the ones who would make the plan go. They would not be turning to a pastor asking, “What would you like us to do?” The process necessitates leadership and produces it. I would like to say that I foresaw this dynamic when planning the project, but I did not.

A second strength, related to the first, was the discovery that the sharing of church history and evangelistic theology motivated the team. I had wondered if the members would balk at the idea of giving up a full Saturday to do classroom work. Perhaps

they had anticipated a long, dreary affair. When the training began, however, the students became increasingly energized as the day went on. They were excited to hear about the history of their own church. They participated throughout the day. They commented on how fascinating it was to see how evangelism worked in the gospel of John and in Acts, seeing the parallels to their own evangelistic opportunities. Perhaps there was also an attraction to getting the undivided attention of the lead pastor for a full day. In such a setting the four church members were getting “inside baseball” from someone who, up till now, only shared information from the pulpit. Whatever the reasons, they convinced me that church members can be motivated to act by being trained. Thought must be given to why this team responded so tangibly to this training. Perhaps the students were energized knowing that the training had practical applications, or because they knew they were part of something important. Whatever the case, a key strength of this project was learning that training can be motivational for church members.

A third strength of this project was that it taught the members of the VOT how to align their goals with the leadership of their church. It is not unusual for church members to have good ideas for new ministry. Having a good idea, however, can become a frustration or even a divisive element in a church if the person or people with the idea do not work in alignment with the church to accomplish their goals. By its design, these VOT members were not only empowered, but they followed a process that ensured that they would have the support of their leaders, beginning with understanding the vision of the church as stated by the lead pastor. Likewise, the team was given the biblical justification for their activity. Then, upon making their plan, they submitted it to their own pastors for review and comment. Finally, by being approved by the executive elders, they were assured that they had the blessing of the leaders of the church as well as the comfort of knowing that they were working to further the stated mission of the church.

Another strength of this project was that it is repeatable. Although such strategic plans require a lot of energy and time to implement and, therefore, must not be

overdone, in a church with four campuses, each campus could repeat this process right away. Beyond this thought, as time goes by, and some plans end or even fail to produce the desired results, they can be set aside, allowing the process to start again from scratch.

Related to repeatability is the administrative leanness of ad-hoc teams. The VOT was not a standing committee. It had only one purpose. It produced one strategy and it was empowered to employ only that strategy. When their work was done, they ceased being a team in the church. If the VOT, by contrast, were made into a standing team in the church, responsible for producing evangelistic strategies over the years, they would be subject to the same stagnation and decline that plagues most standing committees in churches. The team members themselves were not burdened with an endless future of serving on a team. Rather, they could devote themselves fully to the idea that they created, moving on to the next thing God has for them. Harvest Community Church, as it happens, is committed to the leanest possible governing structures, so ad-hoc teams work well within the culture.

Weaknesses of the Project

The most glaring weakness of this project was that prayer was taken for granted. We began our training session with prayer. We prayed when we finished. We prayed for the people we were seeking to reach with the gospel. The prayers, though valuable, were the habitual reflex of Christians in community. We did not ask nor answer the question: What is the role of prayer in evangelism? Other questions like this one would have been valuable. What is the role of prayer in the history and life of the church? What is the role of church in choosing how to form a plan? I was eager to do the project. The VOT was eager to get to work for the Lord. We did not stop and look at prayer thoughtfully. By this neglect, I did not give prayer its important place in the ministry. Most Christians know that prayer is for quiet times and personal reflection before God; but, what is the role of prayer in doing ministry?

A second witness was the requirement to share the gospel with only one friend each. After hearing the feedback from the time each one spent sharing the gospel, I guessed that they would benefit from sharing at least one or two more times. It could axiomatically be stated that most church members are not in the habit of regularly sharing the gospel. If they were, this training would not be necessary. Sending out four church members to preach the gospel only once undercuts the improvement that would come from repetition. They shared the gospel with one person because I asked them to do so. They did not complain. They were equipped, encouraged by the presence of their fellow team members being included, and they quickly completed the task. It is likely that they would have shared the gospel more if required, thereby improving their own skill and comfort in having evangelistic conversations.

A third weakness in the training is that the VOT took for granted what was taught to them as “the second half” of evangelism. In other words, once a person comes to know Jesus (the “first half”), he or she needs to go to a healthy church that openly receives new believers. If Christians do evangelism without remembering that the church gathered is an important part of the process, then unbelievers who visit become confused, and new converts are neglected instead of connected. Since Harvest’s culture has striven to develop elements of health, like hospitality and reliance on regular gospel presentations in services, and since Harvest is a young church, unencumbered with culturally-dated traditions, the VOT did not give much attention to what the church must do to receive the students they hoped would visit. The team seemed to assume that as they have always seen, visitors would be warmly and properly received at Harvest. They did not see that such a hospitable environment did not happen without intentional planning. The project had no specific mechanism for rethinking this singular point. That weakness could easily have been remedied if only I had added a couple of appropriate items to the rubric used to evaluate the strategic plan.

What I Would Do Differently

Besides the simple change to a rubric mentioned, the main improvement to this project would be to give serious attention to the role of prayer in forming an evangelistic strategy. The training would include a brief survey of examples of the role of prayer in ministry in the Bible. Second, the VOT would be provided with a basic theology of prayer. Third, there would be teaching of some historical reports of the effect of prayer on ministry in the life of Harvest and in church history. Finally, the training would include practical prayer elements. Perhaps this process could be a half-day of fasting and prayer together after the training but before evangelizing and before forming the strategic plan. Small prayer regimens could be included in the project, such as formation of prayer partners or the distribution of a private prayer guide to accompany the project.

Another improvement would be the addition of one or two more requirements for the VOT to share the gospel with individuals. Immediately after all four people had shared the gospel, there could be another short training session, where I gather the VOT to discuss what went well and what went poorly in their sharing time. They could be assigned a second round of evangelism that seeks to improve on the first. Finally, after the strategic plan is drafted, the team could go a third time to evangelize, focusing on members of the audience targeted in the strategic plan.

Theological Reflections

In the Gospel of John, introducing another person to Jesus Christ is simple. Andrew went to his brother with an invitation to come see for himself the man he had met. Peter responded and saw Jesus. The Samaritan woman of John 4 did the same. She approached those of her town asking them to come and see the man who told her things about her that no stranger should have known. They went and saw Him. Soon, they let her know that her word was no longer needed. They had seen Him for themselves. In modern times, one does not have the advantage of inviting people to Jesus by producing

Him in the flesh. One may not say, “Come see a man,” and physically present Jesus! There is a need to declare Jesus verbally rather in the flesh.

Fortunately, the gospel is a simple message that, when communicated, depends on the invisible Jesus presenting Himself to the hearer. The Christian says, “Come and see the man, Jesus. He can be seen in the pages of Scripture. Let me tell you the simple story of how He came from heaven to pay for our sins, and how He rose again, and how He forgives sins. And let me tell you my own story of meeting Him.” This sample conversation is a bit more elaborate than Philip’s “Come and see,” from John 1, but the message and method are more alike than different. To say, “I have found the Savior,” and then tell about Him is similar to saying, “I have found the Savior, let me take you to Him.” The physical transport into the presence of a physical human Jesus is replaced with the Spirit of God attesting directly to the heart of the one hearing. Faith comes from hearing this great message, as Paul teaches.

Today, 2,000 years after Jesus physically left the planet, who is it that will take this gospel message to those who have not heard? Gone are the days when a handful of people who could touch the physical Jesus spontaneously reached out to their friends. Gone are the days when the physical Jesus sent out 70 in pairs to tell of the kingdom. In these days, the job of spreading the gospel has not fallen strictly to individuals, but more precisely to a group of individuals. Jesus has gathered His people into assemblies, called churches, that are spread to various parts of the globe. It is the job of the churches to carry out the mandate of Jesus. His mandate, though, is not simply to tell the message to the lost but to make disciples. Disciples are more than converts—they are people who have entered into a process of growth in following Jesus, joining the church as a necessary first step of that journey. The saved join the church. The church reaches the lost.

In practice, unfortunately, the assemblies of believers eventually seem to forget their need to evangelize. Ironically, parachurch organizations often arise to meet the need for evangelism, but they seem to forget the need for the local assemblies. This project

attempted to build a process that motivates and activates the local church to do the job of evangelism, while not losing its identity as a church.

A church like Harvest, with four campuses and over a thousand people, never lacks for activities. There is no problem raising up a group of people for a Bible study for women, for men, for youth, for senior citizens, or for everything. It is easy to put together ministries for moms or dads or marriages or divorcees. There is no lack of people to populate community groups. It is easy to find people for midweek activities, or mission conferences, or worship nights. Harvest can, is, and will be a very active and busy church for at least the foreseeable future. With all this activity, the church can easily forget to share the gospel and reach out to the lost.

As the lead pastor, if I do not remind the people regularly of their opportunity to share the gospel spontaneously with their friends, they too will forget. If I do not share the gospel myself and tell them, they will follow my poor example. Likewise, if I do not influence those who work in the church to organize intentional outreach programs then they will not. This project goes one step further and demands that I mobilize people who are not already in leadership positions to organize, plan, and execute intentional outreach, done with the support and in the context of the local church.

Someone said, “The Church is the only society that exists for the benefit of those who are not its members.”⁵ That quote could cause some to wrongly think that evangelism is the primary work of the church. The bride does not exist for people not at the wedding, does she? No. The bride exists for the delight of the Groom—in this case, Jesus. The church exists for God’s pleasure. The church does not exist for the purpose of evangelism. Evangelism exists to serve the church. The church exists by the hand of God to be the bride of His Son. Evangelism exists so that no one is left out of the church who is supposed to be there. Evangelism is a means of building up the church. The church

⁵ This quote is attributed to William Temple.

does not exist for the lost. The lost exist to supply new members to the church. This distinction might seem like splitting hairs to some, but if the church is seen to exist only for the lost, then evangelism comes to define and shape every aspect of the church. The past few decades have shown the errors that result in some seeker congregations not resembling the church much at all. The past few decades have shown the value of the parachurch and the deficiencies also. Parachurches trip when they train converts to thrive in a parachurch environment while having no church experience at all. We must never forget the words of Paul who stated that even evangelists were given to the church “for building up the body of Christ” (Eph 4:12).

The church is the project of Jesus. He is building her. When human history is complete, only the church remains. With this in mind, the strategic plan that employs average church members is most effective in the evangelistic effort. The VOT’s ultimate goal is not the conversion of the lost, but the growth and health of the church. The VOT must bridge the lost to Jesus and the convert to the church. Their plan does involve other church people directly showing kindness to unbelievers, including opportunities to preach the gospel to the lost. The plan leans on the need to bring the guests back for other events and hopefully to worship services. The plan speaks to students not only saying, “Come and see Jesus,” but also, “Come and join us.” These efforts keep evangelism grounded solidly in the local church.

Personal Reflections

What I found most rewarding about this project was the ability to marry academic study with practical application to a new degree. As an undergraduate, education and real-life application were often very far apart. As a Master of Divinity student, the rich experience of soaking in knowledge for three years equipped me for a life-time of ministry, but not without many intermediate steps to translate the content into actual service to the church. In the case of this Doctor of Ministry degree, the content of chapters 2 and 3 of this project—those chapters that summarize the fruit of my thinking and learning over the

last few years—became the exact content I taught to the VOT. Furthermore, since I formed the project and administered the training, I was able to emphasize the need for a direct connection between what was learned and the plan to be created.

Education while in ministry is challenging for reasons that should be obvious. Twice in my life before I have been able to study for years at a time with nothing much else to do except learn. Working as a lead pastor of a multi-staff church while also seeking to reach an educational goal creates scheduling challenges and priority stresses regularly. Learning while on-the-job, however, had the effect of increasing my focus. The Doctor of Ministry learning is most helpful to the extent that it applies to real life ministry. I was the person with the most control over keeping the learning applicable. The books assigned often supplied me with tools for training other church pastors and elders. The learning in the classroom called me to step back from my church and think in the broadest possible ways about the scope of ministry. For these things, this education has been very rewarding. The Doctor of Ministry program allowed me to move ideas quickly “from the drawing board to the showroom floor,” as it were.

Beyond the educational efficiency mentioned, this project reminded me how large impacts come from focusing on only a few workers. The VOT is only four people. Since we began this training, two members of the VOT decided that they want to go back to school themselves. They were considering missions as a vocation (and they still are), but realized by several factors that more Bible training would be helpful. My relationship with these two people has grown while doing this project, allowing me to invest more in them beyond the scope of the work of the VOT. Likewise, another member of the VOT has taken the first steps toward becoming an elder. That process can take several years at Harvest, but working together with him in the VOT has helped me to get a better understanding of his heart for the Lord and how he conducts himself in a ministry group. This interaction will help me not only to evaluate him as a possible elder but perhaps to even accelerate the process.

The application of the strategic plan has yet to be implemented, but I am again reminded that growing disciples requires time shared. I cannot be there to educationally and personally invest in everyone who attends Harvest. That job requires a large team. Likewise, I have my part to play with some. It is a joy to think that these four people will activate other believers in the church to join them in this evangelistic effort. Only God knows what will come of these small steps taken to form the VOT. Only God knows what He will do with the efforts of the VOT to grow the church.

Conclusion

I have one great fear in pastoring Harvest—that I will lead the church into decline. When a church begins to decline, that process is likely unnoticed at the time. Who would think there was anything wrong when the seats are full and the bulletins bursting with activities? At twenty years old, Harvest, I fear, is ripe to turn inward and away from evangelism and outreach.

My hope in this project and in taking this course of study in church revitalization was not that I could help revitalize Harvest. Rather, my hope was that I could learn what things must be done to keep the church from slumping to a state that needs revitalization. I am satisfied that my learning and this project have helped me down this road.

My second hope is to be allowed by God to bring healthy campuses to small towns where healthy churches are few, and where dying churches are the norm. Every small town in western Pennsylvania that I have visited is dotted with dying, small, old congregations. Hopeless towns seem more hopeless when the churches are dying. Some towns have new life and a healthy church or two. In all, I can think of nothing more satisfying than helping to start a campus in a town where people need a healthy church. Indiana, Pennsylvania, I believe, is one such town. I am thankful to God that Harvest is allowed to serve there. I am thankful to God that I can combine this educational project with my desire to strengthen the church in small towns of Pennsylvania.

APPENDIX 1

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES FOR THE VOLUNTEER OUTREACH TEAM (VOT)

The purpose of this interview was to judge the interest of the candidate while verifying that he or she is in basic agreement with Harvest's statement of faith. This interview also provided a chance for the candidate to declare his or her involvement in the church itself, and his or her willingness to be part of a team that expands the church.

The numbered interview questions should have been asked as written, however, the interviewer used best judgment regarding the need for follow-up questions.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES FOR
THE VOLUNTEER OUTREACH TEAM (VOT)

1. Tell me about your relationship with Harvest Community Church.¹
 - a. *Follow up:* How long have you attended Harvest?
 - b. *Follow up:* Which services or events of Harvest have you attended?

2. Please read this copy of Harvest's Statement of Faith, if you haven't already.² Are you in basic agreement with this statement?
 - a. *If no, Follow up:* Which portions do you disagree with?
 - b. *If yes, Follow up:* Do you have any questions regarding specific parts of the statement?

3. If asked, how would you feel about serving as part of a team that expands the reach of the Indiana campus to unbelievers in the surrounding areas?
 - a. *If response is positive, Follow up:*
 - i. Will you commit to pray about your involvement every day for a week?
 - ii. Are you excited about opportunities to interact with unbelievers for the sake of the gospel?
 - iii. The project, once it begins, will require several weeks of intense involvement. Will you be willing to adjust your schedule to make this outreach a priority?
 - b. *If response is negative, Follow up:*
 - i. What is the reason why you do not prefer to serve at this time?
 - ii. Is there another area of the church where you see yourself serving?
 - c. *If response is uncertain, Follow up:*
 - i. What do you see as the obstacles to your participation?
 - ii. Would you be willing to pray daily for a week about your possible participation?

¹ Ask the follow up questions only if the candidate does not supply this information in his or her answer to the original question.

² The Statement of Faith for Harvest Community Church was provided for the interviewee. The interviewer must either obtain a copy from the "Heart of Harvest" booklet available at every campus, or make it available electronically from Harvest Community Church, "Heart of Harvest" accessed July 5, 2014, <http://s3.amazonaws.com/churchplantmedia-cms/harvestcc/heart-of-harvest-2011.pdf>.

APPENDIX 2

VOLUNTEER OUTREACH TEAM TRAINING EVALUATION

Immediately following the one-day training seminar, this evaluation instrument was used to give each member of the team the opportunity to demonstrate that he or she understood the content presented.

VOLUNTEER OUTREACH TEAM
TRAINING EVALUATION

1. Briefly describe how outreach efforts played a part in history of Harvest Community Church.

2. In John 4, describe the strategy Jesus used in communicating the gospel with the Samaritan woman.

3. In John 4, describe the outreach strategy of the Samaritan woman.

4. In John 1, explain the outreach strategy of John the Baptist, Andrew, and Philip.

5. Which outreach strategy was used in Acts 10? Briefly describe the process.

6. Describe the interplay between preaching, faith, and salvation, as Paul outlines them in Romans 10:8-17.

7. Briefly describe the components of a strategic outreach plan covered in the training.
 - a) *Identify demographic targets*

 - b) *One-on-one evangelism*

 - c) *Group evangelism*

 - d) *Community Event Participation*

e) *Creative “sowing”*

f) *Involving others*

g) *Scheduling the work*

APPENDIX 3

ONE-ON-ONE EVANGELISM EVALUATION RUBRIC

Each participant learned to preach the gospel in a one-on-one setting, using a specific booklet.¹ This rubric was used twice. The first time as the participant was observed in a practice situation. The second time the rubric was used was in a “live” situation.

¹ Bill Bright, *The Four Spiritual Laws* (Wayne, NJ: New Life, 1993). This booklet can be used to share the gospel simply by reading it to another person. For this reason, it is a good tool to train people who are not accustomed to sharing their faith.

ONE-ON-ONE EVANGELISM EVALUATION RUBRIC

Evangelism Evaluation Tool					
1=insufficient 2=requires attention 3=sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The student initiated the conversation.					
The student asked the proper questions to guide the conversation through the “Four Spiritual Laws” booklet.					
The student explained the entire booklet during the course of the conversation.					
The student ended the meeting by offering the tract as a gift, inviting follow-up contact, and requesting to pray for the individual.					

APPENDIX 4

EVANGELISTIC STRATEGY EVALUATION RUBRIC

This tool was used by the expert panel, made of three campus pastors from Harvest Community Church, to measure the evangelistic strategy formed by the Volunteer Outreach Team.

EVANGELISTIC STRATEGY EVALUATION RUBRIC

Evangelistic Strategy Evaluation Tool					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The plan focuses on the target audience(s) that might attend the Indiana Campus of Harvest.					
The ministry steps listed in this plan justify the use of resources required by the plan.					
This plan will increase the number of people who hear about Harvest in the community.					
This plan increases the number of people who hear the gospel outside of regular church services and events.					
The action steps listed in this plan seem reasonable and logical for our church setting.					
The steps in this plan are the right steps, done at the right time.					
This plan, if implemented, will make an impact worthy of the volunteer effort required.					

APPENDIX 5

RESULTS FOR VOLUNTEER OUTREACH TEAM TRAINING EVALUATION

Immediately following the one-day training seminar, this evaluation instrument was used to give each member of the team the opportunity to demonstrate that he or she understood the content presented.

RESULTS FOR VOLUNTEER OUTREACH TEAM TRAINING EVALUATION

Answers from the 4 participants

1. **Briefly describe how outreach efforts played a part in history of Harvest Community Church.**
 - 1) Let community know Harvest existed. Met people's expectations of being kind/welcoming when they showed up. Through RAC's (random acts of kindness)
 - 2) The initial step was going out and letting people know that Harvest exists. They would then come to the church and hear the gospel. It was based strongly on visitors enjoying themselves. Tactics: giveaways, radio, befriending press, advertising.
 - 3) Harvest began by initially going out into the community with Random Acts of Kindness (RAK's), without much evangelism but specifically to let everyone know that Harvest existed. Advertisements: signs, ads, radio . . . worked to publicize.
 - 4) It let people know that HCC existed. It served a need within the community – providing a contemporary Gospel-centered church. Acts of Kindness (water bottles, head bands, etc), connected with people and the kindness attracted them to visit HCC

2. **In John 4, describe the strategy Jesus used in communicating the gospel with the Samaritan woman.**
 - 1) He had to surpass cultural barriers that were not comfortable. He touched on her pain point and did not avoid her questions but was brief answering them and pointed her to the bigger picture.
 - 2) He hooks the woman in by asking for water and then diving into a conversation about water. By which he intentionally crossed cultural borders. When she brings up objections for him, He handles the objection and acknowledges it but showed her that the door to salvation for the Jews was still open to her. He built a bridge to Jesus!
 - 3) Jesus worked with this woman by building bridges. He was intentional with her (finding a cultural barrier). He stepped into her culture, acknowledged her objections (about place of worship and Him speaking to a woman) but opened the truth to her that she was still welcome as a Samaritan because of who H was (Jesus pointed to Himself).
 - 4) He used both planned and spontaneous evangelism. He planned to go to Samaria. He spontaneously approached and spoke to her. He connected and bridged to her through water conversation.

3. **In John 4, describe the outreach strategy of the Samaritan woman.**
 - 1) She went and told those she knew. She brought them to Jesus.
 - 2) When went to those she already knew and lived with. Her outreach was spontaneous as she pointed back to Jesus and what He did for her.
 - 3) The Samaritan woman used the simple strategy of “come and see” –Jesus revealed He knew all she'd done. She tells her closest group this and asks them, “Can this be the Christ?” Finds closest people, “Come and see!”

- 4) John did planned evangelism when he purposefully went out in an area. She spontaneously took and shared the message about Jesus. She invited the town to see “a man.” She also gives her testimony/experience with Jesus to them.
4. **In John 1, explain the outreach strategy of John the Baptist, Andrew, and Philip.**
- 1) John the Baptist –planned life. Andrew –Spontaneously told those he knew. Philip –Shared with those he knew.
 - 2) John the Baptist: “Look at Him! Look to Jesus!” (planned evangelism). Andrew –He found his brother and took him to Jesus (spontaneous evangelism). Philip—He found his friend, told him of his findings and said come and see! (spontaneous evangelism).
 - 3) John saw Jesus and said (pointed) “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” – Points to “go and see” that Jesus is the Messiah. Andrew and Philip both went to those closest to them after believing Jesus (One to his brother) and said “Come and see!”
 - 4) John did planned evangelism when he purposefully went out to an area, proclaiming repentance. Andrew and Phillip used spontaneous evangelism – they received it once and shared the exciting news with each there passing it along.
5. **Which outreach strategy was used in Acts 10? Briefly describe the process.**
- 1) God gave a vision to Cornelius and spoke also to Peter to join them so the gospel could be shared.
 - 2) Cornelius got a vision and was to call for Peter. Peter got an awesome vision on the roof, followed by Cornelius’ men coming as Peter was directed to with them. Cornelius invited lots of people prepping for Peter. Peter comes and they dream-swap! (the bridge).¹ Peter “opened his mouth,” and spread the gospel with all its wonderful pieces, followed by the Spirit descending and baptisms.
 - 3) This was a planned (not spontaneous) strategy set up by God. God worked in a vision to Peter and a dream to Cornelius: He set up a situation for Peter to obey and go share the Gospel cross-culturally (acknowledging barriers) with an entire group of Gentile unbelievers. Peter preaches Cross, Resurrection, Jesus is Judge, and the offer of salvation.
 - 4) Planned evangelism. Peter is intentional. He acknowledged the cultural differences –Jews vs. Gentiles. He shares both his story/testimony and the gospel.
6. **Describe the interplay between preaching, faith, and salvation, as Paul outlines them in Romans 10:8-17.**
- 1) Preaching comes first, and people believe through faith. It is an act of faith and a gift that they trust in God through the preaching. Once one believes they confess and are saved. They give their trust/ life to Christ.
 - 2) The “word” is preaching. The hearer hears. Followed by faith coming through the hearing, resulting in salvation.

¹ “The bridge” refers to finding a way to connect across cultural boundaries. The students learned this concept during the training.

- 3) Preaching comes first: Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of Christ. Tracing back, at the time of our salvation we do not know why we suddenly “know” that this is the truth: God gifts faith by the preaching of His word. Faith involves believing who Jesus is biblically, and believing that he will save me (Hebrews 11:6). Preaching causes hearing of the word, God gives faith through that hearing that leads to salvation.
- 4) The word goes out and is preached by believers correctly. Faith is a gift given by God and comes from hearing the gospel. A response is required. Call/confess we are a sinner, acknowledge Christ as Lord.

7. **Briefly describe the components of a strategic outreach plan covered in the training.**

a) *Identify demographic targets*

- 1) Who’s and What’s. What people and what area are you trying to reach. Example, Indiana University of PA students? If so, Male? Females? Professors or students? Etc.
- 2) Pick different sets of people in your area. As in different culture types, possibly a school, city folk, country folk, different small towns.
- 3) These are any group that you are trying to “target” with the Gospel. WE must be relevant to this group without compromising the Gospel and be welcoming to them.
- 4) Evangelism opportunities specific to our church location. City locations, college campus, men/women, rural/country areas, city/towns people.

b) *One-on-one evangelism*

- 1) Reaching an unbeliever through one Christian sharing the gospel.
- 2) One-on-one evangelism takes more training and will probably have less participants though it is good for discipleship of those in the training.
- 3) We must decide in our strategic planning to target a group exactly what part one-on-one evangelism will play. Lots of this will require more training of your “evangelists.” It allows the word to get out and makes discipleship natural. It does limit the size of an outreach.
- 4) Requires training people (may limit you to certain people). Gets the word out in the community. You individually have control of the conversation. Disciples are naturally created. May limit overall size of program.

c) *Group evangelism*

- 1) One or more believers reaching out to more than one unbeliever. Example: Open to public Bible studies like the Alpha course; or Open-Air preaching.
- 2) Going into public in a group with evangelism being your goal. Or bringing a group home and going over the gospel as a group.
- 3) This involves a group sharing the Gospel together, with a believer to a group of unbelievers –such as non-believer Bible studies, open air preaching, meals with unbelievers, believers together in a home . . .
- 4) Unbeliever Bible studies (Alpha course). Open air evangelism. Sports camps. Child evangelism (VBS). Anything involving a group/ something they share in common.

d) *Community Event Participation*

- 1) Participating in events often already organized by the local community and having a presence there. Example: Parades and Festivals.
- 2) See where the community is at work and get in there. Such as existing festivals community gatherings or anything that they will allow a church to leach itself onto and spread the gospel through.

- 3) Jumping in with what the community is already doing to strategically reach people with the Gospel (festivals, holiday celebrations, etc).
 - 4) Any local community event where people gather. Indiana mall family fun fest. County fair. Local arts/crafts festival.
- e) *Creative “sowing”***
- 1) Church or members of the church creating outreach to serve the needs of the community. Example: Divorce Care
 - 2) Different ideas, not of the norm, such as grief care, recovery care, divorce care, moms helping moms. These would be your specialty groups that are not going to strike a large swath of the public.
 - 3) Creating opportunities to throw out seeds of the Gospel. This could be specific (moms ministries, divorce care, random acts of kindness involving the Gospel or the church’s name...)
 - 4) Specific to a single idea/purpose/need. Divorce care. Recovering from addiction programs, mom’s support. Random acts of kindness.
- f) *Involving others***
- 1) “The other half.”² This is within your church. Welcoming those that are coming to church and including them and increasing discipleship.
 - 2) Bring other people in with more people you can reach more people! This would be easier.
 - 3) Remembering the second half of evangelism: being a place and a people that is welcoming. Getting more workers who will also know unbelievers. Keeping strategy simple for less training and more involvement.
 - 4) Using members of the church (HCC), people not directly involved in the evangelism plan. Gets more people of the church involved. Naturally leads to more discipleship.
- g) *Scheduling the work***
- 1) Set immediate to medium range time frame goals (sometimes long range) for these outreach strategies. How and when to get it done and then the evaluation pre-planning to follow up. “How did it work? Should we change it?” Always go to the top leader to include them and get their resources, consent.
 - 2) Immediate or long term? Plan it –set a date! Evaluate and perhaps re-plan
 - 3) Make the plan happen! Plan and schedule, have a way to evaluate success and change –re-plan if it was good. Communicate with the leader of the ministry you are targeting if it already exists.
 - 4) Plan the work, work the plan. Set immediate/medium range goals initially. Follow-up and evaluate what worked and what didn’t. May involve re-planning. Communicate with top-dog/leader/pastor/elder.

² The students were introduced to the term “the other half” during their training. The term refers to being evangelistic in receiving visitors and invited guests. The entire church body can serve an evangelistic function by its winsome and sincere treatment of unbelievers in her midst.

APPENDIX 6

RESULTS FOR ONE-ON-ONE EVANGELISM EVALUATION RUBRIC

Each participant learned to preach the gospel in a one-on-one setting, using a specific booklet.¹ This rubric was used twice. The first time as the participant was observed in a practice situation. The second time the rubric was used was in a “live” situation.

¹ Bill Bright, *The Four Spiritual Laws* (Wayne, NJ: New Life, 1993). This booklet can be used to share the gospel simply by reading it to another person. For this reason, it is a good tool to train people who are not accustomed to sharing their faith.

ONE-ON-ONE EVANGELISM EVALUATION
RUBRIC USED IN TRAINING

Evangelism Evaluation Tool					
1=insufficient 2=requires attention 3=sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The student initiated the conversation.			1	3	Asked if I owned a Bible. Asked if I'm happy in life. Asked about my background and listened to the answer.
The student asked the proper questions to guide the conversation through the "Four Spiritual Laws" booklet.			1	3	Asked questions for understanding. Worked through booklet. Went in-depth with explanations; too in-depth.
The student explained the entire booklet during the course of the conversation.			1	3	Read through the booklet well, adding explanation.
The student ended the meeting by offering the tract as a gift, inviting follow-up contact, and requesting to pray for the individual.			1	3	Gave out tract. Invited to church. Did not ask to pray.

Evangelism Evaluation Tool					
1=insufficient 2=requires attention 3=sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The student initiated the conversation.				1 2 3 4	1) Scott was very good because he simplified things for me. ² 2) Invited woman to lunch. Asked her how her relationship with God was going as the woman professed faith in Christ but seemed confused about what that means. 3) Moved a conversation about work to spiritual matters. 4) Talked to two people at one time. One claims to believe, the other claims not to.
The student asked the proper questions to guide the conversation through the “Four Spiritual Laws” booklet.			2 4	1 3	2) The booklet was not used but the gospel was fully covered using the God-Problem-Solution-Response format. ³ 3) He explained what he believed, and Katy responded explaining Christianity. Emphasized the fallen state of all people. Explained that Jesus died to solve the problem of sin. Jesus’ death matters. 4) The discussion began with a full explanation of the gospel, although he did not use the booklet. This was followed by a great deal of good discussion and a long conversation.
The student explained the entire booklet during the course of the conversation.			3	1 2 4	3) Walked through the gospel with her but did not use the booklet. 4) Although not using the booklet, the whole Gospel according to the booklet was used.
The student ended the meeting by offering the tract as a gift, inviting follow-up contact, and requesting to pray for the individual.	3			1 2 4	2) They ended with prayer. The woman did respond with repentance (though she had done this before –still not certain of her understanding). Follow up contact was offered. 3) Interrupted. He assured Katy that they would continue the conversation as the two know each other from work. 4) Bill asked Cody if he would like to respond to the gospel with prayer, and Cody declined.

² One person had the opportunity to share the gospel, but no one was there to evaluate. Consequently, he asked the person he shared with to evaluate his presentation. He made only one comment, and it seems positive.

³ During evangelism training, the students were taught to think through a logical, narrative flow of the gospel. This narrative had the headings God, Problem, Solution, Response.

APPENDIX 7

VOT'S STRATEGIC OUTREACH PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Following the training, the Volunteer Outreach Team was tasked with meeting to collect possible ideas for an outreach plan. Then, narrowed that list down to the plan or plans that they would implement. They settled on three ideas. Of those, they chose one to implement.

Strategic Outreach Plan

PANCAKE PASS-OUT

The idea that our team would like to plan and implement is a “Pancake Pass-out.” Weeks prior to the event we will post flyers all over the IUP campus, as well as throughout “downtown” Indiana: targeting grocery stores, coffee shops, and other areas frequented by students. On the day of the event, signs with the same layout as the flyers would be placed on the street outside the church, directing students upstairs. All along the halls to the elevators and even upstairs, signs posted “this way to pancakes.” The campus/community flyer would advertise something to the effect of:

**“PANCAKE PASS-OUT”
FREE! Seriously, come grab your pancakes and head out!
HARVEST Community Church
699 Philadelphia Street (3rd Floor above Steel City Samiches)**

We would like to make this into a regular event, with the purpose of increasing the health of size of God’s church everywhere...and specifically increasing the size of Harvest by adding IUP students to the body. While the first event might not draw a large number of students, we think that this would/could become a tradition, knowing that a church in town offers free pancakes during the three most stressful times of the semester. We plan to have these events each semester during Move-in week (targeting new freshman who may not know of churches in the area), Midterm week, and Finals week (times students are most stressed and may need to get away). The event would be staffed by greeters at the doors guiding students upstairs and then into the sanctuary, where we would have buffet-style tables set up with pancakes and a line of toppings. To-go boxes would be provided, with an invitation card to church and further study at the IUP Community Group: Tuesdays at 7pm (Baker Community Group). Tables would be provided for anyone who would prefer to eat at the church, tables manned by the College Community Group members, who are fellow students and could make personal connections to invite

students to church and friendship. Free Bibles would be available for anyone who wanted: there would be a worker offering a Bible to someone at every table and as students come through the line.

Pancake Pass Out -

1. Identify Demographic Target
 - IUP
 - During Move-in, Midterms, and Finals (high-stress times)
 - Specifically freshmen looking for a church
2. One-on-One
 - Have greeters at the door, outside building
 - Have greeters inside
 - Servers attending tables with drinks, asking about finals and offering prayer
3. Group Evangelism
 - None – group praying for strategic conversations
4. Community Event Participation
 - Participating in events at IUP: move-in, midterms, finals
5. Creative “Sowing”
 - Pass out card with invitation to church and list of next pancake dates
 - Facebook page for “Harvest Community Church Pancake Pass Out”
 - To-go coffee mugs with Harvest name and address to take coffee to study?
6. Involving Others
 - Funded by Harvest members
 - Members for making pancakes, setting up, serving, greeting
 - College Community Group to serve
7. Schedule/Plan: Immediate to Medium range – plan and make happen
 - Dates for Fall semester: Move-in, Midterm, and Finals weeks
 - 6pm-9pm?

Two other ideas that were finalists for possible outreach plans:

1. Host a family fun day with stations of games, snacks, and a quick message, a few songs, and a Christian movie. This event can be hosted in the local public park. The idea is to begin with a vacation-Bible-school-like approach but make it friendly for the entire family. For the movie, people could bring lawn chairs and sit outside.
2. Develop an evangelistic and new social media presence across Facebook and Twitter and other formats to reach the audiences we decide to target. Use life stories of people in our church that share their testimonies and can easily be shared with friends.

APPENDIX 8
COMPLETED EVANGELISTIC STRATEGY
EVALUATION RUBRIC

This tool was used by the expert panel, made of three campus pastors¹ from Harvest Community Church, to measure the evangelistic strategy formed by the Volunteer Outreach Team.

¹ Four pastors evaluated the strategic plan instead of three.

EVANGELISTIC STRATEGY EVALUATION RUBRIC

Evangelistic Strategy Evaluation Tool					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The plan focuses on the target audience(s) that might attend the Indiana Campus of Harvest.			1 2 3		1, Thought should be given to meeting felt needs besides only food. 2, Creative idea to connect with students. Give thought to optimal time of day.
The ministry steps listed in this plan justify the use of resources required by the plan.			2 3	1	2, Efficient. This event would need minimum man-hours
This plan will increase the number of people who hear about Harvest in the community.			1	2 3	1, What is the method of gathering names and contact info for follow up? 2, Absolutely would help students know HCC exists. 3, Idea is good, follow through will be essential. And for this you cannot over advertise or start too soon.
This plan increases the number of people who hear the gospel outside of regular church services and events.		2 3	1		1, Is there a DVD that could be added to an "Exam Rescue Package" particularly suited for college students? 2, Sharing the gospel will require a 2 nd step of returning to the church. 3, It has the potential to do this, but is largely dependent on the possibility of volunteers maybe having the opportunity to share or pray with the student.
The action steps listed in this plan seem reasonable and logical for our church setting.			1 3	2	1, Coffee Mug is a great take-away, but not enough. A few more items in a package would have greater impact. 2, Fits well with our culture as a church.
The steps in this plan are the right steps, done at the right time.			3	1 2	2, Stressed students will be happy to see friendly HCC folk
This plan, if implemented, will make an impact worthy of the volunteer effort required.			3	1 2	2, Connecting with students is a high priority for the Indiana campus. 3, This event is about building excitement and generating momentum. Done on a recurring basis it will accomplish both.

APPENDIX 9

OUTLINE FOR VOLUNTEER OUTREACH TEAM TRAINING

The VOT participated in a full-day training to learn about the history of their church, a brief theology of outreach, and a discussion of practical methods of outreach for the local church. Finally, the team was trained and practiced one-on-one evangelism.

VOLUNTEER OUTREACH TEAM TRAINING,
INSTRUCTOR'S OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION:

- This effort originates in an academic exercise,
 - it should be a growth experience for all of us,
 - it should result in some practical plans that can be implemented
 - [discuss the degree and the process]
 - There will be measurement tools for all we do
 - There will be some follow up work that you four will have to complete rather quickly.
 - Anyone want to quit?

OPENING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

[Encourage participation from all four participants]

What is the church?

Should it seek to grow itself? Or should it grow on its own?

What should churches do in order to grow?

What should churches not do in order to grow?

INSTRUCTION, PART 1

[During this portion, teach the content of chapter 3 of the DMin project, while covering the material below]

2 HALVES to growth

1. Getting new people to come and join us
 - a. This is what we normally think about when we think about evangelistic strategies

2. Being a community that people want to come and join
 - a. This part is usually neglected when thinking about evangelistic strategies
 - i. How should we do this?
 - ii. How should we NOT do this?

1. HISTORY OF HARVEST: Briefly describe how outreach efforts played a part in the formation of Harvest Community Church.

- Get people acquainted with the name of Harvest Community Church so that they will visit and find out about Jesus –this strategy depended on the expectation is that visitors would like the experience they have when they showed up at harvest worship services.
- RAK's (not really random)
 - Giving out water bottles, or popsicles on hot days
 - Handing out headbands at the Motorcycle rally
 - Giving away money for Christmas gifts
 - Advertising
 - Befriending members of press to get into the paper
- RAK's receded
 - Energies needed to manage existing church took momentum from RAK's
 - Missional outreaches took momentum from RAK's
 - Short term missions
 - ARC (Addiction Recovery Center) work
 - Jail work, etc.
 - VBS outreach took momentum from RAK's
- RAK's morphed to visible good deeds and events
 - Outdoor service with public food provided free
 - Outdoor VBS
 - Easter Egg hunts
 - Salvation Army Volunteering
 - Willingness to consider new ideas

INSTRUCTION, PART 2

Biblical Evangelism: [Teach the content summarized in chapter 2 of the DMin project]

1. Examination of John 1 and John 4
2. Examination of Acts 10 and 11
3. Examination of Paul
 - a. Planner: Planned geographically-centered strategic evangelism, three missionary journeys and a desire to reach the unreached
 - b. Strategic approach: Began in synagogues
 - c. ACTS 21: Spontaneous opportunist, when the plan goes wrong, stays the course
 - d. ACTS 17: Strategic opportunist, preaching when the need presents itself
 - e. Mandate for evangelism among the church gathered
 - i. 1 Corinthians 14:23
 - f. Romans 10:8 to 17
 - i. How Do “faith, preaching, and salvation” interact?

INSTRUCTION, PART 3

How to share the gospel

- Four parts to the Gospel & your testimony
 - Part 1: God
 - Part 2: Problem
 - Part 3: Solution
 - Part 4: Response
 - Your testimony
- Getting into the conversation
 - Determine the person you want to talk to –make the strategy fit the person
 - Acknowledge cultural boundaries if they are there
 - Acknowledge other objections if needed
 - Remember the goal is the words of the Samaritan woman: “Come see a man who told me all I ever did!”
- Using tracts or planned presentations
 - Four spiritual laws
 - One-verse method
- PRACTICE SHARING THE GOSPEL [the students are to pair up, practice sharing the gospel while being evaluated by the other]

INSTRUCTION, PART 4

The parts needed to make up a Strategic Evangelistic Plan

[In lecture format, explain each of the following. Invite questions to insure understanding.]

- a) Identify demographic targets
- b) One-on-one evangelism
 - >> Will this be a part of the strategy?
- c) Group evangelism
 - >> gathering people together in one place
- d) Community Event Participation
 - >> What is happening in the culture that we can join without having to organize the event?
 - >> This can include one-time events (festivals, fairs, concerts, etc.) or ongoing, long-term events (sports participation, hobbies, etc.).
- e) Creative “sowing”
 - > RAK’s
 - > Other

- f) Involving others
 >> Consider the “inside the church strategy” -- if visitors come, how will we connect them?
 > The More the better
 > Adds to discipleship
 > Builds the church
 > expands the network of known unbelievers
- g) ***Scheduling the work***
 > Nothing gets done if not scheduled
 > Include immediate, short-term, medium term ideas
 > Always communicate with the “top dog” of any organization
 > For the sake of unity and synergy
 > For the sake of counsel and resources

AFTER TRAINING RESPONSIBILITIES:

Prepare A Do-Able Action For An Outreach Strategy

- Brain storm as many ideas as possible.
- Narrow the list down to three
- Choose the one on the list of three that is to be implemented. Develop a strategic plan for this outreach.
- The strategic plan you formed will be evaluated by three or four pastors of Harvest
- Implementation of the strategy will be a collaboration of this group with Indiana leadership.

Plan Ahead

1. Share the gospel. Go in two's. Rate one another
2. As a team: brainstorm and form outreach strategy
3. Meet with me as needed as you progress in steps one and two

[Administer evaluation (test, short answer format)]

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ABSTRACT

DEVELOPING AN EVANGELISTIC STRATEGY FOR HARVEST COMMUNITY CHURCH IN INDIANA, PENNSYLVANIA

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Chapter 1 introduces the project, describes the church environment of the Indiana campus of Harvest Community Church, and lists the goals and methodology for the project.

Chapter 2 explains the biblical foundation for the project. Attention is given to passages from Romans, 1 Corinthians, the Gospel of John, and the Acts of the Apostles. A theological case is made for methods of evangelism.

Chapter 3 presents practical methods for doing evangelism in the local church. Included in this chapter is support from literature related to the subject.

Chapter 4 explains the implementation of the project, noting each step in the process of achieving the goals stated in chapter 1.

Chapter 5 offers evaluation of the project, focusing on strengths and weaknesses, achievement of goals, theological reflections, and personal deliberations.

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