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CREATING A CULTURE OF SERVANT EVANGELISM  
AT MEMORIAL BAPTIST CHURCH  
FRANKFORT, KENTUCKY

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A Project  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Ministry

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by  
Michael Wayne Colston

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**APPROVAL SHEET**

CREATING A CULTURE OF SERVANT EVANGELISM  
AT MEMORIAL BAPTIST CHURCH  
FRANKFORT, KENTUCKY

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Date \_\_\_\_\_

To Deb,  
my love and my lifelong companion,  
and to our children,  
Megan, Drew, and Kathryn . . .  
Your love, prayers, and support  
have made this project a joy  
to pursue and complete.

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## PREFACE

Though this ministry project bears my name, the completion of this work would not have been possible apart from the help and support of many people. Jeff K. Walters, my faculty supervisor, continually offered support and advice throughout the process and has been an encouragement as well as a friend. Former Dean Charles E. Lawless Jr., Dean Adam W. Greenway, Professor Timothy K. Beougher, and Associate Professor William D. Henard III likewise provided valuable insights, instruction, and information influential in the formation and completion of this project.

A project of this magnitude and importance would not have been possible without the loving support and partnership of the leadership and members of Memorial Baptist Church, Frankfort, Kentucky. They have become more than parishioners and partners in ministry; they have become friends and family. Their love for their pastor and his family amazes and humbles me.

Many others have provided support along the way. My father has always been an encouragement to excel in anything I endeavor to pursue. His honesty and work ethic constantly inspire me. My colleagues in the doctoral program have proven to be faithful to offer honest feedback and have continued to extend the challenge to not only finish, but finish well. A special word of gratitude to Bill Carter for his constant friendship and assistance in the pursuit and completion of this doctoral program. I would also like to thank Patrice Brown for her formatting assistance in Microsoft Word.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to offer heartfelt and lifelong gratitude to my wife for her loving prayers and support throughout the process of pursuing my master of divinity and now my doctorate. Though the degree of sacrifice she has made may never be known, her faithfulness and partnership in life as well as in ministry will forever be worthy

of my undying love. She has made life in the ministry more enjoyable than tolerable, and the days ahead are brighter because of her.

And finally, no project or program would be worth the effort apart from the grace of God. Were it not for grace, life would be a tragedy and ministry a travesty. It is by his grace alone and for his greater glory that I live and learn and serve.

Michael Wayne Colston

Louisville, Kentucky

December 2013

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose for this project was to lead Memorial Baptist Church, Frankfort, Kentucky to create opportunities through servant oriented ministry projects to effectively communicate the gospel. This purpose was carried out through service projects offered by the members of the church to meet the needs of the Frankfort community.

#### **Goals**

The goals of this ministry project were, (1) for Memorial Baptist Church to gain a greater understanding of servant evangelism, (2) for Memorial Baptist Church to grow in humility through acts of service, (3) for Memorial Baptist Church to gain relational skills through communicating the gospel in the context of acts of service, and (4) for me, as pastor, to grow in effectiveness as a servant leader at Memorial Baptist Church.

#### **Context**

Memorial Baptist Church is an urban church, located in downtown Frankfort, the capital of the commonwealth of Kentucky. The church is surrounded to the south and west by state government buildings with employees totaling in the thousands, and is just one mile north of the state capitol. The area southwest of the church is populated by middle income housing and downtown businesses, and to the east by lower income housing, known locally as the Holmes Street community. This diversity in surrounding populace provides a significant challenge for outreach, but one that has been pursued with a fresh passion through appreciation luncheons for the government workers and needs-based ministry projects in the Holmes Street community.

As of 2010, the population dwelling within three miles of Memorial Baptist

Church totaled 28,553. Within five miles the population increased to 38,456. Within ten miles the population increased to 55,821.<sup>1</sup> The least impacted area in Frankfort for Memorial Baptist Church is regrettably the most immediate area of downtown Frankfort. This truth is regrettable due to the fact that the church was begun as a much needed outreach to this area of Frankfort.

The origination of the church was a direct result of the desire of the J.O.Y. Sunday school class of the First Baptist Church to see the Holmes Street community reached. Under the leadership of their teacher, assisted by one of the deacons, a Vacation Bible School for the Holmes Street area was offered in August of 1942. The school had an average attendance of 85 for the week. Because of the success of the school, at the commencement on the last Sunday in August, it was announced there would be Sunday school and church services on Sunday afternoons. Rev. Elroy Lamb, Educational Director at First Baptist Church, served as the pastor.

The Holmes Street Baptist Sunday school began in September of 1942 with 25 members. The school met in a building which had been a beer parlor on the corner of Holmes and Hudson Streets. In 1943, the leaders of the Holmes Street Baptist Sunday school felt a need to change the service time from afternoon to morning. Also in 1943, another Vacation Bible School was held, and a revival was conducted producing many converts. From August 1943 until August 1944 the average attendance of the Sunday school was 62, with 15 conversions and 6 new additions by church letter.

Shortly after the second anniversary in 1944, plans were made for the Holmes Street Baptist Sunday school to become an organized church body. Praying as they worked, the members canvassed the community, inquiring as to who would like to have this mission become an organized church. The signatures on the church charter confirmed the faith and sincerity of those who were willing to become a part of the church organization. The name "Memorial Baptist Church" was selected and agreed upon in honor of the service men from

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<sup>1</sup>*Demographic Report of a Ten Mile Radius of Memorial Baptist Church, Frankfort, KY* (Alpharetta, GA: North American Mission Board, 2011).

Frankfort, Kentucky involved in World War II at that time.

On April 22, 1945, many people crowded into the large brick house at 241 Wright Street. There was a spirit of joy and excitement concerning the new building which had been purchased, and a spirit of awe and adoration as people were allowed the sacred privilege of witnessing the birth of a church. Memorial Baptist Church was duly constituted and organized with 103 charter members.

The church called their first pastor, who lived in a room in the house. The first floor of the house was used for worship, and the other rooms were used for Sunday school classrooms. A barber shop and an apartment next door were used for men's Sunday school classrooms. As the church grew, so did the need for space. Several stages of development followed, leading up to the purchase of property at the existing site. In 1954 the church began the building project at 130 Holmes Street. The sanctuary and education building were dedicated on January 26, 1958, and are still in use today, with renovations to suit current needs.

The church's greatest year in attendance was 1998 when the average worship attendance was 353, and the average Bible study attendance was 277. Since that year, the church has been in a state of steady decline. From 2005 until 2010 the church has lost an average of 8 percent per year in worship and Bible study attendance, averaging 150 in worship and 116 in Bible study for the year 2010. In that span of time, the church has averaged 21.2 additions per year, with 10.8 of those each year joining by baptism. In that same time frame, the church has lost 17.2 members per year by transfer to other local churches. These numbers do not reflect the fact that many still have not transferred their membership elsewhere. These members are either attending another local church they have not yet chosen to join, or are simply inactive in church anywhere.

The years of 2003-2010 were particularly difficult years. Memorial Baptist Church had initially considered relocating based upon the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet's purchase of the property. When that venture fell through, the church was led into a building program to totally renovate the worship center, relocate the offices, construct a new

youth area, and construct a new welcome center and preschool/nursery area.

During this construction phase conflicts in worship and leadership style arose. These conflicts caused numerous members to leave, depleting the church of valuable resources in leadership, ministry, and finances. The depleted resources left the church with limited ability to continue supporting the existing full-time ministry and support staff. The children's ministry team joined another local church plant, one of the two ministry assistant jobs was eliminated, and the senior pastor resigned, leaving the church with an unstable foundation for future ministry. In the interim period, in order to afford a new senior pastor, the worship pastor position was eliminated, leaving two full-time ministry staff positions and one ministry assistant.

Through this season of struggle, with the remaining membership wounded and reeling from negative circumstances and relationships, the church's focus turned from external to internal, requiring ministry and healing for the damages incurred. As senior pastor, the goal for the first six months was to lovingly lead in a time of healing and developing renewed trust in the church's leadership. The refocusing of Memorial Baptist Church's vision has been a gradual process, but has shown significant progress in seeking to be more externally focused.

One of the initial changes that took place in the first year was adopting a new mission statement that gave clarity to this refocusing. The new mission statement of Memorial Baptist Church is to "Love God, Love People, and Serve Others." This newly adopted statement embodied the goal of turning our focus from internal to external, stated in the words, "Love People, and Serve Others." My role as senior pastor is to exemplify a heart of a servant leader in how I serve the church, and how I lead the church to serve the people of our community.

## Rationale

Jesus defined his purpose statement in Matthew 20:28 when he said, “The Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”<sup>2</sup> This ministry project is an effort to define and display the heart of Jesus to the community of Frankfort by doing servant oriented ministry projects with the goal of connecting with people, establishing a relationship of trust, and sharing the gospel efficiently and effectively.

Steve Sjogren offers several reasons for doing servant evangelism on his website.<sup>3</sup> A primary reason for doing servant evangelism in Frankfort is because the people of Frankfort matter to God. The old adage is still true today that people do not care how much a person knows until they know how much a person cares. The harsh reality is people, for the most part, will not know the people of Memorial Baptist Church care until it is demonstrated in some tangible way. By connecting a tangible act of service to the love of God, people are then exposed to a caring God through a caring individual.

A second reason for doing servant evangelism in Frankfort is because anyone can serve. The good news for Memorial Baptist Church members is that any and all can take part in servant evangelism. Serving others does not require a college degree, years of experience, or a loaded resume. All it requires is an individual with willing hands, a servant’s heart, and an opportunity to meet someone at their point of need. The only training required is in being sensitive to the opportunity to turn a servant project into an evangelistic encounter.

A third reason for doing servant evangelism in Frankfort is because it creates a humble, servant-like attitude in the individual. It takes humility to lower oneself to the point of metaphorically washing another person’s feet. And since James 4:6 states that “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble,” servant evangelism involves the grace of God shown through random acts of kindness. Amazingly, those served are often humbled as well by the act of someone serving them, thus opening their heart to some degree to the

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<sup>2</sup>Unless otherwise noted, all quotations of Scripture are from the New King James Version.

<sup>3</sup>Steve Sjogren, “Why is servant evangelism so effective?,” <http://www.servantevangelism.com/questions/> (accessed March 27, 2012).

available grace of God in that moment.

A fourth reason for doing servant evangelism in Frankfort is because it is simple, quick, and involves a high volume of sowing. Most servant oriented projects take anywhere from ninety minutes to two hours to complete, thus allowing for greater capacity for impact on a larger group of people.

A fifth reason for doing servant evangelism in Frankfort is because, for the most part, it is non-offensive and culturally relevant. People are typically aware of their needs but are often unaware that others are aware of their needs, much less willing to meet their needs. In that context, an act of service is basically non-offensive. It is culturally relevant because it packages the love of God in a simple act of service.

A final reason for doing servant evangelism in Frankfort is because it is good for the church. So often churches can become disconnected with the immediate community, thereby eliminating any viable opportunity for relating the gospel in a relevant form. With the current condition of the church having a predominantly internal focus, there was an overwhelming need to turn the focus externally toward the surrounding community.

Some form of evangelism was desperately needed in order to give Memorial Baptist Church an opportunity to reach people. With the diminished resources, however, most evangelistic programs would serve to further exhaust available workers. A plan was needed that would involve more members in a simplified form of outreach. Servant evangelism became the most practical tool, providing a means for helping reconnect the church with the community, and to share the gospel in the context of a simple act of service.

### **Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations**

The length of this ministry project was limited by the standard 15-week duration of the Doctor of Ministry project. The 15-week ministry project involved a full 15 weeks of service activities, including an initial one week for a pre-project survey and one week for training, and concluding with one week for a post-project survey and evaluation. The scope and parameter of this ministry project was determined by the available participants for training and performing the various acts of service, which included anyone from senior

adults to children, as numerous families worked together in acts of service. The delimitation of those participating came in the form of those surveyed, restricting the survey participants to those above the age of 18.

Any reference to “Memorial Baptist Church, Frankfort, Kentucky” from this point on will be as MBC. When the term *evangelism* is used, it is used as it was defined in the Lausanne Covenant of 1974:

To evangelize is to spread the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead according to the Scriptures, and that as the reigning Lord he now offers the forgiveness of sins and the liberating gifts of the Spirit to all who repent and believe. Our Christian presence in the world is indispensable to evangelism, and so it is that kind of dialogue whose purpose is to listen sensitively in order to understand. But evangelism itself is the proclamation of the historical, biblical Christ as Savior and Lord, with a view to persuading people to come to him personally and to be reconciled to God. In issuing the gospel invitation we have no liberty to conceal the cost of discipleship. Jesus still calls all who would follow him to deny themselves, take up their cross, and identify themselves with his new community. The results of evangelism include obedience to Christ, incorporation into his Church and responsible service in the world.<sup>4</sup>

Within the parameters of that definition of the term *evangelism*, the term *servant evangelism* takes on more specificity. In order for an act of service to qualify as *servant evangelism*, there must be a point at which the good news is shared, thereby eliminating any random acts of service that do not have as their goal sharing the gospel. The point at which the conversation was directed toward the gospel came through what is identified as *words of witness*. These *words of witness* were conversation prompts such as, “We just wanted to show you the love of Jesus in a practical way,” thus bringing a valid emphasis on the love of Jesus expressed through an act of service.

Sjogren says that “by adding the adjective ‘servant’ to the noun ‘evangelism,’ the average person was activated. The adjective ‘servant’ empowers the ‘common’ person in the body of Christ. While only a small percentage of us may picture ourselves as prototypical evangelist types, 100 percent of us have gifts of serving.”<sup>5</sup> On his website, Sjogren defines *servant evangelism* as “a simple, straightforward approach to sharing God’s love in simple,

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<sup>4</sup>Tom Houston, “The Lausanne Covenant,” <http://www.lausanne.org/en/documents/lausanne-covenant.html> (accessed March 27, 2012).

<sup>5</sup>Steve Sjogren, *101 Ways to Reach Your Community* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2001), 10.

practical ways.”<sup>6</sup> In that sense, it can be said that servant evangelism is a partnership between demonstration and proclamation of the love of God.

The use of the term *mission trip* is used in reference to a short term project to a location outside of Frankfort, Kentucky for the sake of communicating the gospel, amid other venues, through acts of service. The *mission* portion of that term is directly related to the great commission as recorded in Matthew 28:18-20 and Acts 1:8. The *trip* portion of that term identifies the process of traveling to another location in order to accomplish the *mission* of the great commission.

### **Research Methodology**

As stated in the previous section, two surveys were administered to the participants, a pre-project and a post-project survey and questionnaire.<sup>7</sup> These surveys were vastly similar tools for the express purpose of measuring the growth of the culture of servant evangelism at MBC. The primary goal of this ministry project was for MBC to gain a better understanding of servant evangelism by experience. The surveys therefore probed the participants’ understanding by the use of identical statements, asking for their agreement or disagreement on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being strong agreement and 1 being strong disagreement. The identical questions were able to show measurable improvement in their understanding of servant evangelism.

The goal of growth in the humility of the participants was not as easily measurable as that of understanding. The evaluation of this goal came through three measurable statements in the body of the survey, along with a single question located at the bottom of the survey. This question asked the participants to identify in the pre-project survey any of 15 areas they felt they could improve or grow in either personally or spiritually. The only change in the post-project survey was reflective, asking the participants to identify any of the 15 areas they felt they had improved or grown in either personally or

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<sup>6</sup>Steve Sjogren, “What is servant evangelism?,” <http://www.servantevangelism.com/questions/> (accessed March 27, 2012).

<sup>7</sup>See Appendix for examples of the pre-project and post-project survey and questionnaire.

spiritually.

The third goal was measurable by statistics that were tabulated following each servant evangelism activity. The statistics were able to show how many times the gospel was shared, as well as any decisions that were made during the activity. The final tabulations showed a marked increase of the number of times the gospel was shared as it relates directly to the frequency of the involvement of the participants in servant evangelism activities.

A feedback group comprised of 7 members of the church assisted in the overall ministry project by serving in a consulting, advising, and evaluating role. This group was comprised of the chair of deacons, two other deacons, the chair of the Connections Ministry Team, the former pastor of MBC who had recently joined the church, the chair of the Hospitality Committee, and one member at large.

The evaluation of the final goal was a subjective rating of the training and demonstration of servant evangelism by the pastor and leadership of MBC. There was also a final comment area where all participants were able to interject their personal evaluations of the leadership, the training, the subject matter, and the effectiveness of the tool of servant evangelism in communicating the gospel in a culturally relevant format.

### **Conclusion**

At the heart of this ministry project is the core value of a humble spirit as it is displayed in serving others. Humility allows anybody to connect with the one doing the serving despite race, education, or social status. Humility puts a follower of Christ at the feet of the one being served, and opens up opportunities to both communicate and demonstrate the grace of a loving God. In a spirit of humility, the one serving is able to create a picture of Christ to the one being served, thus allowing them to present a visible demonstration of the love of Christ to a world that desperately needs to see Him.

CHAPTER 2  
BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL SUPPORT  
FOR SERVANT EVANGELISM

The goal for this chapter is to offer biblical and theological support for servant evangelism through the exploration of four passages from the New Testament and one from the Old Testament. The four New Testament passages include Matthew 20:28, John 13:1-17, Philippians 2:5-8, and Galatians 6:9. The one Old Testament passage is Joshua 24:1-15. These passages provide a foundation for the various aspects of servant evangelism.

**Matthew 20:28**

Jesus defined his purpose statement in Matthew 20:28 when he said, “The Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.” Jesus lived a purposeful life of servitude and sacrifice. This ministry project is an effort to define and display the heart of Jesus to the community of Frankfort by doing service oriented projects. Understanding that servant evangelism is incomplete apart from a verbal proclamation of the love of God, the goal is to connect with people, establish a relationship of trust, and share the gospel efficiently and effectively.

Paul A. Cedar proposes, “Imagine, the Lord of all the universe came to earth as a servant! He came to serve. While other leaders take, Jesus gives. While other leaders have slaves and servants waiting upon them hand and foot, responding to their every desire, Jesus serves.”<sup>1</sup> Such was the spirit of the Son of God that he would purposefully lower himself to serve those he came to lead and train to lead in the days of the early church.

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<sup>1</sup>Paul A. Cedar, *Strength in Servant Leadership* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 83-84.

## Jesus' Purpose

When Jesus referred to himself as “the Son of *Man*,” he was choosing to identify himself with the people he came to serve. If he had chosen the words, “the Son of *God*,” he would possibly have alienated himself from most to whom he was speaking. To the Jews, “the Son of *God*” reference would possibly have alienated him directly due to the relational aspect of his connection with God as his father. To the Gentiles, it would possibly have alienated him indirectly due to his relational disconnect with man. His reference to himself as “the Son of *Man*” allowed a larger target group to hear his words without eliminating the most important point of his servitude due to a personal bias related to the religious and non-religious contextualization of his audience.

Frederick Dale Bruner, in commenting on this phrase, said, “The Son of Man *came*” employs “the mysterious verb ‘to come.’ The preexistence of Jesus is hinted at in the synoptic gospels by this verb more than is appreciated. John and Paul make explicit what the synoptic leave implicit.”<sup>2</sup> The preexistence of Jesus is traditionally accepted as a foundational truth among most Christians.

Jesus’ next reference that he “did not come to be served” was one of elimination, describing specifically what he had not come to be and do. If a Jew had somehow recognized Jesus as the promised Messiah, definite associations with servitude owed to him as the king of the Jews might have entered into their perception of him. Even Herod was intimidated when he heard that the wise men were seeking the one who had been born king of the Jews (Matt 2:3). When Pilate questioned Jesus before his crucifixion, he asked, “Are you the king of the Jews?”(Matt 27:11). The association of rulers with Jesus’ kingship brought an entirely different perspective into view. By saying that he had not come to be served, Jesus was removing any undue association with servitude owed him at this time.

Having initially eliminated possible objections from Jews, Gentiles, and the religious leaders of the day, Jesus proceeded to state his approach as having come “to

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<sup>2</sup>Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary*, vol. 2, *The Churchbook, Matthew 13-28* (Dallas: Word Pub., 1990), 735.

serve.” It is interesting to connect the phrase “to serve” to associations in contemporary culture. A book by Robert C. Wadman and William Thomas Allison bears the title, “To Protect and To Serve: A History of Police in America.”<sup>3</sup> In the context of law enforcement, those two words carry a less subservient characteristic, relating more to the professional duty of a law enforcement officer to protect civilians from harm, and in so doing to serve society. It is interesting to note that when a prison inmate is incarcerated, these two words are often associated with them having “to serve” time, carrying an entirely different meaning, yet still involving some level of servitude.

From a biblical standpoint, the first deacons who were selected in Acts 6 were given the ministerial responsibility of “serving tables,” relegating to them the more menial tasks of ministry by that reference. Jesus exemplified that manner of ministry when he chose to wash his disciples’ feet the night before his crucifixion. In that day, washing feet was the most menial of tasks that was typically reserved for the least of the servants. When Jesus told his disciples he had come “to serve,” they could not fully conceive of the depths of servitude of which he spoke. The only way they could possibly grasp the full extent of those two words was when he lowered himself to wash their feet (John 13:1-17).<sup>4</sup>

If Jesus had stopped the course of his conversation at this point, certainly there would have been plenty to occupy his disciples’ thoughts for days to come. Jesus, however, immediately proceeded to associate his purpose for coming as being not just “to serve,” but to serve all humanity in the greatest way when he added, “and give my life a ransom for many.” Robert H. Smith comments that

in the stunning climax Jesus points beyond child or servant or slave to himself: the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and the service he offers is the free gift of his own life as a ransom for many. The entire existence of Jesus is summed up here in a single word: service. That service knew no limits and shrank not even from the cross.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Robert C. Wadman and William Thomas Allison, *To Protect and To Serve: A History of Police in America* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2004).

<sup>4</sup>H. A. Ironside, *Expository Notes on the Gospel of Matthew* (New York: Loizeaux Brothers, 1948), 258-60.

<sup>5</sup>Robert H. Smith, *Matthew*, Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 1 (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988), 241.

Of this service, Bruner affirms, “So seriously does Jesus take his work that he uses his death to motivate it. Jesus’ doctrine of vocation is built on no less firm a foundation than his atonement.”<sup>6</sup> Bruner further asserts,

Jesus’ whole life was a “waiting on” others, and his greatest service was his life given over to God in death as the Great Sin-Offering placed over the iniquity of the world. All who put their hands on the head of this God-sent One Sacrifice – all who believe in him – find that this One Sacrifice has been accepted for them, in their place, to make atonement for them before God. “He who did nothing wrong was condemned for everything so that we who have done everything wrong may be condemned for nothing.” That is the service that Jesus did for the universe, and on the foundation of this world service and in imitation of it Jesus calls his disciples to turn their work from careerism to service.<sup>7</sup>

Smith states that

the life’s blood of a criminal poured out in execution had power to atone for his own sin. The shed blood of righteous martyrs was a powerful antidote to the sins of the whole nation. The outpoured life of the Son of Man possessed awesome power as a ransom for many. The many are all who labor and are heavy laden, staggering under burdens of old and inadequate visions, oppressive social systems, the tyranny of demonic powers. Many signifies not some small fraction calculated in advance or some tiny elite arbitrarily chosen, but rather stands for the vast uncounted multitudes of every time and place who will find in the service of the Son of Man wellsprings of power for fresh creative life not bound to the old patterns of privilege and prestige.<sup>8</sup>

The offering of his life as a sacrifice for sin was a willful choice that combined divine intent with human submission. His life was relentlessly dedicated to that sacrificial purpose to the extent that he never lost sight of why he had come.

### **Purposeful Living**

Such sacrificial service exceeds anything known to the natural mind of man.

Bruner writes that

as believers learn the cosmic redemption-liberation made for them in Jesus’ one sacrifice they find themselves moved to make themselves serviceable in their little piece of world. The key to a social ethic is Jesus’ atonement, as this text teaches classically. This is why christocentricity is still the indispensable foundation for liberation praxis. Liberation ethics will also occur as the fruit of prophetic warning, and there is a place for powerful critique every time Sunday’s text or the situation’s context requires. But the most effective liberation ethics of all is rooted in the Liberator’s

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<sup>6</sup>Bruner, *Matthew*, 2:735.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Smith, *Matthew*, 241.

atonement.<sup>9</sup>

The fact that Jesus claimed to come for the express purpose “to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many” places on any and all of his followers the call to give their lives to purposefully serving others in order to display the attitude of a servant like Jesus. As he gave his life as “a ransom for many,” so followers of Christ should give their lives in sacrificial service to many in an effort to bring them to Christ, their ransom. In regard to serving others, Cedar claims that “serving is central; it is imperative. God has called us to serve – to minister to the authentic needs of people with the love of Jesus Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit. How do we serve? As Jesus did. He is the perfect example of a servant.”<sup>10</sup> When followers of Christ choose willfully to serve others, they thereby display the servant spirit of Jesus through a simple act of kindness.

### **John 13:1-17**

In this passage, Jesus demonstrated the heart of a servant by washing the feet of his disciples, and then challenging them to do as he had done. Certainly his disciples had seen this mode of service before as their culture beckoned such servitude from household servants. On the other hand, none of his disciples could have expected that form of servitude from the Son of God. In serving them, Jesus raised the standard by lowering himself.

### **The Servant Spirit of Jesus**

It is amazing that John spoke so freely of Jesus’ love for his disciples, even to the point in verse one of saying that “having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.” The world was full of servants in that day who would serve their masters out of a sense of obligation. In striking contrast, Jesus here displayed an entirely different form of service stemming from an unworldly love . . . a love that would stop at nothing less than total sacrifice.

Knowing the sacrifice that lay before him, and knowing full well that the one who

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<sup>9</sup>Bruner, *Matthew*, 2:736.

<sup>10</sup>Cedar, *Strength in Servant Leadership*, 84.

would betray him was among those whose feet he was preparing to wash, Jesus displayed the humility of a servant. In referring to Jesus taking the role of a servant, J. Oswald Sanders remarks, “The King James Bible uses the term *leader* only six times. Much more frequently, the role is called *servant*. We do not read about ‘Moses, my leader,’ but ‘Moses, my servant.’ And this is exactly what Christ taught.”<sup>11</sup>

Robert K. Greenleaf, in addressing the subject of servant leadership, refers to his book on *Spiritual Leadership* as “a journey into the nature of legitimate power and greatness,” saying that “the great leader is seen as a servant first, and that simple fact is the key to his greatness.”<sup>12</sup> In that respect, Jesus was easily the greatest leader to ever live, for he displayed in his servitude the depths of his power and greatness. Amazingly, he reserved his greatest acts of service for the conclusion of his earthly ministry rather than setting them at the forefront, thus leaving a lasting legacy of where true power and greatness are best demonstrated.

The imagery that Christ displayed in this powerful moment would leave a lasting impression on his followers. In verse 4, John said that Jesus “rose from supper and laid aside his garments, took a towel and girded himself.” Even in the wording of this phrase Jesus displayed the greatness of his act of service by rising from supper to lower himself to the feet of his disciples. The imagery of laying aside his garments pictures what Christ did when he “made himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men” (Phil 2:7). The completion of that imagery showed itself in him taking a towel and girding himself for the task of serving his disciples.

Of this phrase, C. K. Barrett relates that “when Jesus lays aside his garments in preparation for his act of humility and cleansing he foreshadows the laying down of his life.”<sup>13</sup> Barrett further notes that the Greek word *λέντιον* in verses 4-5 represents the isolated

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<sup>11</sup>J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership: Principles of Excellence for Every Leader*, 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1944), 21.

<sup>12</sup>Robert K. Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), 7.

<sup>13</sup>C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John* (London: S.P.C.K., 1955), 366.

usage of this word as “only in the New Testament. It is a Latinism, a transliteration of *linteum*, but not uncommon in later Greek.”<sup>14</sup> Even the very use of the towel proved that nothing Jesus touched was simply for the sake of symbolism. The towel was there for the purpose of being used in the course of this act of servitude, specifically to wipe the disciples’ feet, as the conclusion of verse 5 indicates.

So much in ministry can be lost to ceremonialism. Jesus wasted no time in venturing beyond the ceremonial aspects of the act of service. Verse 5 begins by saying, “After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet.” Ceremony would dictate more pomp and circumstance in the process . . . more elaborate symbolism. Like so many other occasions, Jesus dispensed of formalities and moved directly to the task at hand of demonstrating the greatness of his humble leadership.

“After that” implies an almost immediate transition from preparation to application. The application of the servitude of the Son of God must have shocked the disciples. Again, this act of servitude was not an unusual practice in that day, but on this occasion, the person performing the act was an extreme reversal of roles. Barrett proposes that

the washing of the master’s feet was a menial task which was not required of the Jewish slave (in distinction from slaves of other nationalities). The degrading character of the task should not however be exaggerated. Wives washed the feet of their husbands, and children of their parents. Disciples were expected to perform acts of personal service for their rabbis: the service of the law is more important than learning it. The point in the present passage is that the natural relationship is reversed in an act of unnecessary and striking humility.<sup>15</sup>

### **A Valid Model of Ministry**

The stunned silence must have hung over the scene like a heavy fog. Here was God in human flesh performing possibly the most menial of tasks of that day with no hesitation or reservation. The only display of hesitation or reservation was when Peter initially denied his master from washing his feet, only to eventually submit to the master’s

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 366-67.

act of humility. It is true that this form of servitude involves humility on the part of the one washing feet, as well as the one whose feet are being washed. In that respect, it is difficult to read Peter's response as to whether it was a denial of personal humility or rejection of Christ's model of humility. It appears, however, that his denial was more directly related to a refusal to accommodate the reversal of roles, thus his words in verse 6, "Lord, are you washing my feet?"

It is also entirely possible that Peter's denial of his master's example was revelatory in nature. Having followed Jesus for some time already, Peter knew that Jesus only did what he saw the Father do (John 5:19) and that his example was a mere demonstration for the sake of imitation by his followers. The possibility exists that Peter's denial of his master's humble act was more directly related to his personal denial of his responsibility to follow suit. This reasoning possibly shows best when Jesus said, "I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you" (John 13:15).<sup>16</sup>

In regard to Jesus' example, verse 12 says that "when he had washed their feet, taken his garments, and sat down again, he said to them, 'Do you know what I have done to you?'" For Christ, every situation provided a teachable moment. He was never one to pass up such an occasion to better explain what his followers had just seen. It is interesting that this question follows on the heels of a previous statement made in verse 7, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this." The previous statement was, however, in direct response to Peter's question, thus relating to Peter's personal lack of understanding and not to that of the disciples as a whole, to whom he offered a more detailed explanation of his actions.

In verse 13, Jesus validated the disciples' reference to him as "teacher and Lord," saying that "you say well, for so I am." The teachable moment took root when he said, "If I then, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet." His act of service became the visible demonstration for future ministry for his

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<sup>16</sup>John Gill, *An Exposition of the Gospel According to John* (Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist Press), 423.

disciples. Barrett says that “those who have been cleansed by him do in fact love and serve one another, and there is no other test of their having been cleansed than this.”<sup>17</sup>

Barrett then opens up the panorama of his application in verse 16 when Jesus said that “a servant is not greater than his master, nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him.”<sup>18</sup> Jesus’ meaning here allows for little confusion. Barrett claims, “The disciples are not to expect better treatment than their Lord received, nor are they to think themselves too important to perform the acts of service which he performed.”<sup>19</sup> Based on that premise, the disciples’ role in future ministry could never rise above that of their Lord, nor could it avoid descent to the depths of the most menial of tasks offered in humble service to others, and by so doing to him as well.

Having explained the meaning of his actions, in verse 17 Jesus brought everything into focus when he said, “If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.” Clearly the blessing is not in the gaining of knowledge or understanding, but in the application of that knowledge and understanding to deeds of service. The blessing then becomes a personal goal of each servant faithfully performing even the most menial of tasks in order to display the servant heart of Christ, thus portraying for a lost world the love of Jesus by a simple act of kindness.

### **Philippians 2:5-8**

Paul challenged the church at Philippi to have the mind of Christ who came in humility in the form of a servant. This servant spirit was not only proclaimed through his purpose statement in Matthew 20:28, but was also demonstrated through his humble act of service in John 13:1-17. In the Matthew passage, Jesus spoke of coming “to serve,” and in the John passage he performed the menial task of washing his disciples’ feet as a demonstration of his humility and servitude.

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<sup>17</sup>Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 367.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 368.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

In his commentary on Philippians, Gerald F. Hawthorne comments that the Philippians 2 passage

presents Jesus as the supreme example of the humble, self-sacrificing, self-denying, self-giving service that Paul has just been urging the Philippians to practice in their relations one toward another (vv 1-4). Hence, although this hymn is unquestionably a Christological gem unparalleled in the NT, although it may be considered soteriological in character, and although it may have been originally composed for Christological or soteriological reasons, Paul's motive in using it here is not theological but ethical. His object is not to give instruction in doctrine, but to reinforce instruction in Christian living. And he does this by appealing to the conduct of Christ. The hymn, therefore, presents Christ as the ultimate model for moral action.<sup>20</sup>

### **The Mind of Christ**

The thought processes of Christ knew no bounds. His thoughts were neither limited by human impossibilities, nor divine improbabilities. Human impossibilities encompass supernatural feats of greatness that exceed the realm of normality. These impossibilities could involve physical healing, demonic deliverance, or even resurrection from the dead. Divine improbabilities encompass natural feats of servitude that exceed the realm of human expectation from divinity. These improbabilities could involve everyday physical labor, acts of ministry performed out of compassion, or even menial tasks like washing feet as Jesus did in John 13.<sup>21</sup>

Hawthorne references the connection of verses 1-4 with verses 5-11 when he says that "verse 5 forms the link between the two sections. It is the transition from exhortation to illustration."<sup>22</sup> He further states, "This verse means that the hoped-for attitude outlined by Paul in verses 2-4 corresponds with that exhibited by Christ Jesus, and that the Philippians are bound to act in accordance with this attitude for one another if they wish to imitate their Lord."<sup>23</sup>

Having given a firm transition in verse 5, Paul proceeds, beginning in verse 6, to

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<sup>20</sup>Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 43 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983), 79.

<sup>21</sup>Gill, *An Exposition of the Gospel According to John*, 423.

<sup>22</sup>Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 80.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

delve more deeply into the details of the mind of Christ by saying that Jesus, despite “being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God.” Rudolph Bultmann asserts that “the ‘form of God’ in which the pre-existent Christ existed is not mere form, but the divine mode of *being*, just as much as the ‘form of a servant’ is the mode of *being* of a servant.”<sup>24</sup> A crucial factor in the incarnation of Christ is the fact that the existence of a new form of being did not cancel the existence of the former form of being. In other words, the mind of Christ was a process of consistent submission of the new form of being (human) to the pre-existent form of being (divine).

Within the context of Christ’s incarnation, Hawthorne claims that it was “precisely *because* he was in the form of God he reckoned equality with God not as a matter of getting but of giving. This giving then makes clear that contrary to whatever anyone may think about God, his true nature is characterized not by selfish grabbing, but by an open-handed giving.”<sup>25</sup> Christ did not consider being equal with God a matter worthy of gaining through “robbery,” or illegitimate possession, but rather a matter of giving of himself freely.

Hawthorne further states, “This idea is clearly spelled out in a profound statement introduced by *ἀλλά* (“but”) – ‘Not this . . . *but* this!’ The being equal with God does not mean filling oneself up, but on the contrary (*ἀλλά*) it means emptying oneself out.”<sup>26</sup> Hawthorne’s next question is worthy of attention. He asks, “But what did this act of self-emptying entail? Of what did Christ empty himself?”<sup>27</sup> He refutes many popular opinions of his day by saying that “one need not imagine that the phrase means that Christ discarded divine substances or essences. Rather, it is a poetic, hymn-like way of saying that Christ poured out himself, putting himself totally at the disposal of people.”<sup>28</sup>

It is interesting that the exceptional “emptying of himself” of which Paul speaks

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<sup>24</sup>Rudolph Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (New York: Scribner, 1951), 1:193.

<sup>25</sup>Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 85.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, 86.

here is that Christ “made himself of no reputation.” A basic understanding of reputation involves the fact of being highly esteemed. For Christ to create for himself an environment where he literally had “no reputation” was for him to remove any reason for being highly esteemed. This removal of esteem forms the foundation for Paul’s earlier statement in verse 3 where he says to “let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.” Such lowliness of mind was foundational for the way in which Christ came.

Of the subsequent sequence of phrases which Paul states in the remainder of verse 7, Hawthorne indicates that

these participles, although aorists, are nevertheless participles of simultaneous action and express the means by which the action of the verb ἐκένωσεν was effected. Paradoxically, then, Christ’s self-giving was accomplished by taking, his self-emptying was achieved by becoming what he was not before, his *kenōsis* not by subtracting from but by adding to. Christ took to himself voluntarily “the form of a slave.” There is no idea here that Christ possessed the external appearance of a slave, or that he disguised himself as a slave. Rather it means that he adopted the nature, the characteristic attributes of a slave. In other words, he became a slave.<sup>29</sup>

Hawthorne further states that “δοῦλος emphasizes the fact that in the incarnation Christ entered the stream of human life as a slave, that is, as a person without advantage, with no rights or privileges of his own for the express purpose of placing himself completely at the service of all mankind.”<sup>30</sup>

Of the second participle phrase, “coming in the likeness of men,” Hawthorne says that it is

used to define more precisely the expression “he emptied himself.” The participle γενόμενος, aorist, and derived from γίνεσθαι, a verb that stresses “beginning,” or “becoming,” stands in sharp contrast to the present participle, ὑπάρχων, in verse 6. There it was claimed that Christ *always existed* (ὑπάρχων) “in the form of God.” Here it is said that he *came into existence* (γενόμενος) “in the likeness of men.”<sup>31</sup>

Amazing as it is, the one who never knew a moment when he did not exist now took on the form of one who existed for the singular purpose of serving and saving mankind.

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<sup>29</sup>Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 86.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 87.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

This factor is at the heart of verse 8 where Paul says, “And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.” Humility is the core element in Christ’s obedience. It is interesting that Paul exerts that Christ “became obedient.” To “become obedient” suggests a previous nature of disobedience, which of course is not the case with Christ. The key to interpreting Paul’s meaning is in understanding that prior to Christ’s incarnation he had only a divine existence which had no form with which to come in conflict. He was entirely divine, and acted exclusively in character with his divinity. When Christ took on flesh, he no longer was exclusively divine, but was human as well, creating within himself a choice of which character to obey, thus the submission of his flesh nature to the will of his divine nature. In that respect, he “became obedient” in his thought processes “to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”

Hawthorne adds,

This concise phrase, “obedient to the point of death,” measures the magnitude of Christ’s humility and conveys the idea that he was principally obedient to God to the full length of accepting death. As a slave, he set himself to obey God by serving humankind. Christ’s acceptance of death, therefore, was his ultimate *yes* to God and man, his ultimate act of obedience to God in his self-giving service to people.<sup>32</sup>

### **A Spirit of Humility and Servitude**

The key word from Bultmann’s earlier assertion is “being,” meaning the pre-existent Christ took for himself a new and entirely unique form of “being” when he took on human flesh. The uniqueness of this form of “being” is similar to the unique form Paul spoke of in 2 Corinthians 5:17 when he said, “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.” Like “a new creation” in Christ takes a new and entirely unique form when they receive Christ through the forgiveness of sins, likewise Christ took a new and entirely unique form when he was incarnated.

In that context, as believers in Christ take a new and entirely unique form when they receive Christ as Savior and Lord, they are then able to take not just the form of Christ

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 89.

within, but the mind of Christ as well. And just as receiving Christ through the forgiveness of sins is transformational, likewise receiving the mind of Christ is transformational. With that transformation comes the “lowliness of mind” of which Paul urged the followers of Christ at Philippi to operate in.

When a follower of Christ serves someone in humility they truly “esteem others better than themselves” (Phil 2:3). It is in the spirit of the humility that they thereby possess the mind of and demonstrate the heart of Jesus for a lost world through a simple act of kindness.

### **Galatians 6:9**

Paul gave the church at Galatia a promise that doing good would have its results if they did not give up before the harvest. Jesus gave the encouragement to “let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matt 5:16). What a powerful promise! The Father in heaven will be glorified by men as a direct result of followers of Christ letting their light shine through “good works.” Steve Sjogren argues that “God’s love must be communicated from person to person, not just from page to person. Deeds of love allow us to sneak into the hearts of those we serve.”<sup>33</sup>

It would vastly simplify the work of evangelism if “doing good” was all there was to it. Add to the work of “doing good” the command of Jesus to “love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you” (Matt 5:44), and the work of evangelism gets enormously complicated. Taking the command of Jesus to heart means to avoid any appearance of selective service.

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<sup>33</sup>Steve Sjogren, *Conspiracy of Kindness: A Refreshing New Approach to Sharing the Love of Jesus with Others* (Ann Arbor, MI: Vine Books, 1993), 22-23.

## The Purpose of Good Deeds

Sjogren emphasizes, “Deeds of love aren’t enough on their own to bring someone to Christ, but they do create ‘phone wires’ for transmitting the spoken message.”<sup>34</sup> Those “deeds of love” are the demonstration of the love of God. The definition of servant evangelism in Chapter 1 is crucial to remember in this context: “servant evangelism is a partnership between demonstration and proclamation of the love of God.” That being true, it deserves to be restated that servant evangelism is incomplete apart from a verbal proclamation of the love of God.

Since Paul’s words to the church at Galatia involve a promised harvest, it is evident that his intent was for proclamation to occur at some point in the process of doing good. Paul’s words, however, indicate that doing good can be wearisome when results are not seemingly forthcoming, thus his encouragement to “let us not grow weary while doing good.” Sjogren states, “Our experience in Cincinnati has shown us that evangelism must contain the right words, but that those words must *follow* the demonstration of the love of God. The following equation states how this approach works:

$$\text{Servant evangelism} = \text{deeds of love} + \text{words of love} + \text{adequate time.}^{35}$$

In the context of the potential weariness that can come from doing good without seemingly forthcoming results, the element of “adequate time” in that equation bears tremendous significance. Sjogren says that “we need to allow time for deeds and words of love to have their effect on the hearts of people. If we are allowing the Holy Spirit to do his work in his way in his timing, we must not demand instantaneous results. We can be assured that God will not allow any seed he has sown to come back without bearing fruit.”<sup>36</sup>

Hans Dieter Betz, in his commentary on Galatians, emphasizes that “the appeal of verse 9 presupposes the previous discussion of verses 7-8, as it is indicated by  $\delta\acute{\epsilon}$

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 23.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 22.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 23.

(“then”).”<sup>37</sup> Those previous verses emphasize to “not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life” (Gal 6:7-8). Betz further stresses that “the phrase τό καλόν ποιεῖν (“doing the good”), includes everything the Christian is responsible for doing. Thus, it is identical with the concepts of the ‘fruit of the Spirit’ (Gal 5:22-23) and of ‘following the Spirit’ (Gal 5:25; cf. 5:16).”<sup>38</sup>

Regarding Paul’s reference to the growing weariness of the Galatians, the natural tendency of people is to revert to works of the flesh when weariness sets in, which is where Paul’s warning in verses 7-8 comes into play. In commenting on this tendency, Richard N. Longenecker, in his commentary on *Galatians*, suggests, “They were beginning to revert from an outgoing type of Christian faith that seeks the welfare of others to a selfish, self-contained religious stance that has little concern for others.”<sup>39</sup>

That same tendency can become a prominent issue at any church where people have been somehow wounded in the course of ministry or where a small portion of willing workers carry the predominant weight of the ministry, thus causing weariness in the course of doing the work of ministry. When weariness occurs, the external focus of ministry turns inward, requiring a substantial amount of ministry within the church in order to reclaim the external focus. Often, that form of ministry is related to healing prior to a return to an external focus.

Longenecker claims, “What Paul fears, it seems, is that his converts of Galatia, having begun well, were losing their enthusiasm about life lived ‘in step with the Spirit,’ and so were not only being enticed by a nomistic lifestyle, but also were allowing libertine attitudes to take control.”<sup>40</sup> Betz further asserts that

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<sup>37</sup>Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Churches in Galatia* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 309.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 41 (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 281.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

Paul assumes that at the moment the Galatians are in fact doing the good. The problem is, however, that they are in danger of getting tired of it. The apostle does not supply any specific reasons for this “weariness,” but the term is familiar, especially from apostolic texts, and points to the cardinal problem of all enthusiasts: time. As time goes on, enthusiasm fades away, boredom sets in, and in this situation “the flesh” gets its chance.<sup>41</sup>

## A Promised Harvest

Here is the point in verse 9 where Paul redirects the attention of his readers from the issue of weariness in doing good to the crucial promise of God regarding sowing and reaping. Longenecker states, “In support of his appeal, Paul now adds what appears to be another traditional maxim, which is introduced by an explanatory γάρ, ‘for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.’ The maxim here not only adds support to Paul’s appeal, but also promises a positive outcome for those who persevere in doing good to others.”<sup>42</sup>

Betz adds,

The promise in v 9b undergirds the appeal in v 9a: καιρῷ γὰρ ἰδίῳ θερίσομεν μὴ ἐκλυόμενοι (“for in due season we shall reap, if we do not give out”). Again, the metaphor of θερίζω (“harvest”) is employed to describe the eschatological reward. The phrase καιρῷ ἰδίῳ (“in due season”) points to the eschatological crisis. The condition for this eschatological reward is that “we do not lose heart” – clearly an eschatological topos.<sup>43</sup>

Longenecker explains that

the verb θερίζω (“reap” or “harvest”) corresponds to the agricultural imagery of verses 7-8. Its appearance here in the future tense is a promise for the future, but again without any specification as to whether that time is to be a this-worldly existential future or an other-worldly eschatological future, or both. Interpreters have easily latched on to one or the other of these understandings depending on their own theological proclivities. But Paul is not really interested in questions of timing; rather, his attention focuses on the certainty of God’s promises and the inevitability of what will occur when certain spiritual processes are in place.<sup>44</sup>

Regardless of the interpretation of the future context of this promise’s fulfillment, the nature of every promise in Scripture is the intrinsic call for faith in that particular

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<sup>41</sup>Betz, *Galatians*, 309.

<sup>42</sup>Longenecker, *Galatians*, 282.

<sup>43</sup>Betz, *Galatians*, 309.

<sup>44</sup>Longenecker, *Galatians*, 282.

promise. That being true, the promise of Romans 10:17, that “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God,” is thereby employed, causing the faith of all who hear the promise of Galatians 6:9 to be strengthened for them to continue doing good. Knowing this to be true, they can confidently trust that the day will come when their work will be rewarded, thus motivating them to continue to do good to others through acts of kindness as a part of servant evangelism.

### **Joshua 24:1-15**

Joshua called the people of God to choose whom they would serve. The crowd to whom he appealed in this passage included everyone from the elders, heads, judges, and officers down to the actual members of the twelve tribes of the nation of Israel. He called them to join in a covenant with God at Shechem. Although scholars differ dramatically regarding the actual location of this gathering, the point for this exploration is not logistical in nature. The point in this study and application of the truths in this passage regard the call to and the covenant of service rendered to the Lord.

Trent C. Butler, in his commentary on *Joshua*, states, “The service of ‘other gods’ is the theme of the entire chapter. The expression ‘other gods’ picks up the opening motif of the Decalog and sounds the theme of the entire Deuteronomistic history.<sup>45</sup> Their blatant idolatry gave cause to the summary statement regarding their forefathers at the conclusion of verse 3, in which Joshua stated that “they served other gods.” Butler further asserts, “‘To serve’ includes worship, but cannot be limited to the cultic sphere. Service here describes the recognition of a relationship of dependence upon Yahweh, based on the liberation from Egypt.”<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Trent C. Butler, *Joshua*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 7 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983), 270.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

## A Corporate Call to Serve God

Joshua continued to give account of God's historical faithfulness, speaking in verse 7 on God's behalf in stressing that "your eyes saw what I did in Egypt." Joshua culminated God's word to the people in verse 13, saying that "I have given you a land for which you did not labor, and cities which you did not build, and you dwell in them; you eat of the vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant." It is in the context of his brief account of God's historical worthiness of their attention and allegiance that Joshua issued a corporate call to the people to serve God.

Butler advocates, "The text abruptly changes speakers and mood. The prophetic Joshua now assumes the role of an attorney pleading for the proper verdict for his client."<sup>47</sup> He began verse 14 by saying, "Now, therefore." In other words, based on the account of God's faithfulness to his people throughout history, they have come to a crucial juncture where they must make a momentous choice that will dramatically affect the course of their future.

It is in this context that Butler asserts,

He demands two actions be taken. First, the people are to enter into the proper relationship to Yahweh. Second, they are to rid themselves of all other claimants to lordship over them. The proper relationship includes the proper attitude of reverence and awe in response to the majestic acts of God and the proper action of service in its widest sense.<sup>48</sup>

This sense of reverence and awe is expressed in Joshua's call to "fear the Lord." Clearly, Israel has been notorious throughout their history for failing to act wisely in the choices they made. Based on their history, in order for them to make right choices Joshua called them to "fear the Lord." Solomon recognized the importance of fearing God, thus his words of wisdom in Proverbs 9:10 that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."

Butler further states that the service duly rendered "is qualified by a pair of terms. חמ"ם ("totally") can refer to the completeness of a day or year, but most often refers to the

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<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 272.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

perfection of an animal to be sacrificed.”<sup>49</sup> Since this Hebrew word is so seldom ascribed to a man, Butler claims that “the man who achieves it is often the victim of ridicule.”<sup>50</sup> He further adds, “The other element describing the service of God is אֱמֶת (“faithfully”). This, too, is seldom attributed to a person and finds its basic usage in the Psalms. It designates a quality within men that cannot be presupposed, that of trustworthiness and faithfulness in speech and deed in relationship to other people and to God.”<sup>51</sup>

By issuing this twofold demand, Butler asserts, “Joshua thus demands an attitude and actions which are beyond the normal, expected attitude and actions of men. He demands the same type of response to God that God has already shown to men, that of total loyalty and dedication.”<sup>52</sup> This twofold demand is followed by Joshua’s call in verse 14 to “put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the river and in Egypt.” Herein rests Joshua’s demand for a clean break between their history and their future that can only be relegated to repentance of the people on behalf of the sin of their forefathers of serving other gods. Based on their corporate repentance as the people of God, Joshua issued the corporate call to “serve the Lord” at the conclusion of that verse.

### **A Personal Commitment to Serve God**

Joshua knew that regardless of whether the people of God were faithful to their corporate commitment to serve the Lord, he had to make a personal commitment in order to raise the standard to a higher level of faithfulness for the future. Therefore, Joshua boldly proclaimed in verse 15, “And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the river, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 273.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

Butler notes,

The call for Israel to choose is unique in several respects. (1) God is normally the subject, having chosen Israel. Yet his very choice forces a decision on Israel, for it is made in the midst of many attractive religions. The doctrine of election may well have been formulated precisely in the battle against the Canaanite religion. (2) The only choice for Israel's neighbors was which god to serve at the moment, in the present crisis. Polytheism, the worship of many gods, was the natural presupposition in Israel's environment. Ultimate choice was unnecessary, heretical, basically stupid. (3) Cultic activities presupposed that the god of the cult was known and chosen before cultic worship began. The task of the cult was celebration, not choice.<sup>53</sup>

Joshua knew that it was this call to choice that would determine Israel's future.

He also knew that he could not base his own personal choice on their choice. It was therefore in the integrity of Joshua's heart that he stood before the people of God, even if it meant standing alone, and said, "But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Joshua was both a servant and a leader. He was a servant in that he never demanded allegiance to him as a leader, thus his statement, "choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve." Yet he was also a leader in that he boldly proclaimed a personal choice, and called for all who would follow in his footsteps. Likewise, when a pastor chooses to serve others as a personal commitment to show the love of Christ through an act of servant evangelism, he provides an example for others to follow.

### **Conclusion**

For all who will follow Christ, there comes a time when critical choices must be made. Those choices demand a personal commitment from the leader to follow Christ whether others do or not, and to issue a call for others to follow in the footsteps of that leader's personal commitment. Such was the case with Joshua, with Paul, and with Jesus.

Jesus established early in ministry his purposeful approach for coming "to serve." As a servant leader, Christ not only stated that attitude, but also demonstrated it by washing his disciples' feet and calling on his followers to do as he had done by serving one another. Paul spoke openly to the church at Philippi about the humble servant spirit of Christ, and called for all who would follow him to operate with that same mentality and spirit. Paul

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

challenged the church at Galatia to be faithful in doing good, trusting that God would honor his promise to bring a harvest in due season from the seed that was sown. And Joshua made a personal commitment to serve God, and called for the people of God to follow his example and serve God as well.

These Scripture passages serve to form the biblical foundation for servant evangelism. In these texts followers of Christ are called to serve others, and in serving others to serve God in a spirit of humility, providing clear leadership for others to follow. Within the context of serving others the evangelistic appeal occurs. It is in this context MBC seeks to gain a greater understanding of servant evangelism, to grow in humility through acts of service, and to gain relational skills through communicating the gospel in the context of acts of service. It is also in this context that the church's leadership seeks to grow in effectiveness as servant leaders of MBC.

## CHAPTER 3

### RATIONALE FOR AND MODELS OF SERVANT EVANGELISM

The goal for this chapter is to present servant leaders in the context of social involvement through the avenues of serving, shepherding, and saving the city. The endeavored result of those three avenues is to better facilitate the answer to the prayer, “your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt 6:10). In so doing, a greater understanding of the kingdom of God is necessitated, thereby gaining a grasp on what the kingdom is not and what the kingdom is as it relates to the whole church, the whole gospel, and the whole city. Reaching the city requires faith that is demonstrated in action . . . social action, serving action, and saving action.

#### **Servant Leaders in Social Involvement**

Often ministers and ministries attempt to avoid the stigma of becoming another social service. The key element in the social context of doing servant evangelism is the basis of the personal needs of the individual being ministered to. Warren W. Wiersbe, in *On Being a Servant of God*, offers the following definition of ministry: “Ministry takes place when divine resources meet human needs through loving channels to the glory of God.”<sup>1</sup> With that definition in mind, social involvement takes on more of an imperative nature in order to do the work of servant evangelism.

The theoretical role of the pastor in social involvement is not an absolute but is often seen as circumstantial in application. When the role of the pastor as a servant leader is added to the theoretical equation, the circumstances are exponentially more complex due to the fact that the congregation sees the pastor’s role of a servant leader as exclusively

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<sup>1</sup>Warren W. Wiersbe, *On Being a Servant of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), 12.

relevant to ministry to the congregation. This factor provides an ongoing challenge to turn the church's focus from internal to external. This approach of the social involvement of servant leaders provides a venue in which to engage a predominantly unchurched culture in their sociological domain with evangelism as the ultimate goal.

It is in this context of the church engaging with a predominantly unchurched culture that the Lausanne Covenant states,

The development of strategies for world evangelization calls for imaginative pioneering methods. Under God, the result will be the rise of churches deeply rooted in Christ and closely related to their culture. Culture must always be tested and judged by Scripture. Because men and women are God's creatures, some of their culture is rich in beauty and goodness. Because they are fallen, all of it is tainted with sin and some of it is demonic. The gospel does not presuppose the superiority of any culture to another, but evaluates all cultures according to its own criteria of truth and righteousness, and insists on moral absolutes in every culture. Missions have all too frequently exported with the gospel an alien culture and churches have sometimes been in bondage to culture rather than to Scripture. Christ's evangelists must humbly seek to empty themselves of all but their personal authenticity in order to become the servants of others, and churches must seek to transform and enrich culture, all for the glory of God.<sup>2</sup>

### **Serving the City**

Many evangelistic techniques often take a more confrontational approach to affecting culture, advocating truth that demands a remedy requiring grace. Ed Silvano, in *Prayer Evangelism*, seemingly comes in conflict with this approach to engaging culture evangelistically when he asserts,

John 1:14 reads, "And the word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, *full of grace and truth*" (emphasis added). John lists first grace and then truth to describe what he and others saw when they laid eyes on Jesus. First they saw grace, and then – and only then – they saw truth. This sequence is very important. Not only are the words in the Bible inspired, but the order in which they are presented. The sequence in this passage tells us that Jesus carried up front the right equipment to connect with sinners: grace. Only sinners can benefit from His grace, and only grace enables a three-times-holy God to come in contact with sinners without compromising His holiness.<sup>3</sup>

Silvano proceeds to suggest that

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<sup>2</sup>Tom Houston, "The Lausanne Covenant," [http:// www.lausanne.org/en/documents/lausanne-covenant.html](http://www.lausanne.org/en/documents/lausanne-covenant.html) (accessed January 11, 2013).

<sup>3</sup>Ed Silvano, *Prayer Evangelism* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2000), 92.

we have reversed the order of the components in the grace-truth binary set. When we introduce Jesus to people, we usually present Him as a truth that people must first understand, accept and obey as a precondition to receiving grace. So when we preach to sinners, we spend the bulk of our time expounding on their wickedness and on how much they deserve hell, and we devote only a tiny fragment of the time presenting grace – and this only at the very end.<sup>4</sup>

This binary truth, thus applied, presents an approach whereby, in serving the city, grace is offered up front in a simple act of kindness, followed by the truth that sin can be forgiven through the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross.

With truth at the forefront, cultural barriers often present themselves that prohibit the effective communication of the gospel. *The Willowbank Report* that was published as a part of the Lausanne Occasional Papers states, “Sometimes people resist the gospel not because they think it false, but because they perceive it is a threat to their culture, especially the fabric of their society, and their national and tribal solidarity. To some degree this is unavoidable because Jesus Christ is a disturber as well as a peacemaker, and he demands total allegiance.”<sup>5</sup>

What then can be done to alleviate this cultural barrier? In Galatians 6:9-10 Paul addressed the weariness that often accompanies doing good works. He said, “Let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.” Paul’s words intimate the perspectives of inward and outward focus in doing the work of ministry. Many churches, however, focus almost exclusively on the “especially to those who are of the household of faith” phrase to the point of ignoring Paul’s encouragement to “do good to all.”

In “The Outreach Interview” conducted in the September/October 2011 edition of *Outreach Magazine*, Wayne Cordeiro responded to a question regarding doing good deeds: “Good deeds are important, but only as a means to an end because good deeds generate good

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 93-94.

<sup>5</sup>*The Willowbank Report*, Lausanne Occasional Papers, no. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 1978), 13.

will so that people are open to the Good News!”<sup>6</sup> For a body of believers in a local church setting, serving the city would involve Paul’s perspective of doing good to all people. Reggie McNeal advocates that “the condition of our communities is the scorecard of how well the church is doing at being the people of God.”<sup>7</sup> This perspective provides a significant challenge to every church in every community. How can the people of God be more effective in making a difference in their city?

The purpose in serving the city is to engage the surrounding community at their point of immediate need in an effort to engage them at their point of ultimate need of salvation. Scottish evangelist and writer Henry Drummond, in his book *The City Without a Church*, admonishes his readers

to make cities – that is what we are here for. To make good cities – that is for the present hour the main work of Christianity. For the city is strategic. It makes the towns; the towns make the villages; the villages make the country. He who makes the city makes the world. After all, though men may make cities, it is the cities which make men.<sup>8</sup>

It is in this context that Swanson and Williams allege that “cities attract the people who shape the thinking and values of a nation.”<sup>9</sup> That truth makes it imperative for the church to seek to have a greater impact on the cities of the world, and by so doing to have a greater influence on the thinking and values of society.

Regarding the need for believers to be engaged with unbelievers, Steve Sjogren, in *Conspiracy of Kindness*, explains,

If you long for more of God’s heart, you’ll probably get it simply by spending time with the unchurched. This phrase “with the people” is repeated often in the Book of Acts. Leaders of the early church were continually with the people, both inside and outside the fold of God. They lived out the opposite lifestyle from the priest and Levite, who believed that the secret to success meant being separated from the people. They believed that one could hear God more accurately by getting away from the people.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Wayne Cordeiro, “The Outreach Interview,” *Outreach Magazine*, September/October 2011, 84.

<sup>7</sup>Eric Swanson and Sam Williams, *To Transform a City* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 12.

<sup>8</sup>Henry Drummond, *The City without a Church* (Redford, VA: Wilder, 2008), 14-15.

<sup>9</sup>Swanson and Williams, *To Transform a City*, 32.

<sup>10</sup>Steve Sjogren, *Conspiracy of Kindness: A Refreshing New Approach to Sharing the Love of Jesus with Others* (Ann Arbor, MI: Vine Books, 1993), 88-89.

The problems connected with the mentality of the priests and Levites of that day are numerous. The primary problem relating to this project is the one that is directly relevant to the challenge of evangelism. Without some form of connectedness with the people, evangelism cannot and will not occur.

A contemporary example of this social disconnectedness is the “Here’s Hope Campaign” of the 1990s, which provided a means for promoting the truth of the phrase “God Loves You” to a largely lost and unchurched nation. The phrase was a great slogan, but the missing element was a visible demonstration of God’s love. Certainly there was no lack for a visible demonstration of God’s love at Calvary. The goal in doing servant evangelism, therefore, is to meet people where they are with a visible and practical demonstration of the love of God. Sjogren’s testimony of the turning point in his ministry in Cincinnati is expressed in the following words:

If our church could meet people on the basis of serving our way into their hearts, maybe then we would have an audience. Servant evangelism was born out of this realization that as we touch people at their point of pain – whether the need was for food, healing, or wisdom – they would open the door of their hearts and invite us into their lives. I had come to Cincinnati with the wrong goal. My ambition of starting a new church was much too narrow. The goal that was worth pursuing was much more central to the heart of God: to bring the kingdom of God to this city through acts of love and mercy. Everything in the Christian life flows out of the first commandment: to love God with our heart, soul, strength, and mind. That *vertical love*, from God to us, lays the foundation for any other love. *Horizontal love* for our neighbor overflows out of the love of God.<sup>11</sup>

One of the theoretical goals in this project is to metaphorically wash the feet of the city leaders of Frankfort, Kentucky. In Jesus’ day this was an extremely practical form of service since people walked everywhere they went, and their feet acquired the filth of traveling along the same paths as common animals of transport of that day. In a twenty-first century capital city like Frankfort, washing feet is not a practical form of service. Shining shoes, however, provides a symbolic act of servitude that closely parallels the biblical act of washing feet. The practical goal takes the form of shining the shoes of city leaders, and in so doing to present the pastor and the church as a visibly valid team who are ready to serve the city.

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 106.

Amazingly, when the people of God serve the leaders and the people in their cities, a strange and unusual change occurs . . . the perception of the church undergoes a change in the hearts of those outside the church. Where most people see church as being, like most anything else in life, about what a person can get from people, serving others is more about what a person can give to people.

A farmer is constantly mindful of the importance of the harvest, but not to the extent that he refuses to sow one single seed until he knows for certain he will harvest a bumper crop when the time comes. A farmer knows that the potential size of the harvest is directly proportionate to the amount of seed that is sown. Paul said it this way in 2 Corinthians 9:6: “He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.” Serving the city is all about sowing the seed in as many people’s lives as possible through random, practical acts of kindness as a visible demonstration of God’s love combined with a verbal proclamation of that love.

### **Shepherding the City**

The image of a shepherd leading a flock of sheep is a familiar image for most pastors and churches. When Jesus spoke of this image in John 10:27, he claimed, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.” Given, the image Jesus is picturing is of his relationship with those who have entered into a saving relationship with him, thus referencing them as “my sheep.” The same is also true of the relationship between a local pastor and his parishioners. A parish is often thought of as a local church community composed of the constituents of a protestant church, or even as a civil division of the state of Louisiana corresponding to a county in other states. The second of those two definitions places a pastoral role in a parish or community as an instrumental leader influencing the lives of all those who dwell in the city.

Often a pastor’s role in a community is seen from a negative perspective, viewing his leadership as being in opposition to most of what the city leaders feel the community needs. Through random acts of kindness offered by the church under pastoral leadership, a city has the potential of developing a different perspective, seeing the pastor and his church

in a positive light, as being for the good of the community. By connecting with the city leaders, and presenting a positive model of servitude to others for the sake of the city, a pastor earns the role of being a leader in the community, and to some degree a pastor and shepherd to the city, with the goal of leading others to Christ through the venue of servant evangelism.

A shepherd also serves as a protector and provider for his sheep. In a similar way, a pastor to the city provides a sense of spiritual leadership and protection from unseen elements that can easily ensnare secular-minded city leaders. In describing the difference between a shepherd and a hireling, Jesus says that “the Good Shepherd gives his life for the sheep. But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep” (John 10:11-13).

As a shepherd to the city, a pastor demonstrates a sense of ownership in saying, “This is my city,” and in giving his life in caring ministry to the people of the community. That pastor does not flee to higher ground when times get tough, and he does not seek to preserve his life, but seeks the safety and security of the city over his own. Serving the city can be as simple as a random act of kindness, and can take place early in a pastor’s ministry in the city. Shepherding the city, however, takes time to develop trust between a pastor and city leaders. In that sense, a pastor must be committed to serve in a community for the long haul.

### **Saving the City**

Saving the city through social involvement is the ultimate goal of serving and shepherding the city. Francis Schaeffer, in his article “A Christian Manifesto,” claims,

Every single revival that has ever been a real revival, whether it was the great awakening before the American Revolution; whether it was the great revivals of Scandinavia; whether it was Wesley and Whitefield; wherever you have found a great revival, it has always had three parts. First, it has called for the individual to accept Christ as Savior, and thankfully, in all of these that I have named, thousands have been saved. Then, it has called upon the Christians to bow their hearts to God and really let the Holy Spirit have His place in fullness in their life. But there has always been, in

every revival, a third element. It has always brought *social change*.<sup>12</sup>

If it is true that shepherding the city takes time to develop trust, saving the city can seemingly take an eternity. In that context, servant evangelism is not a quick-return form of evangelism. It takes time because it is relational in nature, and relationships take time to develop and grow. The time factor was influential in Paul's words of encouragement to the church at Galatia when he said, "In due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart" (Gal 6:9).

Through the consistent demonstration of sacrificial service over a significant span of time, trust is developed to the point that the message of God's love is validated by a practical demonstration of God's love. As has already been said, at some point a verbal message must be communicated. Paul, in Romans 10:17, clearly states that "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Faith is not a result of an act of kindness. Faith is, however, a direct result of a faithful servant communicating the message of the gospel at the appropriate time under the leadership and power of the Holy Spirit.

This time factor drove Sjogren to say, "I fear our cultural values of instant response and the bottom line have produced a distinctly American form of evangelism. When was the last time you heard someone get excited about planting seeds of God's love?"<sup>13</sup> It is this aspect that provides the motivation for evaluating the success of this project as being based entirely on the faithful sowing of the seed of the gospel.

### **Understanding the Kingdom**

In *The Unshakeable Kingdom and the Unchanging Person*, E. Stanley Jones references H. G. Wells, "who when fumbling through history in search of the relevant came across the fact of the kingdom of God and was shocked as by an electric shock: 'Why here is the most radical proposal ever presented to the mind of man, the proposal to replace the

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<sup>12</sup>Francis Schaeffer, "A Christian Manifesto," <http://www.boundless.org/2005/articles/a0001588.cfm> (accessed September 25, 2012).

<sup>13</sup>Sjogren, *Conspiracy of Kindness*, 124.

present world order with God's order, the Kingdom of God.”<sup>14</sup> Understanding the kingdom of God is to get a grasp of the big picture of all that God is doing in the world, and not just restricting his work to a particular church in a specific time and place. Swanson and Williams describe the kingdom of God as “a place where worldly values are turned upside down and things are not as we expect them to be.”<sup>15</sup>

Jesus obviously knew how easy it would be to get lost in seeking to take care of the daily necessities of life, for he stated it as the rule and not the exception to “seek first the kingdom of God” (Matt 6:33). Swanson and Williams point out that

kingdom work involves two aspects. It involves introducing people to the King (Jesus), and it involves bringing his perspective, his values, and his generative structures into the world in which we live. It is about being active participants in answering the prayer, “Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in

heaven” (Matt 6:10).<sup>16</sup>

To seek to advance the kingdom of God should be first and foremost in a pastor's mind.

### **What the Kingdom is Not**

Understanding the kingdom involves not only an accurate grasp of what the kingdom is, but a grasp, as well, of what the kingdom is not. Numerous misconceptions of the kingdom of God exist in various forms. One of the most popular misconceptions involves establishing an environment resembling the kingdom, but lacking the presence and power of the King of kings. Rob Bell represents a shift away from conservative views of theology in today's culture. In his book *Love Wins*, in the chapter entitled “Here is the New There,” he argues,

When Jesus talked about heaven, he was talking about our present *eternal, intense, real* experiences of joy, peace, and love in this life this side of death *and* the age to come. Heaven for Jesus wasn't just “someday;” it was a present reality. Jesus blurs the lines, inviting the rich man, and us, into the merging of heaven and earth, the future and

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<sup>14</sup>H. G. Wells, cited in E. Stanley Jones, *The Unshakeable Kingdom and the Unchanging Person* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972), 11.

<sup>15</sup>Swanson and Williams, *To Transform a City*, 76.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 77.

present, *here and now*.<sup>17</sup>

On the surface, Bell's comments regarding heaven and earth seem theologically and eschatologically correct until it is understood that "the rich man" to whom he refers is the one Jesus spoke of as being in torment in hell while Lazarus rested in Abraham's arms in heaven (Luke 16:19-31). The difficulty of understanding the kingdom is wrapped primarily in the contextualization of the interpreter. In *Evangelicals Engaging Emergent*, R. Scott Smith makes the following statement: "There is a grave danger in interpreting God according to our limitations, for inevitably we will create our own god, which is why it is so important to check our ideas against Scripture. But it seems the Emergent view *requires* that we create our own god."<sup>18</sup> This man-made god would then be bound by time and space where the God of Scripture is infinite and unlimited, as is the kingdom of God.

With a foundational misunderstanding of eternal matters like heaven and hell, it is relatively easy to see how the kingdom can be misunderstood to involve any and all who exist here and now in bringing and being a part of the kingdom of God by simply creating an environment resembling that kingdom. It is critical to understand, as Robert E. Sagers states in *Evangelicals Engaging Emergent*, that "the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom is to bring men and women to salvation in Jesus Christ (2 Tim 3:15), urging people to repent of sin to be a part of the kingdom now – which all men may enter if they respond to the gospel in obedient faith – even as the church prays for God's kingdom to come (Matt 6:10)."<sup>19</sup>

### **What the Kingdom is**

Gordon Harland in *Christian Faith and Society*, states, "For no one was the Kingdom of God more central than it was for Walter Rauschenbusch."<sup>20</sup> His foundational

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<sup>17</sup>Rob Bell, *Love Wins* (New York: Harper One, 2011), 58-59.

<sup>18</sup>R. Scott Smith, "Emergents, Evangelicals, and the Importance of Truth: Some Philosophical and Spiritual Lessons," in *Evangelicals Engaging Emergent*, ed. William D. Henard and Adam W. Greenway (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2009), 151.

<sup>19</sup>Robert E. Sagers, "The Emerging Church and Salvation," in *Evangelicals Engaging Emergent*, ed. William D. Henard and Adam W. Greenway (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2009), 209.

<sup>20</sup>Gordon Harland, *Christian Faith and Society* (Calgary: The University of Calgary Press, 1988), 9.

approach to the kingdom of God, as stated in *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, emphasized that “if theology is to offer an adequate doctrinal basis for the social gospel, it must not only make room for the doctrine of the kingdom of God, but give it central place and revise all other doctrines so that they will articulate organically with it.”<sup>21</sup> Much like Bell, Rauschenbusch often strayed beyond the realm of conservative theology. Despite that tendency, in *The Righteousness of the Kingdom*, he stresses that the establishment of Christ’s kingdom on earth was dependent on “inward communion with God and in outward *obedience* to him. This was the living germ of the kingdom.”<sup>22</sup>

It is in the context of that inward and outward identification with the God of this kingdom that Swanson and Williams contend,

The kingdom of God is found anywhere God has operative dominion. Although “the earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it” (Ps 24:1), the kingdom of God is present in those places, spiritual or material, where God is honored as sovereign and his values are operative. The kingdom of God has a king, and his name is Jesus (Matt 2:1-12; John 18:37). So preaching the message of the kingdom, among other things, demands that we tell people through our words and communicate with our actions who this king is and what he values. We tell an alternative story of what life should be, can be, and one day will be.<sup>23</sup>

In regard to acknowledging the King of this kingdom, Jones explains that

the kingdom is here in two phases: The kingdom of God is within you. You are built for the kingdom. It has been built into the structure of your being from the foundation of the world. The second phase is this: the kingdom of God is at your doors. It is your structural destiny, but without your decision to make it your own it would be coercion – coercion, not conversion. So the kingdom is not a kingdom of puppets but a kingdom of persons.<sup>24</sup>

Recognizing this truth is crucial to understanding the kingdom. Although creating an environment that is conducive to the kingdom can resemble the kingdom of God, that kingdom will only exist in an earthly sense in its fullest manifestation as those involved welcome the King (Jesus) into their hearts as their Savior and Lord.

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<sup>21</sup>Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 131.

<sup>22</sup>Walter Rauschenbusch, *The Righteousness of the Kingdom* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968), 87-88.

<sup>23</sup>Swanson and Williams, *To Transform a City*, 73-74.

<sup>24</sup>Jones, *The Unshakable Kingdom and the Unchanging Person*, 133.

This kingdom mindset stirs many different emotions in church leaders. When church leaders from 150 nations came together in the International Congress on World Evangelization at Lausanne in 1974, this kingdom mindset provided impetus for the covenant that was developed. Regarding the church and evangelism, the covenant reads, “World evangelization requires the whole church to take the whole gospel to the whole world.”<sup>25</sup>

### **The Whole Church**

The context of the whole church is a reference to the universal church as opposed to the local church. Swanson and Williams quote Jim Herrington of Mission Houston as saying, “The hope of the world is the church, but not necessarily the local congregation.”<sup>26</sup> In a more local context, the whole church represents the churches of that city which are willing to work together for the furtherance of the kingdom of God and for the sake of the city.

A number of factors become significant for the churches in a city working together. The most prominent factor is typically the issue of unity. Swanson and Williams hold that “unity does not require that we have uniformity of doctrine, uniformity of programming, or unity in the way we pray and worship.”<sup>27</sup> Far too long churches have focused on their differences in doctrine and practice to the total neglect of the one thing they have in common, which is Christ. It may well be that this focus on differences has become the twenty-first century idolatry.

In dealing with the issue of cooperation in evangelism, the Lausanne Covenant states,

We affirm that the Church's visible unity in truth is God's purpose. Evangelism also summons us to unity, because our oneness strengthens our witness, just as our disunity undermines our gospel of reconciliation. We recognize, however, that organizational

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<sup>25</sup>Tom Houston, “The Lausanne Covenant,” <http://www.lausanne.org/en/documents/lausanne-covenant.html> (accessed August 22, 2012).

<sup>26</sup>Swanson and Williams, *To Transform a City*, 100.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, 103.

unity may take many forms and does not necessarily forward evangelism. Yet we who share the same biblical faith should be closely united in fellowship, work and witness. We confess that our testimony has sometimes been marred by a sinful individualism and needless duplication. We pledge ourselves to seek a deeper unity in truth, worship, holiness and mission. We urge the development of regional and functional cooperation for the furtherance of the Church's mission, for strategic planning, for mutual encouragement, and for the sharing of resources and experience.<sup>28</sup>

In focusing on unity, Swanson and Williams reason,

Uniting around purpose means that the church in the city shares a common function of *raison d'être*. That common purpose is given to us by Jesus in his prayer in John 17:20-23: "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so *that the world may believe that you have sent me*. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity *to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me*" (emphasis ours).<sup>29</sup>

This oneness that Jesus prayed for is a rare occurrence. As these authors point out, unity must be seen as "a means and not an end. The end of our unity is not simply good relationships between fellow Christians. Instead it is the proclamation and demonstration of the gospel to the world."<sup>30</sup>

For the Great Commission to be fulfilled will require the partnership of every church that names the name of Christ to join hands in a cooperative effort to reach the world for the kingdom of God with the gospel of the kingdom. Certainly there are limitations to the ability of churches to cooperate in fulfilling the Great Commission, including doctrinal and philosophical agreement on the primary message, as well as evangelistic approaches and allocation of converts. The doctrinal differences raise the question of what the gospel of the kingdom of which Christ spoke (Matt 24:14) truly is.

## **The Whole Gospel**

The gospel of the kingdom is the whole gospel, and the implications of the whole gospel are enormous. If the gospel is segmented in any way to the extent that significant

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<sup>28</sup>Tom Houston, "The Lausanne Covenant," <http://www.lausanne.org/en/documents/lausanne-covenant.html> (accessed January 11, 2013).

<sup>29</sup>Swanson and Williams, *To Transform a City*, 106.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 107.

parts are left out, then it is no longer the whole gospel, and there is no longer a possibility of biblical salvation. In dealing with the content and communication of the gospel in their Consultation on Gospel and Culture, The Willowbank Report states,

It is important to identify what is at the heart of the gospel. We recognize as central the themes of God as Creator, the universality of sin, Jesus Christ as Son of God, Lord of all, and Savior through his atoning death and risen life, the necessity of conversion, the coming of the Holy Spirit and his transforming power, the fellowship and mission of the Christian church, and the hope of Christ's return.<sup>31</sup>

Swanson and Williams emphasize that “the incarnational message of Jesus was made manifest through word *and* deed. He would both show *and* tell, and his words clarified his deeds while his deeds verified the truth of his words.”<sup>32</sup> Understanding the importance of the centrality of the heart of the gospel, Swanson and Williams further insist that “deeds can verify the truth of our words, but it is our words that clarify the reason for our deeds.”<sup>33</sup>

Swanson and Williams suggest to

remember this – goodwill is not the same thing as good news. Winning the goodwill of the community should not imply that something of eternal, salvific significance has occurred! The goodwill generated by our actions provides an opportunity to share the good news about Jesus. Without this, we are simply a social service agency with Bibles in our pockets. We must never forget that the church has the opportunity to do what no one else in the community can – point people to Jesus for forgiveness of sin.<sup>34</sup>

It is in the context of understanding the kingdom of God that Swanson and Williams stress, “We are not saying that every time you serve, you must include a gospel presentation as part of your service or as a qualifier for whether you will serve someone, but we must never lose sight of the fact that we are kingdom workers, not just social volunteers.”<sup>35</sup>

The difficulty in working with city leaders is that their focus is entirely on the dreams and needs of the city. Swanson and Williams indicate that “every city has needs, which are often quite obvious – pressing problems that need to be addressed. In addition,

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<sup>31</sup>“The Willowbank Report: Consultation on Gospel and Culture,” <http://www.lausanne.org/en/documents/lops/73-lop-2.html#5> (accessed January 17, 2013).

<sup>32</sup>Swanson and Williams, *To Transform a City*, 128.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, 133.

communities also have dreams, aspirations, and hopes for what they would like to become and what they would like to be known for.”<sup>36</sup> The authors state the difficulty involved in this respect, observing that “dreams and needs tended to focus on physical and material problems rather than spiritual ones.”<sup>37</sup> This area of spiritual needs is where the whole church communicating the whole gospel comes into play. The authors further claim, “God wants a spiritual reconciliation with the city through Jesus.”<sup>38</sup>

With the theme of this project involving servant evangelism, the goal in every encounter is not to simply interact with people on a social level, meeting the needs of individuals in the community. The goal in meeting the needs of people is to win the opportunity to share a word of witness, a word of testimony, or ultimately the gospel. The impact of churches crossing denominational lines for the sake of sharing the gospel carries enormous potential. The central focus of that impact, however, is not the churches, but the gospel.

### **The Whole City**

Where the focus at this point in the Lausanne Covenant was for the whole church to take the whole gospel to the whole world, the focus for this project is primarily on impacting the city, thus the emphasis on the whole city. Just like the whole church being cognizant of sharing the whole gospel, they must also be faithful to reach the whole city. Each church typically has a focal group in their immediate community. That focal group should occupy a major portion of their time, resources, and energy. When the whole church, however, comes together to carry the message of the whole gospel, the focus must enlarge to encompass the whole city.

Swanson and Williams note that “economists and social scientists recognize at

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 140-41.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 141.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

least three major sectors in every society.”<sup>39</sup> They further explain, “Each city, regardless of geography or ethnography, can be divided into these three sectors – the private sector, the public sector, and the social sector.”<sup>40</sup> They define the private sector as being “composed of privately owned businesses, companies, corporations, small businesses, and banks which are not controlled by the state. These institutions are profit motivated.”<sup>41</sup> They define the public sector as being “that part of economic and administrative life that deals with the delivery of goods and services by and for the government at the local, state, and national level. The public sector is owned by the state and exists to provide services that reflect the public interest.”<sup>42</sup> The final sector is the social sector, which the authors define as representing “the wide range of community, voluntary, religious, and not-for-profit activities in society.”<sup>43</sup>

Swanson and Williams propose that “the key to successful community transformation requires all three sectors – public, private, and social (the church) – working together for the good of the city. The three sectors can also be subdivided into what are commonly referred to as the domains of society.”<sup>44</sup> It is in influencing these domains that the church has the power to transform parts of the city that effect the whole.

Swanson and Williams further emphasize the impact of the church on the three domains of society, reasoning that normally “talent is pulled from the domains of society into the church, and the church draws the resources of the community to itself.”<sup>45</sup> This normal pattern of operation is what is typically thought of as channeling a person’s gifts, talents, skills, and abilities into some form of ministry. What could take place if the church reversed its role, and chose instead to channel its resources into the community? Could it be

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 147.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 147-48.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 148.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 149.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 152.

that the whole church could have a far greater impact on the whole city with the whole gospel?

Swanson and Williams describe this approach to city transformation when they suggest, “All kinds of gifts and talents can be employed to serve the Lord and build his kingdom, even gifts that do not fit the particular ministries of the church and its programs.”<sup>46</sup> Rodney Stark, in *Cities of God*, confirms the importance of the church interacting with societal domains, claiming that “social networks are the basic mechanism through which conversion takes place. To convert someone, you must first become that person’s close and trusted friend.”<sup>47</sup> Swanson and Williams fully agree, stipulating, “Friendships are most often made within the domains of communities – educators with educators, businesspeople with businesspeople, media people with media people. Social connections are often the pathways that God uses to lead us to eternal life.”<sup>48</sup> It is in the context of this approach that a church leader can have his greatest impact on the community for the kingdom of God.

This approach to evangelism, however, requires a change in how churches strategically do evangelism. Jeff Irog states, “In my book, *Live Like a Missionary*, I outlined three general kinds of evangelism strategies – attraction, engagement, and infiltration. Attraction strategies are events designed to gather people to hear the gospel. Engagement strategies are programs designed to meet the needs of people for the purpose of sharing the gospel. Infiltration strategies are efforts to take the gospel to people where they live, work, and play.”<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 152-53.

<sup>47</sup>Rodney Stark, *Cities of God: The Real Story of How Christianity Became an Urban Movement and Conquered Rome* (New York: Harper Collins, 2006), 13.

<sup>48</sup>Swanson and Williams, *To Transform a City*, 154.

<sup>49</sup>Jeff Irog, “Out of Balance,” <http://www.ggbts.edu/president/blog.aspx?category=Evangelism> (accessed August 13, 2013).

## Faith in Action

The strategy of infiltration evangelism is mandated by Scripture. James 2:14-17 asks some important questions in regard to social interaction:

What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

James goes so far as to restate the deadness of a person's faith when he concludes the chapter by saying, "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (Jas 2:26). The context of James' statements is directly related to social action taken by a person of faith.

In *The Social Conscience of the Evangelical*, Sherwood Eliot Wirt contends, "James has many provocative things to say about Christians putting into practice the message they received from Jesus. He makes explicit what is implicit all through the New Testament: that the Christian social conscience should be as wide as the love of God in Christ."<sup>50</sup> Wirt further insists, "When a man becomes a believer he does not retreat from his responsibilities as a member of society; quite the opposite. He takes his place in the tradition of Moses, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah, Mary, James, and John the Baptist."<sup>51</sup> These examples represent the footprints of the faithful in social action.

### Social Action

Often the James 2 passage is misunderstood to associate works with saving faith.<sup>52</sup> Paul, in Ephesians 2:8-10, offers strong opposition to this misinterpretation when he says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in

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<sup>50</sup>Sherwood Eliot Wirt, *The Social Conscience of the Evangelical* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1968), 7-8.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>52</sup>Ligonier Ministries, the teaching fellowship of R. C Sproul, "Faith and Works," <http://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/faith-and-works> (accessed August 16, 2013).

Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” So faith is foundational to good works, which Paul says that believers are “created in Christ Jesus for.”

In associating Ephesians 2 to James 2, for a person to say they have faith, and to do nothing to help someone in need is to remove the fulfillment of what a person of faith is created in Christ Jesus for. Could it be that the reason twenty percent of the church does 80 percent of the work is because those dysfunctional church members refuse to become socially active due to some form of social bias?

Stephen Charles Mott, in *Biblical Ethics and Social Change*, contends that Christian social action “builds on everything that the Scriptures say about the grace of God in salvation. As a form of Christian ethics, it starts with the cross, with appropriation of atonement.”<sup>53</sup> In that context, grace extends beyond simply having an influence on individuals to that of society as a whole.

It is amazing that truth can still find its rightful place despite the presence of predominantly liberal views. In *Christianity and the Social Crisis in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Walter Rauschenbusch writes,

The fundamental virtue in the ethics of Jesus was love, because love is the society-making quality. Human life originates in love. It is love that holds together the basal human organization, the family. The physical expression of all love and friendship is the desire to get together and be together. Love creates fellowship. In the measure in which love increases in any social organism, it will hold together without coercion. If physical coercion is constantly necessary, it is proof that the social organization has not evoked the power of human affection and fraternity.<sup>54</sup>

Regarding the various characteristics of human nature, Rauschenbusch insists that “pride disrupts society. Love equalizes. Humility freely takes its place as a simple member of the community.”<sup>55</sup> With faith as the foundation for doing good works, and love as the motivation for interacting with people in society, certainly social action is a legitimate rule

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<sup>53</sup>Stephen Charles Mott, *Biblical Ethics and Social Change*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 19.

<sup>54</sup>Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (New York: Harper One, 2007), 55.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, 57.

rather than an exception for a church. Delos Miles, in *Evangelism and Social Involvement*, writes,

Jesus gave us a love parable in the story of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37). The hero of that story showed us what *agapē* love is like:

- Love finds needs and stops to help.
- Love rearranges the schedules of busy days.
- Love shows compassion.
- Love meets the needs of hurting persons.
- Love gets its hands dirty for others.
- Love pays bills and signs blank checks.<sup>56</sup>

Miles further advocates that “*agapē* is more than just talk; it is something we do.”<sup>57</sup> He concludes his discourse on love with the statement, “God’s incredible love is sufficient to meet the incredible needs of humankind. But there is a crying need for us to be credible. If our theology is so ‘good,’ what is it doing to correct the ‘bad’ things of this world?”<sup>58</sup> That question calls for an answer in word and deed through social action.

### **Serving Action**

Faith in action is not only demonstrated in social action, but in a more practical way through serving action. In *Mobilizing a Great Commission Church for Harvest*, David Wheeler explains, “The aspect of intentionally connecting the verbal message of Christ through acts of service is what differentiates servanthood evangelism from the negative connotations of the Social Gospel movement that became popular with liberal theologians over the past century.”<sup>59</sup>

Many people in society have a distorted perspective of the church as a result of scandal after scandal related to the church and its members. Far too many see the church as being against everything. In identifying some of the long-term effects of doing servant evangelism, Sjogren, in *Conspiracy of Kindness*, believes that “the church will be redefined

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<sup>56</sup>Delos Miles, *Evangelism and Social Involvement* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1986), 65.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 65.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 66.

<sup>59</sup>David Wheeler, “Servanthood Evangelism as a Bridge to the Gospel,” in *Mobilizing a Great Commission Church for Harvest: Voices and Views from the Southern Baptist Professors of Evangelism Fellowship*, ed. Thomas P. Johnston (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 156.

to the surrounding community.”<sup>60</sup>

Sjogren adds, “When we come to Christ, God grants us a new nature which is entirely different from our old self-centered one that sought to be served. As we encounter the life of God, we come to have the same nature as that of Jesus Christ. As we live out that nature by serving others, we are able to influence the lives of others.”<sup>61</sup> It is in this same spirit that Sjogren argues, “The call of God is in direct opposition to our cultural conditioning.”<sup>62</sup> Culture proposes being served, where God calls people of faith to live a life of servitude.

Wheeler states that “the attraction of a servant life that is connected back to Christ and his message as a bridge in effective evangelism cannot be overstated!”<sup>63</sup> Sjogren proposes,

We can choose to do battle in two different arenas. We can either try to convince others in the arena of the *mind* or we can approach people in the arena of the *heart*. For the most part, traditional approaches to evangelism go head-to-head instead of heart-to-heart. We assume that if we could just get unbelievers to *think* straight, then we would see them come to Christ. Having equated salvation with a mental assent to particular doctrines, we try to enter peoples’ lives by way of argumentation. The mind certainly plays a part in coming to Christ, but the will is central in what Scripture frequently refers to as the heart. The *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* defines “heart” in the biblical sense as meaning “the center or focus of man’s personal life, the spring of all his desires, motives, and moral choices – indeed, of all his behavioral trends.” Thus, when we touch the heart, we have touched a person at the deepest level. The exciting news is that the heart is not unreachable. Our experience has shown that a person’s heart is most quickly touched by acts of service.<sup>64</sup>

Farmers understand the principle of sowing and reaping. They know there is a season for sowing in which the ground is prepared to receive the seed, and they know the harvest will come in due season with proper care and adequate rainfall. Often a person’s heart can grow callous over time due to hardship and hurts in life. Much like a farmer preparing the ground to receive the seed, it is in that timely moment when an experience of

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<sup>60</sup>Sjogren, *Conspiracy of Kindness*, 146.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 111.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid.

<sup>63</sup>Wheeler, “Servanthood Evangelism as a Bridge to the Gospel,” 163,

<sup>64</sup>Sjogren, *Conspiracy of Kindness*, 112.

love opens a person's heart to the seed of a message of love.

Sjogren defines servant evangelism as “demonstrating the kindness of God by offering to do some act of humble service with no strings attached.”<sup>65</sup> Wheeler describes servant evangelism as “a combination of simple acts of kindness and intentional evangelism.”<sup>66</sup> He adds, “While servanthood evangelism acknowledges that this kind of ministry does not always result in evangelistic conversations – it is by nature *intentionally evangelistic*.”<sup>67</sup> He further notes, “Years of pastoral experience reveals that servanthood evangelism leads to a full presentation of Christ much more often if the concept of servanthood is not ignored.”<sup>68</sup>

Sjogren goes so far as to insist that “the mere offer to serve others holds great power.”<sup>69</sup> In regard to this power, Wheeler concludes,

Next to the Holy Spirit, the Bible, and the gospel message, there is nothing more powerful or useful in the call of evangelism than the towel and the basin. As demonstrated by Jesus in John 13, the example of washing the disciple's feet serves as a reminder of Christlike humility and surrender that should be manifested in the lives of all true believers. One thing is for sure, it is a life-changing concept in evangelism when put into daily practice.<sup>70</sup>

This humble method of evangelistic activity puts faith in action through the simple act of serving others.

### **Saving Action**

In Isaiah 55:10-11, the prophet relates a promise from God regarding his word, saying, “As the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me

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<sup>65</sup>Ibid., 17-18.

<sup>66</sup>Wheeler, “Servanthood Evangelism as a Bridge to the Gospel,” 156.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., 157.

<sup>69</sup>Sjogren, *Conspiracy of Kindness*, 18.

<sup>70</sup>Wheeler, “Servanthood Evangelism as a Bridge to the Gospel,” 155.

void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.” God uses the principle of sowing and reaping in regard to his word, saying that there is inherent power in his word, just like there is in a seed, to produce results in people’s lives.

Clearly the saving power is not in social action or serving action. If all the church does is social work and service, salvation will be a rare occurrence at best. The key element in servant evangelism that makes the encounter a saving action is words of love that lead ultimately to sharing the gospel of Christ, which Paul said in Romans 1:16 “is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes.” When the gospel is shared in the context of social action and serving action, the seed of God’s word sown in that person’s heart has the power to produce faith in God.

In Galatians 6:7, Paul deals with the same principle of sowing and reaping, saying, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.” The next verse gives a promise that “he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” It is here that Paul, in verse 9, interjects the promise of a harvest to come “in due season.” The harvest, however, will not reap itself. There must be consistent nurturing and follow-up in order to be there when the time is right to reap the harvest. The power believers hold, then, is not in the harvesting sickle, but in the seed that is sown, and in the prayers offered over the seed until that “due season” comes about.

What, then, is the saving action? The saving action is a combination of all that is involved in putting a person’s faith into action. It is social action that causes a change in a communities’ attitude toward the church and Christianity; it is serving action that opens a person’s heart to a believer’s words of love; and it is the saving action of sowing the seed of God’s word and the gospel in that person’s heart, and nurturing it in prayer and faithful follow-up until the season of harvest presents itself.

In an interview with *Outreach Magazine*, Wayne Cardeiro made the statement, “If you’re planting the right seeds, you should have a harvest. What farmer plants seed and doesn’t look for harvest? And I say it this way: The harvest will not self-reap, but it will self-destruct if not reaped. Jesus prayed for more laborers in the harvest. And that is my

heartbeat – to get us back to our assignment, our identity, as laborers in the harvest.”<sup>71</sup> In order for a believer’s faith to be alive and vibrant, it must be put into action. To simply acknowledge the command of Jesus to make disciples is not enough. If a person believes that command, they will act on it by being a faithful witness for Christ.

### **Conclusion**

The theoretical and sociological implications of servant evangelism are less programmatic in nature, offering a more pragmatic approach to evangelism. The theory of servant leaders getting involved in social action is not a program to purchase and put in place in a local church; to the contrary, it is a practical application of Jesus’ style of meeting people at their point of immediate need, and extending mercy and grace in the context of serving them.

The Great Commission is bigger than any one group of believers and churches can realistically accomplish by themselves. It is a kingdom work that requires a kingdom approach. Can it be done? Jesus would not have spoken the words, “this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Matt 24:14) if it could not be done. Servant evangelism is simply a piece of the puzzle that holds the potential of involving more of the church in advancing the kingdom of God in simple acts of service.

In *Changing the World through Kindness*, Steve Sjogren stresses,

Sometimes Christians, and pastors in particular, make the mistake of thinking that God is desperately counting on us to get his point across. We've all read Paul's words, "How shall they hear without a preacher?" (Rom 10:14). While the gospel does have to be proclaimed to the world if we hope to change it, we are prone to overemphasizing our role and underemphasizing God's. I have found there is nothing like doing acts of kindness to humble us Christians and to show us how much is God's part in redeeming the world and how much (or little) is ours. Pelagius, one of the early heretics in Church history, believed that God's actions are limited to the actions of his people. It was determined by early church councils that Pelagius, a British monk, was limiting God by focusing too much on people's part in redemption.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup>Cordeiro, “The Outreach Interview,” 83.

<sup>72</sup>Steve Sjogren, *Changing the World through Kindness: Living a Life That Will Change Your Family, Your City, and Eventually Your World* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2005), 75.

It is through random acts of kindness that God's people play their simplistic part in God's enormous plan to take the gospel to people in their respective social settings. With the love of God as the motivating factor and the word and Spirit of God as the converting factors, lives can be changed through servant evangelism.

## CHAPTER 4

### DETAILS OF THE MINISTRY PROJECT

In January 2012, after more than a year of searching for a ministry model for this era that would closely resemble foot washing in Jesus' day, I met Benny Pate, a state missionary in the leadership department of the Georgia Baptist Convention. Pate had been involved in a leadership development activity among Southern Baptists in Georgia that involved shoe shining with mitts that displayed the words, "Lead Like Jesus," facing the person being served. Thanks to Pate, I had found my twenty-first century model for foot washing. This proved to be the primary mode of servant evangelism for me personally. A chance meeting with Bill Henard at LifeWay provided the secondary mode of servant evangelism. Henard informed me that Porter Memorial did servant evangelism activities on Saturdays from 10:00 a.m. until noon. Their main activity on Saturdays was washing windshields at local service stations around Lexington.

On Sunday, July 8, 2012, while I was on a mission trip to Scotland, Bill Carter preached in my absence on servant evangelism. A total of 19 volunteers signed up to be involved and 26 were trained on Sunday night, August 26, 2012, with another 21 who indicated an interest in participating in upcoming servant evangelism projects. With roughly 50 workers enlisted to serve, the feedback team met periodically over the course of the next 5 months to make plans for the servant evangelism activities and events, with shoe shining being the most prominent activity through the 15 weeks of the ministry project.

Where most evangelistic programs and efforts utilize a relatively small number of church members, this project proved to be a break from that norm. A total of 78 members participated, accounting for approximately half of the average weekly attendance. The following information is a brief account of each week's activities.

## **Week 1 – February 16-23**

### **Pre-service Activities**

Two weeks prior to the beginning of this project I administered a pre-project survey via email to 47 servant evangelism participants and 7 feedback team members with a 75 percent return ratio. The one area that stood out in preparing for this project was communicating the gospel in relevant terms. The response to that statement indicated a consistent struggle among participants in the ability to relate the truth of God's love in a relevant way, which is one of the strengths provided in the tool of servant evangelism. This discovery provided added incentive in preparing participants prior to each activity to respond appropriately to the questions that would be posed in serving others.

In order to convey the concept of shoe shining as the twenty-first century motif of foot washing, I preached the initial sermon as part of the initial week of this servant evangelism project on the passage in John 13 where Jesus washed the disciples' feet. I then shined the shoes of my wife, the worship team leader, and the chair of deacons, and released them to shine the shoes of the remainder of the worship team and the deacons, thus giving a visual example of the primary mode of servant evangelism.

Recognizing that more laborers were needed and that Jesus' imperative command was to pray to the Lord of the harvest to send laborers into his harvest (Matt 9:37-38), MBC began Forty-Days of Praying and Fasting on Wednesday, February 20. More than half of the members made commitments on Sunday, February 3, following a message on praying and fasting out of Matthew 9:35-38. Similar to fasting for Lent, participants were encouraged to fast from something significant to them, and to spend that time in prayer. The commitments were on one of three levels . . . to pray and fast one day during the forty days, to pray and fast one day a week during the forty days, or to pray and fast every day during the forty days.

The culmination of the Forty-Days of Praying and Fasting came on Easter Sunday, the final day of MBC's Spiritual Awakening Conference. The goal was for God to call out more laborers to be involved in servant evangelism during the subsequent Forty-

Days of Evangelism that was to begin the day after Easter, Monday, April 1. The culmination of this evangelistic activity was to come on May 10 at the close of week 12 of the servant evangelism project.

### **Servant Evangelism Projects**

The shoe shining began on Monday, February 18, at three locations: the break area of the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet from 9:00-10:30 a.m., the showroom of Bob Allen Chrysler/Dodge/Jeep from 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., and the Basement Center of the Kentucky Capitol Annex from 2:00-4:00 p.m. With the Kentucky Legislative Session having begun in January, the traffic in the annex was enormously increased. Mondays were typically filled with committee meetings prior to the opening session for the week at 4:00 p.m. Most of the legislative body travels to the capitol for sessions by way of the adjoining tunnel, creating a steady flow of traffic through the Basement Center of the Capitol Annex.

The second day of shoe shining came on Tuesday, February 19, in the conference room of the Kentucky Justice and Public Safety Cabinet from 11:00 a.m.-noon. The third day of shoe shining came on Friday, February 22, in the Basement Center of the Kentucky Capitol Annex from 2:00-4:00 p.m. All shoe shining activities were promoted via email from the in-house staff to the workers at each location.

A “Free Shoe Shine” sign was used with a bold red-letter slogan at the top reading, “MBC ♥ Frankfort.” When people passed by the shoe shine sign and location, a simple offer was extended for a free shoe shine. The two most prominent questions in response were, “Why are you doing this?” and “What does MBC stand for?” The former request provided the opportunity to explain in one of two ways: the first being an explanation of this service-oriented project, and the second being an explanation of our church’s mission statement to “love God, love people, and serve others,” with shoe shining being a personal means of serving others in our community. The latter request provided the opportunity to introduce the person to Memorial Baptist Church (MBC), and to explain our mission statement as expressed through acts of service.

A table was set up to serve free coffee, cocoa, and bottled water in the lobby of

one of the two schools where Upward Basketball and Cheerleading was hosted on Saturdays. The first two Saturdays of free service were February 16 and 23. When people asked why they were giving it away and not selling it, the servers were trained to simply reply, “As a picture of grace, it is free, because grace is free.” This form of service created a curiosity among those being served to ask more questions, thus providing greater opportunities to share a word of witness.

Two MBC women coordinate and supervise the service teams for the Frankfort Soup Kitchen. The team gathered at 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday, February 19, to prepare food for service. Many of Frankfort’s homeless people share a meal there on a daily basis. MBC serves lunch there the third Tuesday of every month, allowing us the opportunity to connect with a number of folks we might not otherwise have the opportunity with which to connect.

One of the MBC deacons and feedback team members for the servant evangelism project is a dentist in Frankfort. He joined a number of other local physicians on Wednesday, February 20, at 5:00 p.m. to donate his time at First Baptist Church to provide free medical and dental care to those of our community who cannot afford it.

Henry T. Blackaby and Claude V. King’s *Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God*<sup>1</sup> taught many churches to look for where God is working and get involved in what he is doing. During our first two years at MBC, my wife led a children’s Christmas musical. Preparation began in September and continued through the December presentation. The first two years showed measurable growth from an initial involvement of 15 in the first year to 20 in the second. The third year, however, showed a noticeable increase in involvement of 35 children. Recognizing that God was up to something in the children’s area of ministry, MBC began making plans to begin an Awana Club in January. Each Wednesday night adult workers lead the children through creative forms of Scripture memorization. The MBC Awana Club met on Wednesday, February 20, at 6:00 to continue this ministry.

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<sup>1</sup>Henry T. Blackaby and Claude V. King, *Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God* (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 1990).

MBC has been involved in Upward Basketball and Cheerleading for more than eight years. One night each week coaches share devotions with their team during practice, and each Thursday night and each Saturday during the children's games an adult shares devotions with the adults and children in the stands.

The halftime devotion for Saturday, February 23, involved 2 adults washing the feet of one of their children at the two schools that host Upward Basketball and Cheerleading. While the child's feet were being washed, an adult shared what takes place each year in July when a mission team from MBC travels to Harlan County, Kentucky, to wash the feet of children and put new shoes on their feet. MBC's goal each year is to collect 500 pair of shoes for the Harlan County mission trip. The purpose of the devotion was to demonstrate what happens on the mission trip in order to motivate increased participation in bringing shoes to the Upward Awards Day Celebration Saturday, March 9, at MBC.

### **Summary**

The first week provided 12 opportunities of service. The projects involved 115 workers in making contact with 1,216 people, serving 895 individuals, and sharing 661 words of witness.

### **Week 2 – February 24-March 2**

#### **Pre-service Activities**

Week 2 of the servant evangelism project involved a continuation of the second week of the Forty-Days of Praying and Fasting. MBC continued to pray and fast for revival and spiritual awakening in our church and the Frankfort area, and for laborers to be raised up to be sent into the harvest.

#### **Servant Evangelism Projects**

The shoe shining continued for week 2 on Monday, February 25, at three locations: the break area of the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet from 9:00-10:30 a.m., the showroom of Bob Allen Chrysler/Dodge/Jeep from 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., and the Basement Center of the Kentucky Capitol Annex from 2:00-4:00 p.m. The second day of shoe shining

came on Tuesday, February 26, in the conference room of the Kentucky Justice and Public Safety Cabinet from 11:00 a.m.-noon. The third day of shoe shining came on Friday, March 1, in the Basement Center of the Kentucky Capitol Annex from 2:00-4:00 p.m.

A new activity consisted of serving dinner to the women at the Frankfort Women's Shelter on Tuesday, February 26, at 6:00 p.m. The leader of one of our servant evangelism teams made the necessary arrangements to serve the women a meal, to spend a little time with them, and to offer to pray with them. This activity involves various Sunday morning Bible study classes providing and serving the meal the fourth Tuesday of every month.

An MBC deacon and feedback team member for the servant evangelism project again donated his time at First Baptist Church on Wednesday, February 27, at 5:00 p.m. to provide free medical and dental care to community residents. The MBC Awana Club met that night at 6:00 p.m. Relationships continued to be built and lives continued to yield greater degrees of influence.

One of the MBC deacons and feedback team members for the servant evangelism project became burdened for the Franklin County Sheriff's Office. In an effort to provide encouragement and support, an MBC servant evangelism team provided and served a free barbeque luncheon on Friday, March 1, at 11:30 a.m. at the Sheriff's Office. Servant Evangelism cards were used for the first time during this project. These cards have a picture of the church on front, the MBC website, and the words, "We just wanted to show you the love of Jesus in a practical way." The back of each card states that the service is provided "from your friends at Memorial Baptist Church" and supplies the church's address and phone number.

The Upward coaches conducted their weekly practices and shared devotions with the children during the break time. An adult shared the devotion during halftime of the Thursday night kindergarten games on February 28, and the Saturday graded children's games on March 2. This week's games concluded the 2012-2013 Upward Basketball and Cheerleading season.

A table was set up to serve free coffee, cocoa, and bottled water in the lobby of one of the two schools where Upward Basketball and Cheerleading was hosted on Saturday, March 2. This activity was on the final day of games for the season, and conversations took on a deeper nature with those being served expressing gratitude for all that MBC does for the children who participate, as well as for their families.

### **Summary**

Week 2 provided 11 opportunities for service and showed an expected increase in both those serving as well as those being served. The number of MBC members involved in servant evangelism projects during week 2 were 114, making a total of 949 contacts, serving 776 people, and giving 653 words of witness.

### **Week 3 – March 3-9**

#### **Pre-service Activities**

Week 3 of the servant evangelism project involved a continuation of the third week of the Forty-Days of Praying and Fasting. More than half of MBC continued to pray and fast for revival and spiritual awakening in our church and the Frankfort area, and for laborers to be raised up to be sent into the harvest. Lonnie Riley, NAMB missionary to Lynch, Kentucky, shared in the Sunday morning, March 3 service about the impact of faith in regard to the window of missions. MBC was challenged, much like the young boy with the seven loaves of bread and two small fish, to give what they might consider a meager offering to God and see what God can do.

#### **Servant Evangelism Projects**

The shoe shining continued on Monday, March 4, at three locations: the break area of the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet from 9:00-10:30 a.m., the showroom of Bob Allen Chrysler/Dodge/Jeep from 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., and the Basement Center of the Kentucky Capitol Annex from 2:00-4:00 p.m. The second day of shoe shining came on Tuesday, March 5, in the conference room of the Kentucky Justice and Public Safety Cabinet from 11:00 a.m.-noon. The third day of shoe shining came on Friday, March 8, in

the Basement Center of the Kentucky Capitol Annex from 2:00-4:00 p.m. The consistency of serving in one location proved to create a development of relationships, affording even greater opportunities of influence.

On Wednesday, March 6, from 8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m., MBC servant evangelism teams worked two four-hour shifts, cooking and serving pancakes to students at the BCM in the midst of mid-term exam week at Kentucky State University, Frankfort, Kentucky. This opportunity grew out of an earlier date of serving pancakes during final exam week in the previous semester.

An MBC deacon and feedback team member for the servant evangelism project again donated his time at First Baptist Church on Wednesday, March 6, at 5:00 p.m. to provide free medical and dental care to community residents. With a steady flow of new patients there was a growing sense of expanded influence. The MBC Awana Club met that night at 6:00 p.m. As a direct result of increased connections with families through Awana, many new families have begun to attend worship on Sundays. The next step was to attempt to draw them into a Sunday morning Bible study class in order to assimilate them into the ministries of MBC.

Saturday, March 9, was the Upward Awards Day Celebration at MBC. Each year following the conclusion of the season a celebration takes place in which the participants enjoy a day of fun and festivities and claim their awards for the year. MBC workers assisted in managing the traffic on the inflatable devices, registering Upward participants claiming awards, and distributing free bottled water to the crowd.

### **Summary**

Week 3 provided 9 opportunities for service, and again showed a slight decrease in those serving as well as those being served due to the conclusion of Upward Basketball and Cheerleading. Sixty-six members of MBC were involved in servant evangelism projects during week 3, making a total of 503 contacts, serving 200 people, and giving 112 words of witness.

## **Week 4 – March 10-16**

### **Pre-service Activities**

Week 4 of the servant evangelism project began on Sunday with a continuation of the Forty-Days of Praying and Fasting in preparation for the Spiritual Awakening Conference. More than half of MBC continued to pray and fast for revival and spiritual awakening in our church and the Frankfort area, and for laborers to be raised up to be sent into the harvest.

### **Servant Evangelism Projects**

Monday, March 11, marked the fourth Monday filled with shoe shining opportunities at three locations: the break area of the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet from 9:00-10:30 a.m., the showroom of Bob Allen Chrysler/Dodge/Jeep from 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., and the Basement Center of the Kentucky Capitol Annex from 2:00-4:00 p.m. The second day of shoe shining came on Tuesday, March 12, in the conference room of the Kentucky Justice and Public Safety Cabinet from 11:00 a.m.-noon. The third day of shoe shining came on Friday, March 15, in the Basement Center of the Kentucky Capitol Annex from 2:00-4:00 p.m.

An MBC deacon and feedback team member for the servant evangelism project again donated his time at First Baptist Church on Wednesday, March 13, at 5:00 p.m. to provide free medical and dental care to community residents. The MBC Awana Club met that night at 6:00 p.m. Relationships continued to develop and involvement showed a consistently gradual increase.

Saturday, March 16, was the first scheduled day for windshield washing at local Shell stations from 10:00 a.m.-noon. Six people gathered at MBC at 9:30 a.m. to gather supplies, divide into teams, and pray prior to transporting to the 2 sites. Two adults, 1 teenager, and 1 child were assigned to 1 site, and 2 adults were assigned to the other site. A total of 60 contacts were made, 30 people were served, 32 words of witness were shared, and 2 people were engaged in prayer.

## **Summary**

Week 4 proved to be a slightly slower week with 8 opportunities for servant evangelism. This was the first Saturday after the conclusion of Upward Basketball and Cheerleading, so those workers were given a Saturday off. The week yielded a total of 28 workers making contact with 252 people, rendering service to 100 people, and giving a word of witness to 104 individuals. Despite fewer opportunities for service, God still provided more moments of significant influence amidst the limited encounters, proving once again that when his people are faithful to serve him, he is faithful to honor and bless their labor.

## **Week 5 – March 17-23**

### **Pre-service Activities**

Week 5 of the servant evangelism project began on Sunday with a continuation of the Forty-Days of Praying and Fasting in preparation for the Spiritual Awakening Conference. More than half of MBC continued to pray and fast for revival and spiritual awakening in our church and the Frankfort area, and for laborers to be raised up to be sent into the harvest. The first portion of the sermon that Sunday was given to an interview with a 20-year-old female college student who had recently returned from leading in a Princess Weekend gathering at a church in Georgia. This young woman's testimony of having the opportunity to lead 4 teenage girls to faith in Christ because of her willingness to serve God was the perfect segue into the challenge to submit to Jesus as fishers of men.

MBC was encouraged to sign commitment cards to participate in Forty-Days of Evangelism beginning April 1 and extending through May 10. The church was challenged to commit to witness on one of three levels: to witness to one person during the Forty-Days of Evangelism, to witness to one person a week during the Forty-Days of Evangelism, or to witness to one person a day during the Forty-Days of Evangelism. The goal was to involve as many members as possible at some level of commitment to being intentional as a witness for Christ.

## **Servant Evangelism Projects**

Servant evangelism projects for week 5 began on Monday, March 18, with shoe shining at three locations: the break area of the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet from 9:00-10:30 a.m., the showroom of Bob Allen Chrysler/Dodge/Jeep from 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., and the Basement Center of the Kentucky Capitol Annex from 2:00-4:00 p.m. The second day of shoe shining came on Tuesday, March 19, in the conference room of the Kentucky Justice and Public Safety Cabinet from 11:00 a.m.-noon. The third day of shoe shining came on Friday, March 22, in the Basement Center of the Kentucky Capitol Annex from 2:00-4:00 p.m.

Tuesday, March 19, provided the opportunity of serving lunch at our regularly scheduled monthly time at the Frankfort Soup Kitchen. MBC servant evangelism team members participated in serving people and giving a word of witness when opportunities arose. Wednesday, March 20, at 5:00 p.m. was the regularly scheduled time for an MBC deacon and feedback team member to again provide free medical and dental care to community residents. The MBC Awana Club met that night at 6:00 p.m. As a result 2 families were drawn into a Sunday morning Bible study class and 1 family member joined the worship team.

MBC has built a relationship with the Kentucky Blood Center over the course of the previous year by hosting quarterly blood drives. On Friday, March 22, MBC hosted a drive from 8:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. and provided 2 workers to serve coffee and cocoa, as well as free shoe shines to workers and donors.

Saturday, March 23, was the second opportunity to wash windshields for free at local service stations. A family of friends from Alabama came to visit and joined in assisting our servant evangelism teams. The number of stations was increased from the previous week to include a total of 3 stations. An unexpected benefit of this particular service project was the developing relationship between the management at the stations and the workers.

## **Summary**

Week 5 demonstrated an increase to 10 servant evangelism opportunities. This was the second Saturday after the conclusion of Upward Basketball and Cheerleading, so some of those workers were available. The week yielded a total of 38 workers making contact with 487 people, rendering service to 218 people, and giving a word of witness to 205 individuals. With increased opportunities for service came an equally proportionate increase in significant encounters with people.

## **Week 6 – March 24-30**

### **Pre-service Activities**

Week 6 began on Sunday with the final week of Forty-Days of Praying and Fasting in preparation for the Spiritual Awakening Conference. Anticipation seemed to grow as members prayed and fasted into the final week of preparation.

### **Servant Evangelism Projects**

Monday, March 25, was the beginning of the sixth week of shining shoes in Frankfort at three locations: the break area of the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet from 9:00-10:30 a.m., the showroom of Bob Allen Chrysler/Dodge/Jeep from 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., and the Basement Center of the Kentucky Capitol Annex from 2:00-4:00 p.m. The second day of shoe shining came on Tuesday, March 26, in the conference room of the Kentucky Justice and Public Safety Cabinet from 11:00 a.m.-noon. Friday, March 29, was Good Friday, so no shoe shining was offered.

An additional opportunity of service came in week 6 as a result of another visiting family from Alabama who bore a significant connection with my family. With a passion for missions this family sought to connect to the community through a servant project. This connection came via the soup kitchen on Tuesday, March 26, at 11:00 a.m. A Sunday morning Bible study group continued our connection with the Women's Shelter that night at 6:00. One woman from the shelter began to attend MBC as a direct result of the relationships developed through this servant evangelism project.

An MBC deacon and feedback team member for the servant evangelism project again donated his time at First Baptist Church on Wednesday, March 27, at 5:00 p.m. to provide free medical and dental care to community residents. The MBC Awana Club met that night at 6:00 p.m. As a direct result of increased connections with families through Awana, several new families began to attend worship on Sundays and were drawn into a Sunday morning Bible study class.

Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights, March 28-30, were set aside for the Spiritual Awakening Conference. The intended goal was for God to move at MBC as a result of the praying and fasting that had been taking place. On Saturday, March 30, from 10:00 a.m. until noon we continued the free windshield washing at local service stations.

### **Summary**

Week 6 provided nine opportunities for service and proved to be a week wrought with developing relationships. This was the third Saturday of free windshield washing at local service stations, thus demonstrating a greater level of confidence in serving and sharing in this context. The week yielded a total of 42 workers making contact with 385 people, rendering service to 172 people, and giving a word of witness to 145 individuals.

### **Week 7 – March 31-April 6**

#### **Pre-service Activities**

Week 7 began on Easter Sunday morning, March 31, with the conclusion of the Forty-Days of Praying and Fasting, as well as the final scheduled service for the Spiritual Awakening Conference. The attendance far exceeded expectations even for Easter, with an overflow crowd of more than 250. Dr. Brad Allen preached passionately from John 12:24 regarding the necessity of a kernel of wheat falling to the ground and dying in order to become productive, and concluded by inviting those in attendance to plant themselves by dying to their own desires and living for Christ. Two people made professions of faith, 10 came for believer's baptism, and 38 committed their lives afresh and anew to living for Christ.

## **Servant Evangelism Projects**

This week demonstrated a drop in available workers due to Spring Break at local schools. Monday, April 1, was the starting day for Forty-Days of Evangelism. The goal was not only to involve MBC members in increasing levels of evangelism, but to provide opportunities for members to be intentionally evangelistic in their encounters.

Monday, April 1, was a continuation in week 7 of shining shoes in Frankfort at three locations: the break area of the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet from 9:00-10:30 a.m., the showroom of Bob Allen Chrysler/Dodge/Jeep from 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., and the Basement Center of the Kentucky Capitol Annex from 2:00-4:00 p.m. The second day of shoe shining came on Tuesday, April 2, in the conference room of the Kentucky Justice and Public Safety Cabinet from 11:00 a.m.-noon. The third day of shoe shining came on Friday, April 5, in the Basement Center of the Kentucky Capitol Annex from 2:00-4:00 p.m.

An MBC deacon and feedback team member for the servant evangelism project again donated his time at First Baptist Church on Wednesday, April 3, at 5:00 p.m. to provide free medical and dental care to community residents. The MBC Awana Club workers received a much needed break from activity due to Spring Break at local schools. On Saturday, April 6, from 10:00 a.m. until noon servant evangelism teams continued the free windshield washing at local service stations.

## **Summary**

Week 7 was a slower week, yet still provided a total of 7 opportunities of service. The week yielded a total of 10 workers making contact with 170 people, rendering service to 48 people, and giving a word of witness to 56 individuals.

## **Week 8 – April 7-13**

### **Pre-service Activities**

Week 8 began the second week of Forty-Days of Evangelism, focusing the members of MBC on being intentional in their efforts to bring a word of witness to those they came in contact with on a daily basis. I began a new sermon series entitled, “A

Changed Life,” focusing on the changes that come to a believer’s life, and the influence of a changed life on the lives of those around them.

### **Servant Evangelism Projects**

Monday, April 8, was a continuation in week 8 of shining shoes in Frankfort at three locations: the break area of the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet from 9:00-10:30 a.m., the showroom of Bob Allen Chrysler/Dodge/Jeep from 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., and the Basement Center of the Kentucky Capitol Annex from 2:00-4:00 p.m. The second day of shoe shining came on Tuesday, April 9, in the conference room of the Kentucky Justice and Public Safety Cabinet from 11:00 a.m.-noon. The third day of shoe shining came on Friday, April 12, in the Basement Center of the Kentucky Capitol Annex from 2:00-4:00 p.m.

An MBC deacon and feedback team member for the servant evangelism project again donated his time at First Baptist Church on Wednesday, April 10, at 5:00 p.m. to provide free medical and dental care to community residents. The MBC Awana Club met that night at 6:00 p.m. As a direct result of increased connections with families through Awana, 2 new families joined MBC, and 2 people followed the Lord in believer’s baptism the following Sunday. On Saturday, April 13, from 10:00 a.m. until noon we continued the free windshield washing at local service stations.

### **Summary**

Week 8 was the fifth Saturday of free windshield washing at local service stations, thus yielding a growing level of confidence in serving and sharing in this context. The week resulted in a total of 30 workers making contact with 259 people, rendering service to 95 people, and giving a word of witness to 97 individuals.

## **Week 9 – April 14-20**

### **Pre-service Activities**

Week 9 continued the Forty-Days of Evangelism, as well as the sermon series focusing on “A Changed Life.” The week would provide nine opportunities for service.

## **Servant Evangelism Projects**

Servant evangelism projects for week 9 began on Monday, April 15, with shoe shining at three locations: the break area of the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet from 9:00-10:30 a.m., the showroom of Bob Allen Chrysler/Dodge/Jeep from 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., and the Basement Center of the Kentucky Capitol Annex from 2:00-4:00 p.m. The second day of shoe shining came on Tuesday, April 16, in the conference room of the Kentucky Justice and Public Safety Cabinet from 11:00 a.m.-noon. The third day of shoe shining came on Friday, April 19, in the Basement Center of the Kentucky Capitol Annex from 2:00-4:00 p.m.

Tuesday, April 16, provided the opportunity of serving lunch at our regularly scheduled monthly time at the Frankfort Soup Kitchen. MBC servant evangelism team members participated in serving people and giving words of witness. Wednesday, April 17, at 5:00 p.m. was the regularly scheduled time for free medical and dental care to community residents provided by an MBC deacon and feedback team member for the servant evangelism project. The MBC Awana Club met that night at 6:00 p.m. One child bearing a direct connection with this ministry came to faith in Christ following Awana and was baptized the following Sunday.

Week 9 allowed for a break in the Saturday morning free windshield washing at local service stations. With the threat of rain, MBC servant evangelism team members distributed packages of light bulbs in the immediate community on Saturday, April 20, from 10:00 a.m.-noon. Workers were again equipped with the Servant Evangelism cards to distribute along with the light bulbs.

## **Summary**

Week 9 seemed to be a pivotal period in the project. With the passage of time, motivation seemed to decrease somewhat, creating a renewed sense of focusing on the message more than the results. Despite the growing sense of weariness, the week yielded a total of 31 workers making contact with 331 people, rendering service to 160 people, and giving a word of witness to 165 individuals.

## **Week 10 – April 21-27**

### **Pre-service Activities**

Week 10 was the fourth week of Forty-Days of Evangelism. Numerous opportunities would be provided for MBC members to fulfill their commitments to be intentional in their evangelistic efforts.

### **Servant Evangelism Projects**

Monday, April 22, was the beginning of the tenth week of shining shoes in Frankfort at three locations: the break area of the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet from 9:00-10:30 a.m., the showroom of Bob Allen Chrysler/Dodge/Jeep from 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., and the Basement Center of the Kentucky Capitol Annex from 2:00-4:00 p.m. The second day of shoe shining came on Tuesday, April 23, in the conference room of the Kentucky Justice and Public Safety Cabinet from 11:00 a.m.-noon. The third day of shoe shining came on Friday, April 26, in the Basement Center of the Kentucky Capitol Annex from 2:00-4:00 p.m.

One of the MBC Sunday morning Bible study groups continued our connection with the Women's Shelter on Tuesday night, April 23, at 6:00. MBC members connected with the women by preparing and serving them dinner at the shelter. An MBC deacon and feedback team member for the servant evangelism project again donated his time at First Baptist Church on Wednesday, April 24, at 5:00 p.m. to provide free medical and dental care to community residents. The MBC Awana Club met that night at 6:00 p.m. , resulting in increased connections with families, and yielding 2 more directly connected baptisms the following Sunday.

On Saturday, April 27, from 10:00 a.m. until noon we continued the free windshield washing at local service stations. 7 workers came out, 65 contacts were made, 35 people were served, and 36 words of witness were shared.

### **Summary**

Week 10 provided a total of ten opportunities of service for MBC servant

evangelism team members. The week resulted in a total of 49 workers making contact with 283 people, rendering service to 104 people, and giving a word of witness to those individuals.

### **Week 11 – April 28-May 4**

#### **Pre-service Activities**

Week 11 was the fifth week of Forty-Days of Evangelism consisting of eight opportunities of service. This focus aided in providing ample opportunities for members to fulfill their commitments to be intentional in their evangelistic efforts.

#### **Servant Evangelism Projects**

Monday, April 29, was the beginning of the eleventh week of shining shoes in Frankfort at three locations: the break area of the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet from 9:00-10:30 a.m., the showroom of Bob Allen Chrysler/Dodge/Jeep from 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., and the Basement Center of the Kentucky Capitol Annex from 2:00-4:00 p.m. The second day of shoe shining came on Tuesday, April 30, in the conference room of the Kentucky Justice and Public Safety Cabinet from 2:00-3:00 p.m. With the close of the Legislative session came an increasingly diminished flow of traffic through the Capitol Annex, thus precipitating the ceasing of shoe shining on Friday afternoons.

An MBC deacon and feedback team member for the servant evangelism project again donated his time at First Baptist Church on Wednesday, May 1, at 5:00 p.m. to provide free medical and dental care to community residents. The MBC Awana Club met that night at 6:00 p.m. Although the numbers diminished slightly, the impact continued to be evidenced as baptisms took place every Sunday into the month of May.

The MBC youth pastor oversees an annual fundraiser partnering with Levi Restaurants in serving the general public at the Kentucky Derby at Churchill Downs in Louisville, Kentucky. MBC workers served during the Derby Friday, May 3, and Saturday, May 4, by carving meat for those attending the Derby in the club suites.

## **Summary**

Week 11 resulted in a total of 51 workers making contact with 1,686 people, rendering service to 1,549 people, and giving a word of witness to 94 individuals. The decline in words of witness shared was directly proportionate to our partnered relationship with Levi, thus restricting MBC's available spiritual influence.

## **Week 12 – May 5-11**

### **Pre-service Activities**

Week 12 was the final week of Forty-Days of Evangelism. The conclusion of this focus did not, however, diminish in any way MBC's involvement in servant evangelism projects as opportunities continued to be consistently provided.

### **Servant Evangelism Projects**

Monday, May 6, was the beginning of the twelfth week of shining shoes in Frankfort at two locations: the break area of the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet from 9:00-10:30 a.m., the showroom of Bob Allen Chrysler/Dodge/Jeep from 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., and the Basement Center of the Kentucky Capitol Annex from 2:00-4:00 p.m. The second day of shoe shining came on Tuesday, May 7, in the conference room of the Kentucky Justice and Public Safety Cabinet from 2:00-3:00 p.m.

An MBC deacon and feedback team member for the servant evangelism project again donated his time at First Baptist Church on Wednesday, May 8, at 5:00 p.m. to provide free medical and dental care to community residents. The MBC Awana Club met that night at 6:00 p.m. On Saturday, May 11, from 10:00 a.m. until noon we resumed the free windshield washing at local service stations. Later that afternoon, from 5:00-7:00 p.m., MBC servant evangelism team members gathered to help move a family.

## **Summary**

Week 12 provided eight opportunities of service and resulted in a total of 27 workers making contact with 206 people, rendering service to 71 people, and giving a word of witness to those individuals. The blessing of faithful service continued to yield the

development of relationships with people and organizations in our community.

### **Week 13 – May 12-18**

#### **Pre-service Activities**

Week 13 was an extremely busy week for servant evangelism at MBC. We not only continued the regular weekly activities of this project, but 3 additional activities were added to the week's involvement in the life of the Frankfort community.

#### **Servant Evangelism Projects**

Monday, May 13, was the beginning of the thirteenth week of shining shoes in Frankfort at two locations: the break area of the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet from 9:00-10:30 a.m., the showroom of Bob Allen Chrysler/Dodge/Jeep from 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., and the Basement Center of the Kentucky Capitol Annex from 2:00-4:00 p.m. The second day of shoe shining came on Tuesday, May 14, in the conference room of the Kentucky Justice and Public Safety Cabinet from 2:00-3:00 p.m.

An MBC deacon and feedback team member for the servant evangelism project again donated his time at First Baptist Church on Wednesday, May 15, at 5:00 p.m. to provide free medical and dental care to community residents. The MBC Awana Club met that night at 6:00 p.m. The extended effects of Awana continued to prove this activity to be one of the most productive ongoing activities of this project.

As a direct result of the connection MBC has developed with the local government cabinets, requests result in greater opportunities for service. One such request was for MBC to host a statewide luncheon for the regional school lunch directors. The lunch was catered by the state, but was hosted at MBC due to the accessibility and availability of our facilities.

The next quarterly blood drive put on by the Kentucky Blood Center and hosted by MBC took place on Friday, May 17, from 8:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. Two workers again provided service to workers and donors, serving coffee and cocoa and shining shoes for free. Later the same day MBC servant evangelism team members assembled in downtown

Frankfort to serve water to race participants in the Run-for-Life event. Men, women and children provided warm and friendly service to all involved. Saturday, May 18, from 10:00 a.m.-noon was the final day of washing windshields at area service stations.

### **Summary**

Week 13 demonstrated a substantial increase in the numbers due to the expansiveness of the 10 opportunities of service provided. A total of 59 workers making contact with 1,457 people, rendering service to 1,087 people, and giving a word of witness to 152 individuals.

### **Week 14 – May 19-25**

#### **Pre-service Activities**

Week 14 saw a return to a more regular week for servant evangelism at MBC. The only additional activity added to the regularly scheduled activities was the second of 2 light bulb distributions in the downtown area.

#### **Servant Evangelism Projects**

Monday, May 20, was the beginning of the fourteenth week of shining shoes in Frankfort at two locations: the break area of the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet from 9:00-10:30 a.m., the showroom of Bob Allen Chrysler/Dodge/Jeep from 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., and the Basement Center of the Kentucky Capitol Annex from 2:00-4:00 p.m. The second day of shoe shining came on Tuesday, May 21, in the conference room of the Kentucky Justice and Public Safety Cabinet from 2:00-3:00 p.m.

As a part of the regularly scheduled activity, MBC servant evangelism team members prepared and served lunch at the Frankfort Soup Kitchen on Tuesday, May 21, from 10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. An MBC deacon and feedback team member for the servant evangelism project again donated his time at First Baptist Church on Wednesday, May 22, at 5:00 p.m. to provide free medical and dental care to community residents. The MBC Awana Club met that night at 6:00 p.m. to continue the Scripture-focused memorization activities.

On Saturday, May 25, from 10:00 a.m.-noon MBC servant evangelism team

members assembled to distribute light bulbs to the immediate neighborhood. This activity has served to connect MBC with the surrounding community residents, but still warrants further efforts to reach the entire community.

### **Summary**

Week 14 showed a decrease in the numbers despite the 8 opportunities of service provided. A total of 33 workers making contact with 299 people, rendering service to 145 people, and giving a word of witness to 122 individuals.

### **Week 15 – May 26-June 1**

#### **Pre-service Activities**

Week 15 was the final week for the servant evangelism project at MBC. Although the project was officially concluding, the work of servant evangelism will continue to fill the hearts and efforts of MBC members with productive activity.

#### **Servant Evangelism Projects**

Monday, May 27, was the beginning of the fifteenth and final week of shining shoes in Frankfort at two locations: the break area of the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet from 9:00-10:30 a.m., the showroom of Bob Allen Chrysler/Dodge/Jeep from 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., and the Basement Center of the Kentucky Capitol Annex from 2:00-4:00 p.m. The second day of shoe shining came on Tuesday, May 28, in the conference room of the Kentucky Justice and Public Safety Cabinet from 2:00-3:00 p.m.

One of the Sunday morning Bible study groups continued MBC's connection with the Women's Shelter as workers assembled at the shelter to serve dinner to the women in residence there on Tuesday, May 28, at 6:00 p.m. An MBC deacon and feedback team member for the servant evangelism project again donated his time at First Baptist Church on Wednesday, May 29, at 5:00 p.m. to provide free medical and dental care to community residents. The MBC Awana Club met at 6:00 that night in the worship center, along with their families and a wider gathering of the church to celebrate the conclusion of the first semester of Awana. The age-graded groups assembled on stage to share Scripture and

testimonies, followed by a covered dish fellowship.

The final day of the project was Saturday, June 1, from 9:00 a.m.-noon. As should be the case, MBC began a new connection and ministry of working with Frankfort's Habitat for Humanity, beginning our regularly scheduled involvement on the first Saturday of every month. MBC workers showed up at the house at 329 Holmes Street to hang ceiling insulation, and demolish a concrete section of sidewalk outside in preparation for a flowerbed.

### **Summary**

Week 15 concluded the work of this project. A total of 43 workers made contact with 209 people, rendering service to 58 people, and giving a word of witness to those 58 individuals.

### **Conclusion**

This servant evangelism project was consumed by service-oriented projects for the sake of connecting with people in order to have an evangelistic influence. The training and evaluation took place outside of the 15 weeks, leaving a full 105 days of activities directly related to servant evangelism. The pre-project and post-project surveys took place two weeks prior to and two weeks after the conclusion of the project, and were administered via email to servant evangelism participants and feedback team members with a 75 percent return ratio. The feedback team met three times prior to the start of the project. In-project meetings occurred with various members periodically on an individual basis as needed throughout the 15 weeks. The post-project evaluations took place with team members on an individual basis whereupon they returned the surveys and gave a first-hand evaluation based on their involvement.

The numbers, although shockingly high, demonstrate the involvement of MBC members in outreach to the community. During the course of the 15 week servant evangelism project MBC averaged 49 workers involved, 579 contacts, 379 people served, and 187 words of witness shared with individuals each week.

## CHAPTER 5

### EVALUATION OF THE MINISTRY PROJECT

Possibly the most intriguing perspective in this whole project has been that the primary change that was desired was in the lives of the membership of MBC. This perspective differs from most other evangelistic projects because evangelism is largely results oriented, where the focus of this project was directed at “creating a culture of servant evangelism.” That focus necessitated a change in the hearts of the members of MBC in order to place themselves in a position of serving others so as to create an evangelistic opportunity. Understanding that perspective was liberating since there were no goals for increased professions of faith or baptisms. The purpose and goals were entirely focused on a desire to experience a change in the church that would create an atmosphere conducive to increased evangelistic involvement, thus bringing a praiseworthy result of increased professions of faith and baptisms.

#### **Evaluation of the Project’s Purpose**

The purpose for this project was to lead MBC, Frankfort, Kentucky, to create opportunities through service-oriented ministry projects to effectively communicate the gospel. The opportunities were predominantly consistent projects that happened on a weekly basis, with a few regular opportunities that occurred monthly, as well as a number of periodic opportunities that took place on random occasions. All of these opportunities were intentionally non-comprehensive as far as the gamut of service-oriented ministry projects, but were intended to provide a relatively consistent representation of what servant evangelism is about.

In meeting with feedback team members, the most consistent response was that although the project did not create a completely equipped and functional culture of servant

evangelism, it did serve to initiate a process that will subsequently continue for years to come. In that respect, the purpose was successfully fulfilled, thus allowing for future growth in ideas and opportunities, thereby creating a sense of incompleteness for the sake of a compelling need of continuation.

### **Evaluation of the Project's Goals**

The first goal of this ministry project was for MBC to gain a greater understanding of servant evangelism. Paul's reference to his goal for the church at Ephesus as being, "to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge" (Eph 3:19) alludes to their knowing by experience what they could never fully comprehend by mere knowledge alone.<sup>1</sup> So, too, was the premise of this project's foremost goal. The success of this goal was entirely dependent on MBC's experience, thereby embracing the intent to involve more members as the project progressed through each successive week.

The success of this goal often eerily hung in the balance, weighing heavily on the ripple effect of the involvement of MBC members in enlisting more members in doing the work of servant evangelism. The simplicity of the format of serving others and answering their questions honestly and openly provided an environment of almost guaranteed success. The sheer exhilaration of being involved in an activity that holds the potential of having a positive impact on people's lives has a contagious effect.

It would be a great joy to be able to say this goal was overwhelmingly accomplished. It was a worthwhile goal and was fulfilled for the most part in that many joined in the service projects along the way because they could simply learn as they went, and there was minimal investment required up front in training and preparation. It was not, however, in any way similar to a raging wildfire spreading out of control with a consuming passion for lost humanity. The greatest attraction was the simplicity, and the simplicity of serving others provided more than adequate opportunities for increased understanding of servant evangelism.

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<sup>1</sup>Marvin R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1946), p. 385.

The second goal of this ministry project was for MBC to grow in humility through acts of service. This goal was probably the most difficult of all the goals to measure in successfulness. This difficulty in measurability is why the pre-project and post-project surveys included humility as one of the areas listed at the bottom of the survey for personal and spiritual growth. 85 percent of the pre-project survey respondents considered humility to be an area they could improve or grow in, and 100 percent of the post-project survey respondents considered humility to be one of the areas in which they had improved or grown.

Although humility is such a difficult area to measure, it still appears to be a natural by-product of serving others. The opposite of humility is pride, which tends to exalt oneself as the center of attention, and place personal needs above the needs of others. Humility, however, tends to grow in an individual's heart when they choose to esteem others more highly than themselves (Phil 2:3), and to place the needs of others above their own. The very nature of servant evangelism thus provided sufficient opportunities for the members of MBC to grow in humility as they symbolically put themselves at the feet of others in servitude.

The third goal of this ministry project was for MBC to gain relational skills through communicating the gospel in the context of acts of service. As was the case with humility, relational skills are best acquired through the experience of relating to others. One of the difficulties with communicating the gospel tends to stem from the stress of discovering and taking advantage of transition points in the course of a conversation without forcing the conversation in that direction. Such stress often causes what William Fay and Ralph Hodge identified in their book *Share Jesus without Fear* as the most prominent prohibiting factor to witnessing – fear of failure.<sup>2</sup>

The most amazing factor in doing servant evangelism is the predominant absence of such stress and fear. The course of the conversations typically involved numerous questions from the persons being served, with the most prominent question being, “Who are

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<sup>2</sup>William Fay and Ralph Hodge, *Share Jesus without Fear* (Nashville: LifeWay, 2008).

you and why are you doing this?” Servant evangelism team members were trained to respond with one of two answers: “We are from MBC, and this is just a practical way of showing you the love of Jesus,” or “We are from MBC, and this is our way of putting our mission statement into action, which is to love God, love people, and serve others.” With many of the activities involving time restraints due to the flow of traffic, we supplied cards with a picture and the address of the church on one side and the words, “We just wanted to show you the love of Jesus in a practical way.” Participants were trained to hand the person being served a card and say, “this is who we are and why we are out here serving you today.” The simplicity of responding to a person’s questions instead of feeling a need to direct a conversation toward the gospel showed in the survey where servant evangelism participants found it less difficult to communicate the gospel in relevant terms to people.

One of the most consistent factors involved in doing servant evangelism is the element of time. In *Conspiracy of Kindness*, Steve Sjogren expresses it in the form of a mathematical equation:

$$\text{Servant evangelism} = \text{deeds of love} + \text{words of love} + \text{adequate time}.^3$$

The element of adequate time means that servant evangelism is not a quick return evangelistic tool, but requires consistent deeds of love and persistent infusion of words of love, and trusting the results to God. In that context, the relational skills involved were a learning process of responding to the questions with loving words to express the heart of loving acts of service.

The fourth goal of this ministry project was for me, as pastor, to grow in effectiveness as a servant leader at MBC. This again appeared to be a difficult area to measure since it involved intangible qualities. One thing I learned early in ministry was that I should never ask church members to do something that I was unwilling to do. If I, therefore, was asking members of MBC to serve others, I needed to set the example by serving others myself, thus setting the pace as a servant leader.

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<sup>3</sup>Steve Sjogren, *Conspiracy of Kindness: A Refreshing New Approach to Sharing the Love of Jesus with Others* (Ann Arbor, MI: Vine Books, 1993), 22.

The intent in shining shoes was to develop teams that would follow the pattern their pastor had set for them in serving others through this ministry activity. Unfortunately the time of day that was most convenient for the locations where shoes were shined did not allow for members to get involved. That being the case, shoe shining became a weekly activity for me as pastor whereby I knelt two to three days a week at people's feet and served them. It is amazing how God can use a simple act of service to affect change in peoples' hearts whether they are directly involved or not. Such was the case with the members of MBC with regard to their pastor serving others in this way. The chair of deacons at MBC put it this way in his response to the post-project survey question regarding the training and demonstration of servant evangelism by the pastor and leadership of MBC: "It has been touching to see our pastor humble himself to shine shoes, wash windows, and change light bulbs for Christ. It has moved me to follow his example and humble myself to do these things as well. He led us, equipped us, and trained us to do the work, then sent us out in groups to perform the work. This model looks and sounds familiar."<sup>4</sup>

Many of the developments through the course of this project were not planned, but simply occurred in the course of the service activities. One such development occurred in the second week of shining shoes in the Basement Center of the Kentucky Capitol Annex. On Monday afternoon I shined shoes from 2:00-4:00 p.m. during the opening session of the week's legislative sessions. To my surprise, a photographer showed up to take pictures and run a story in the State Journal regarding a local pastor offering free shoe shining at the Capitol.<sup>5</sup> It was humbling to be caught on camera in the act of serving someone, yet MBC members found it to be a reason to be proud of their pastor.

As a means of keeping church members aware of their pastor's daily activities, I posted pictures and status reports on Facebook each time shoes were shined in the various locations. In this sense technology became a valuable tool as these posts provided a consistent line of communication with many of the MBC members.

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<sup>4</sup>John Lawrence, "Post-Project Survey and Questionnaire," completed June 3, 2013.

<sup>5</sup>Hannah Reel, "A Shoe Shine and a Smile," *The State Journal*, February 27, 2013, A5.

With each of the ministry project's goals came a fresh set of challenges. Each goal, however, proved not only to be a challenge, but to raise the performance standard to newer heights as well, and to provide sufficient means for evaluating the level of success of the various aspects of the ministry project.

### **Strengths of the Project**

In *Conspiracy of Kindness*, Steve Sjogren makes the statement, "For most Christians, doing evangelism is a lot like going to the dentist: No one really enjoys doing it, but it has to be done every once in a while."<sup>6</sup> The dilemma then is how to effectively do what Jesus commanded all Christians to do in the Great Commission (Matt 29:18-20). Without exception the greatest strength of this ministry project was the relative ease of applicability of the tool of servant evangelism. Sjogren calls servant evangelism a low-risk and high-grace means of communicating the love of God through random acts of kindness.<sup>7</sup> The low-risk factor means that "it doesn't take a great deal of gifting, money or even boldness to influence large numbers of people."<sup>8</sup> In regard to the high-grace factor, Sjogren states, "Time and again, we saw God convert our simple acts of service into powerful and unforgettable seeds planted in people's hearts."<sup>9</sup> Such was the experience of this ministry project.

Another strength of this ministry project was the appeal to most Christians of being involved in doing acts of kindness with a simple message of God's love. Through the years I have had the privilege of being involved in a number of evangelistic programs. Most involved a great deal of training with a relatively small group of trainees attempting to reach a massive number of people with a worthwhile message. The weakness of those approaches was the low percentage of involvement of church members. Most often the workers who

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<sup>6</sup>Sjogren, *Conspiracy of Kindness*, 29.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

were involved were already carrying a great deal of the load of ministry within the church. With servant evangelism, however, minimal training is required and anybody can do it.

The total number of MBC members who were involved in the ministry project came to 78, which accounts for approximately half of MBC's regular attendees. Of those who participated in the servant evangelism activities, more than a dozen were not currently involved in any other church activity. Participants included families with small children and youth, as well as adults, so the overall appeal of serving others through acts of kindness proved to be age-appropriate across the board.

Of the three evangelism strategies Jeff Iorg identified (attraction, engagement, and infiltration),<sup>10</sup> this ministry project focused almost exclusively on the strategies of engagement and infiltration. The only event that employed attraction evangelism was the Spiritual Awakening Conference, March 28-31. The remainder of the events and activities were programmatically geared toward engaging those involved in building relationships with people, or were infiltrative in nature, carrying workers into the places where people work, play, and live, all for the sake of evangelism.

During the tenth week of this ministry project, one of the feedback team members took the tool of acts of kindness to a more personally applicable level. He planned the course of his day's activities around servant evangelism opportunities at the grocery store, the gas station, and various other locations. In each situation he looked for opportunities to serve others through random acts of kindness, and when asked why he was doing it, he would offer them one of the servant evangelism cards as an explanation. It was at this point that we began to offer the cards to the church at large for distribution in the course of their daily activities by looking for opportunities to demonstrate the love of God to others through random acts of kindness. This offer took the tool of servant evangelism to a greater level of personal appeal. 500 cards were printed and grouped in packs of 10. All were taken over the course of the next 6 weeks, and more were printed and made available.

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<sup>10</sup>Jeff Iorg, "Out of Balance," [http:// www.ggbts.edu/president/blog.aspx?category=Evangelism](http://www.ggbts.edu/president/blog.aspx?category=Evangelism) (accessed August 13, 2013).

## **Weaknesses of the Project**

Two prominent weaknesses stood out in the evaluation process. The first weakness was consistently mentioned in each of the evaluation interviews with feedback team members. For the most part, the youth were not very involved. This fact was unusual since the youth comprise the largest single group in the church and are typically the ones most involved in mission endeavors and activities. There was no definite reason for their lack of involvement other than the busy-ness of their schedules, athletic conflicts, and the fact that it was not a youth event or activity and involved a broader base of the church.

The second weakness was organizational. The initial format involved enlisting team captains, training them in servant evangelism, and releasing them to enlist team members and organize activities to fit their schedules. That format, however, required far too much individual motivation which was not present since servant evangelism, for the most part, was a new form of outreach and evangelism. Due to that fact, almost every activity was organized by the leadership, including personal enlistment of workers, acquisition of required materials, and implementation of the activity. It was discovered early in this ministry project that most of the MBC membership prefers to be told what to do, how to do it, and with whom they will be doing it.

## **What I Would Do Differently**

As a result of the above mentioned weaknesses, I would gear a number of servant evangelism activities to the youth so they could adopt that particular project and own it as theirs. In the future, as well, all youth-oriented servant evangelism activities will be coordinated with their schedules in order to accommodate their personal and athletic activities. The unfortunate part of this whole ministry project was the season and time restraints that were imposed due to the 15-week format.

As for the organization of servant evangelism teams, I would assign certain teams to particular activities or formats about which they felt personally passionate, train them appropriately, aid them in scheduling, and release them to carry them out. I would attempt to

coordinate 6 teams that each could do 2 to 3 different servant evangelism activities, with each team having enough members that they would not wear out workers by requiring them to be there every week in order for their particular activity to work. I would also schedule and coordinate the activities more seasonally so as to accommodate the weather and temperatures.

### **Theological Reflections**

Regarding evangelism and missions, I typically act as if I expect the woods to be set on fire, ablaze with the power of God flowing through an act of kindness or a simple word of love. Before I took my first foreign mission trip in 2003 I was told by Rick White, senior pastor of The People's Church in Nashville, Tennessee that mission teams often expect to change the world, but the ones who are changed are the ones who go. That fact became evident in the entire process of this ministry project as our hearts were stirred and changed by the people we served.

If it is true as James said that “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (Jas 4:6), then when his people humble themselves to serve others it is the grace that flows into and through his people to those who are served that leaves a lasting impression. Luke 2:52 uses the same Greek word *χάριτι* that is translated to mean “goodwill,” and in Luke 1:28 it is used as a corresponding verb, being translated “endued with grace.”<sup>11</sup> That being true, His people then are more conduits rather than containers of his grace. It is in that instant when a grace-filled vessel serves somebody that they come in contact with the grace of God through an act of kindness.

It is likewise an amazing point of contact when a humble servant does good for someone in a service-oriented ministry context. Paul was experienced in the Pharisaical lifestyle, living by the letter of the law, and imposing that same standard on all he had influence over. Paul, however, expressed the heart of the human dilemma when he said, “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with

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<sup>11</sup>W. E. Vine, *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996), s.v. “grace.”

me, but how to perform what is good I do not find” (Rom 7:18-19). For Paul to say that he didn’t have enough goodness within himself to do good for others certainly places us all in that same position. If any good is to come to us and flow through us in ministry to others there must be a consistent experience and application of the grace of God.

Matthew records an interesting conversation between Jesus and the rich young ruler (Matt 19:16-22) in which the young man approaches Jesus with the question, “Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?” Jesus dealt directly with the term “good” when he responded, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but one, that is, God.” When the young man persisted, Jesus told him to sell everything he had and give the proceeds to the poor, and then to follow him. When it all came down to it, the bottom line for this young man was too high a price. All who wish to do good have the same struggle apart from the presence of God in their lives which comes by grace alone. Apart from grace we cannot know God, and likewise we cannot make him known to others by the good we do. Without grace, any good that is done becomes about promotion of oneself. This truth is what Jesus was dealing with in Matthew 6:1 when he said, “Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven.”

The primary tool involved in servant evangelism is the performance of acts of kindness – doing good to others. If any of these good deeds were done for personal promotion, or even to promote MBC in the community, the gain was merely temporal and there were no eternal benefits. Great care, therefore, had to be taken at every juncture and in every activity to always point any accolades and attention to the God who alone is good, and who gave the command by Paul to “do good to all” (Gal 6:10).

One of the most crucial aspects of this ministry project was the place of prayer as a constant reminder of our need for God’s grace and favor. The third week met with a stern reminder that Satan is most opposed to the work when God is at work. I had spent two weeks shining shoes for free in three different government locations when the director of facilities contacted me regarding requests for access to three other government locations. He

was not at all satisfied with the fact that a minister was ministering in government facilities without his permission. Fortunately, I had taken proper action in acquiring permission from those three facilities in particular, so he allowed the current work to continue as long as complaints did not get back to him. This incident served as evidence that this ministry project was of God, and that if it was to continue, it would happen only because of him granting favor with man as a direct result of the prayers of MBC.

### **Personal Reflections**

My life has been enormously enriched through this ministry project. I have been trained in a number of different evangelistic programs, but none has ever put the message of God's love on a simpler and more demonstrable level than has servant evangelism. I have personally had the privilege of shining the shoes of the mayor of Frankfort, state representatives from across the commonwealth, a highly esteemed and respected Jewish lawyer, as well as a custodian at the Capitol Annex. In every situation my intent was to treat them as I would treat Jesus were it his shoes I was shining. The grace of God in those moments made every effort worthwhile.

The primary lesson I learned about myself in the course of this ministry project was the power of operating in an area of giftedness when combined with personal skills, talents, and abilities. My primary spiritual gift is mercy, my skills involve a love for and desire to communicate with people, and my greatest strength is a passion to serve others. In every service activity I looked intentionally for a personal encounter that would define for me my reason for being in that location serving in that way that day. The personal stories that have emerged from this project still fill my heart and mind.

MBC has been involved for the past seven years in washing approximately 300 children's feet each year and giving them new shoes before school starts. Five hundred pairs of shoes are collected through various venues throughout the spring and early summer to take to Lynch for distribution. Surprisingly, for many of the kindergarten-aged children, this will be their first pair of shoes to ever own. On Saturday, February 23, 4 adults and 4 children were involved in explaining and demonstrating the foot washing that takes place on

this annual mission trip to Lynch, Kentucky. This demonstration and explanation took place during the halftime devotions at Upward at both Peaks Mill Elementary and Westridge Elementary schools, and served as a moving portrayal of what servant evangelism is all about.

Teams were sent to two stations in Frankfort on the first Saturday of washing car windows for free to work a two-hour shift. The former pastor of MBC and I were blessed to serve together. There were only about ten minutes remaining, and the traffic flow had slowed considerably, so we were considering packing up to head back to church when a gentleman pulled in to get gas. He declined the window wash, but asked who we were and why we were doing what we were doing. A fifteen-minute conversation ensued that proved to be my reason for being there that day. He had not been in church in some time, and had all but lost hope in God and the church. He had prayed the day before for God to demonstrate in a tangible way that he had not forgotten him, and that he still mattered to God. This encounter proved to be the answer to his prayer. After praying for my new friend, hugging, and parting ways in tears, it was no surprise to see him in church the next day, nor when he publicly recommitted his life to Christ at the conclusion of the service.

About week 11, I was shining shoes in the break area of the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet when a young man stopped in. He asked the usual questions and I gave the usual answers, so from all evidence nothing exceptional took place. Later that day I met with the MBC Church Council, and was informed by an MBC member who works with this young man that he is a self-professed agnostic. When he returned to the office he could not stop talking about an interesting minister who shined his shoes and would not accept his money. His statement as he walked away was, “he called it grace, and said it came with no price tag.” The MBC member just smiled and acknowledged the power of the grace of God demonstrated in a practical way.

It is humbling how God puts a person at the feet of such a diverse group of people when that person is willing to serve others. While shining shoes at the Capitol Annex I had the privilege of shining the shoes of a Jew who moved with his family from Nazi Germany

at the age of six. He is a retired lawyer who spent the first eight years of his career involved in the civil rights movement in the 1960s, and the remainder of his career in Prestonsburg, Kentucky, directing the Appalachian Research and Defense Fund, defending the rights of the poor and often forgotten. Only God would order the steps of a Baptist preacher from Alabama, an enormous center of civil rights controversy in the 60s, to experience the honor of serving a Jewish lawyer of national renown who defended the rights of many of my friends and classmates in some of the darkest days in Alabama history.

### **Conclusion**

It is difficult to approach this section as a conclusion since my hopes are that the ministry and outreach potential of servant evangelism will not cease at MBC. Numerous service-oriented projects have continued throughout the summer, and will as well into the fall and winter seasons. The MBC youth went to an M-Fuge camp early in July in Houston, Texas, where they were all involved in doing service-oriented mission work across the city. The annual Lynch, Kentucky, mission trip the middle of July was an enormous success this year with one of the largest groups going to serve underprivileged families in Harlan County, Kentucky. MBC has adopted the first Saturday of each month as their day for working at the Habitat for Humanity house on Holmes Street in Frankfort, Kentucky.

The MBC youth have a fall Sunday night small group Bible study. Typically the young men and women have alternated their Sunday night meetings. The youth pastor, however, has talked with me about each group meeting every week and alternating between Bible study one week and a service-oriented activity or fellowship the alternate week. This activity is especially encouraging since the youth were disconnected from the activities of the ministry project for the most part. Other activities are scheduled for the coming months that indicate that servant evangelism will continue to be a major tool in the community outreach of MBC.

The culture of servant evangelism is not an end in itself, but is a means to an end. The missing element in the course of this project has been the persuasive element of classic gospel presentations. This project, therefore, is a step in the right direction of restoring a

sense of an external focus to MBC, with the goal of adding the crucial persuasive element in the next step.

When Jesus had finished washing the feet of his disciples he told them, “If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them” (John 13:14-17). Truly the blessing of doing the work of servant evangelism has exceeded all expectation. May MBC continue to be blessed by serving Jesus by serving others.

APPENDIX  
RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

The following tools are a sample of both the pre-project and post-project survey and questionnaire that were taken by the participants:

MEMORIAL BAPTIST CHURCH – PRE-PROJECT  
SERVANT EVANGELISM SURVEY & QUESTIONNAIRE

Using the following scale, please respond to the following statements:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Strongly		Disagree		Uncertain		Agree		Strongly	
Disagree								Agree	

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Servant evangelism is a powerful and practical tool for reaching people.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Jesus was a servant.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Jesus called his disciples to follow his example of service.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Serving others is a means of connecting with individuals in order to communicate the gospel to them.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Without proclamation, servant evangelism is minimized in its effectiveness.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Serving others causes me to esteem others more highly than myself.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ Serving others is a practical means of showing God’s love to people.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ Serving others is a way of serving Jesus.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ I will often allow my own needs to go unmet in order to meet other people’s needs .
10. \_\_\_\_\_ I find it relatively easy to accept others as they are.
11. \_\_\_\_\_ I feel confident in my own personal relationship with the Lord.
12. \_\_\_\_\_ I feel confident in relating my story of salvation in clear and relevant terms.
13. \_\_\_\_\_ I understand the sequential components of an effective gospel presentation.
14. \_\_\_\_\_ I find it difficult to communicate the gospel in relevant terms to people.
15. \_\_\_\_\_ I find it difficult to lead a person to commit their life to Christ.
16. \_\_\_\_\_ I am a compassionate person when it comes to the needs of others.
17. \_\_\_\_\_ I feel confident in my personal relational skills.
18. \_\_\_\_\_ I consider myself a good listener when it comes to conversing with people.
19. \_\_\_\_\_ I find it relatively easy to discover means to connect with people.
20. \_\_\_\_\_ I find it easier to talk than to listen.

What areas do you feel you could improve or grow in either personally or spiritually?

- |                   |                      |                   |
|-------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| _____ Competence  | _____ Congeniality   | _____ Cooperation |
| _____ Courage     | _____ Decisiveness   | _____ Empathy     |
| _____ Leadership  | _____ Honesty        | _____ Humility    |
| _____ Observation | _____ Orderly        | _____ Patience    |
| _____ Persistence | _____ Persuasiveness | _____ Sincerity   |

MEMORIAL BAPTIST CHURCH – POST-PROJECT  
SERVANT EVANGELISM SURVEY & QUESTIONNAIRE

Using the following scale, please respond to the following statements:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Uncertain		Agree		Strongly Agree	

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Servant evangelism is a powerful and practical tool for reaching people.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Jesus was a servant.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Jesus called his disciples to follow his example of service.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Serving others is a means of connecting with individuals in order to communicate the gospel to them.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Without proclamation, servant evangelism is minimized in its effectiveness.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Serving others causes me to esteem others more highly than myself.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ Serving others is a practical means of showing God’s love to people.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ Serving others is a way of serving Jesus.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ I will often allow my own needs to go unmet in order to meet other people’s needs .
10. \_\_\_\_\_ I find it relatively easy to accept others as they are.
11. \_\_\_\_\_ I feel confident in my own personal relationship with the Lord.
12. \_\_\_\_\_ I feel confident in relating my story of salvation in clear and relevant terms.
13. \_\_\_\_\_ I understand the sequential components of an effective gospel presentation.
14. \_\_\_\_\_ I find it difficult to communicate the gospel in relevant terms to people.
15. \_\_\_\_\_ I find it difficult to lead a person to commit their life to Christ.
16. \_\_\_\_\_ I am a compassionate person when it comes to the needs of others.
17. \_\_\_\_\_ I feel confident in my personal relational skills.
18. \_\_\_\_\_ I consider myself a good listener when it comes to conversing with people.
19. \_\_\_\_\_ I find it relatively easy to discover means to connect with people.
20. \_\_\_\_\_ I find it easier to talk than to listen.

What areas do you feel you have improved or grown in either personally or spiritually?

- |                   |                      |                   |
|-------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| _____ Competence  | _____ Congeniality   | _____ Cooperation |
| _____ Courage     | _____ Decisiveness   | _____ Empathy     |
| _____ Leadership  | _____ Honesty        | _____ Humility    |
| _____ Observation | _____ Orderly        | _____ Patience    |
| _____ Persistence | _____ Persuasiveness | _____ Sincerity   |

Please rate and comment on the training and demonstration of servant evangelism by the leadership of MBC and the pastor, along with the effectiveness of the tool of servant evangelism in communicating the gospel in a culturally relevant format.

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## ABSTRACT

### CREATING A CULTURE OF SERVANT EVANGELISM AT MEMORIAL BAPTIST CHURCH FRANKFORT, KENTUCKY

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013  
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This project is an exploration of the relationship between serving people and doing the work of evangelism in and through the ministry of Memorial Baptist Church, Frankfort, Kentucky. Though the title states that this effort embodies the goal of “creating a culture of servant evangelism,” the true test of this culture will not be fully recognized until far more time than the length of this 15-week project has come and gone.

Chapter 1 introduces the ministry project, stating the purpose and goals set forth. A brief history of the host church is offered for the sake of contextualization. Definitions, limitations, and delimitations are provided for clarity, and the research methodology and instruments are included.

Chapter 2 offers an exploration of five biblical texts directly relevant to the venue of servant evangelism. The exploration and research provide adequate detail to give substance and support to the various aspects of this project. Two biblical characters represent the model of a servant leader: Jesus and Joshua. Both serve as honorable role models for the venue of servant evangelism.

Chapter 3 examines the theoretical and sociological aspects of servant evangelism. The goal for this chapter is to present servant leaders in the context of social involvement in order to create evangelistic opportunities. With that goal in mind, the endeavored outcome is to extend the kingdom of God through acts of kindness done in a spirit of humility.

Chapter 4 gives the details of the 15-week ministry project. The goal for this chapter is to present the project in such a way that any church can take this chapter and carry out the work of servant evangelism in their context.

Chapter 5 offers an evaluation of the purpose, goals, strengths and weaknesses of the ministry project, as well as theological and personal reflections. The chapter correlates the overall impact of the project on all who were involved.

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