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DEVELOPING A GREAT COMMISSION CULTURE
AT FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF CATOOSA,
CATOOSA, OKLAHOMA

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

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

by
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December 2013

APPROVAL SHEET

DEVELOPING A GREAT COMMISSION CULTURE

AT FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF CATOOSA,

CATOOSA, OKLAHOMA

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To my wife, Joyce,
whose love and support
have made this project possible

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PREFACE

This project was an accomplishment involving many people. Upon my graduation from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1999, with a Master of Divinity, I knew I would be returning for further studies. In 2009 I was given the privilege of entering into the Doctor of Ministry in Evangelism and Church Growth in the Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism, and Church Growth at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. I am grateful to the entire faculty for their instruction and encouragement. Former dean of the Graham School, Chuck Lawless, inspired me to stay focused on the Great Commission. He encouraged me to make personal evangelism a priority in my ministry and reminded me that sometimes it takes personal sacrifice to be involved in ministry. I am grateful for Jeff Walters' friendship and encouragement to pursue my doctorate.

This project would not have been possible without the support of FBC Catoosa, Catoosa, Oklahoma. The result of this project is to see this church reclaim its passion for fulfilling the Great Commission. The investment in these men and women will lead them to develop disciples for Christ.

My wife, Joyce, has been my greatest supporter. During our marriage, Joyce has loved me, encouraged me, and respected me as a husband and minister. She has stood

beside me in ministry and in life as we minister to our local church members and as we minister to others during our overseas mission trips.

Marcus R. Dorsey

Catoosa, Oklahoma

December 2013

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to lead the members of First Baptist Church of Catoosa in Catoosa, Oklahoma to become more involved in the Great Commission.

Goals

Four goals served to evaluate this project's effectiveness. The first goal was for the congregation to know a simple, effective process for making disciples. To facilitate this goal a discipleship process was developed. This process needed to be simple, with few steps. Therefore, it consisted of only three essential steps. The steps, if followed by believers, would help them develop into disciples of Jesus Christ. The discipleship process was followed by all the church's ministries. A simplified process of making disciples enables the church to refocus its ministries towards accomplishing the Great Commission. A clear knowledge of the discipleship process would help the church to become a Great Commission-focused church.

The second goal was to ensure the new attendees understood and knew the biblical standard for church membership at First Baptist Catoosa. In order to accomplish this goal, a membership class was developed. The class covered the purpose, mission, and vision of the church. Included in the class was an explanation of the ministries of the church and how new attendees could be involved. This membership class helped to

ensure that the new people coming into the church embraced the Great Commission culture and connected with the small group ministry of the church. This class was open to church attendees who had an interest in learning more about the church and new members who had recently joined. The class explained what it meant to be a member of the church.

The third goal was for the church leadership to be skilled in the process of making disciples through small groups. This skill was accomplished by creating a small group ministry that became actively involved in the Great Commission. Members and church prospects of the groups same age span were assigned to each group for follow up and outreach ministry. Training was needed to equip the members to share their testimonies and the gospel message. The small group members were trained to conduct outreach events that connect with their assigned age group. A simple discipleship process gave the small group ministry direction.

The fourth goal was a personal goal for the pastor. My desire was to become a more effective leader. The success of this project depended on my ability to equip adequately the laity to be committed followers of Jesus Christ. In order to lead the church to be a Great Commission-focused church the vision needed to be cast clearly and passionately to the congregation. Part of being an effective leader was to motivate all generations to become involved in making disciples. Good planning and successful follow up produced effective leadership. Success for this goal meant others responding to the Great Commission vision. Included in this goal assessment would be the church member's ability to repeat the Great Commission vision to others.

Ministry Context

First Baptist Church of Catoosa is located in the center of downtown Catoosa, Oklahoma. The church is on the corner of Cherokee Street and East Oak Street across from Catoosa City Hall and the Catoosa Public Library. Located beside the church is the Helen Paul Learning Center. Helen Paul is home to the Catoosa school district's preschool, kindergarten, and first grade classes. The church parking lot is used by the parents of the adjacent school for dropping off and picking up the students each day. Not only is the location of the church an opportunity because of the shared parking lot, but all the schools are less than a mile from the church. The close proximity of the school system and city government entities creates an obvious ministry opportunity.

Prior to the expansion of Highway 66, the famous Route 66 went in front of the church's current location. Route 66 no longer passes in front of the church, but it does continue to go through Catoosa. The loss of major highway road frontage is a drawback to the church's location, but Route 66 brings opportunities with popularity of the highway and the large volume of traffic. Currently, this highway is a four lane highway with 2,100 cars passing through Catoosa each day.¹ Being downtown brings lots of local traffic past the church with the Catoosa City Hall and Catoosa Public Library across the street. In addition to local traffic, there are neighborhood communities within walking distance from the church. The church is in a land-locked location. There is no available land adjacent to the church property with the city of Catoosa owning all the adjacent land. In

¹Café Team of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, *A Customized Demographic Study for First Baptist Catoosa*, CD-ROM (December 2009).

summary, to the greater Tulsa area the church is isolated, but to the local Catoosa community, the church's location creates a lot of exposure and opportunities.

Catoosa is a fifteen-minute drive from downtown Tulsa, Oklahoma. Two major influences in the community are the Cherokee Hard Rock Casino and the Port of Catoosa. The casino attracts hundreds of people daily. The port is the deepest inland port in the world. Material is shipped in and out of the area through the Arkansas River to the mouth of the Mississippi River all over the world. The port has created a large industrial section. The population of the Catoosa area was 16,659 in 2009.² The annual growth rate is 1.23 percent annually.³ The growth is higher than the national annual rate and the state annual rate with the national rate being .91 percent and state rate .66 percent.⁴ As I write this proposal, the county officials are considering a shopping center that will employ 1,000 people. Catoosa is set to experience significant growth in the coming years. The opportunities for ministry are great.

I have been at the church since September 2009, following an interim pastor who served for about two years. Prior to his arrival, the church had experienced many episodes of interpersonal conflict among members and between members and the pastor. Through the 1990s and in 2006, internal conflict and stagnant and declining membership were the norm for the church. The interim was able to help the church body deal with their past and prepared them for the present pastor.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

The peak average Sunday worship attendance was between 150 and 175 during the 1980s and early 1990s.⁵ At the height of the conflict, the average worship attendance was 110 and 140.⁶ As with most established churches, the worship format was traditional, and the average age of resident members was 52. When the interim pastor arrived, the average Sunday worship attendance was down to 40 to 45. At my arrival, the attendance dropped to the mid 30s. Currently, the church worship attendance is consistently 68, but the church has seen a growth in the youth and young adult membership. In May 2009, the church hired a youth and worship minister part-time. This pastor and his wife are in their late twenties. My wife and I are in our late forties and early fifties. Among the current membership, there is a strong sense of unity, working well with the current pastoral leadership. Those members who were at odds with each other are no longer attending.

Leadership is needed to give the church a new vision for the future. The future must embrace a simpler ministry structure and a focused vision that reflects the Great Commission. The church should embrace a missionary mentality in order to reach its current culture. The missionary mentality must permeate the church culture. All the ministries must work cooperatively to fulfill the Great Commission.

The Sunday School ministry is in disarray. There is no clear purpose for its existence. The current attitudes of the class members are to show up, be taught a Bible lesson, fellowship with the same few friends, go to worship, go home, then come back next week and do the same thing all over again. That type of attitude and behavior will not grow the class, the Sunday School, or the church and will cause the church to fall

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

short of fulfilling the Great Commission. If a class fails to reach outside their own group, they will eventually cease to exist. The class will not be adding new people nor touching the lives of others in order to make more disciples. It is the assumption of this project that the small group ministry, Sunday School included, is the outreach and ministry mechanism of a healthy church. In order for the Sunday School to be more effective, there should be classes for all age groups. Currently, not all age groups are represented. More classes or home groups are needed for the church to move forward and experience healthy growth. At present, there are no home group Bible studies off the church's campus. What is needed is a small group ministry that effectively makes disciples and assimilates new members into the church body.

Rationale

The reason for this project was to build into the church a culture that is passionate about the Great Commission. This passion must be a part of the church's value system. Currently, there is an attitude of complacency. The church has experienced conflict in the past and has been distracted by the disunity conflict causes. The church's growth has been in decline for some time, and the church needs a new direction. The church does not have a clear vision for the future. The current ministries have become disconnected from the needs of the community. The church has lost its compassion for people.

The church needs competent leadership from the pastor and other church leaders. During the last ten years, the church has not only experienced conflict, but it has lacked clear decisive leadership. It is the job of the pastor and leaders to chart a new course and provide a plan for the future. One of the main goals of this project was to

instill a new Great Commission vision for the church. What the church needs is a vision that engages the community and is embraced by the church body. It is a daunting task to change a culture that is complacent and disorganized. Change must start with a vision, and there must be other changes that support the new vision in order to bring real change.

To bring real change, the church needs a small group ministry that both disciples new believers and is a platform for ministry into the community. This project moves the church away from a Sunday School format to a cell group model. The reason for this change is that a person's home generates a more conducive atmosphere for a life-sharing experience. When people share life together around a shared belief in the Bible's authority, sins get exposed in a safe, life-changing atmosphere. Real discipleship takes place, which is the purpose of the group. These cell groups will be outreach ministry groups as well. The church lacks a mechanism through which effective outreach, ministry, and discipleship can take place. The church needs to simplify its structure. Combining multiple church functions into one ministry will aid in this simplification process. The central purpose for the small group ministry is to fulfill the Great Commission. By making Christ followers who support the global mission of God, the church will be obeying the Great Commission.

A membership class was needed in the church to introduce the church's purpose and plans to fulfill the Great Commission. The class introduced new members and prospective members to the ministry philosophies of the church. Those who took the class came away with an understanding of why the church exists and how they fit into the church body. The aim of the class was to help instill the Great Commission vision for the

church into the new members. The church culture must change; the membership class pointed the new additions to the ministry in a new direction.

Any new plan or vision can stall out in the implantation stage of a vision's establishment. In order for vision to be effective, it must be one that people within the group can rally behind. The people must be willing to move from where they are to becoming active in completing the new vision. What is needed in the church is real change with lasting effects on the life of the church. Thom Rainer and Eric Geiger call for movement within the process of discipleship development.⁷ In *Simple Church*, they describe this movement as follows: "Movement is the sequential steps in the process that cause people to move to greater areas of commitment. Movement is about flow. It is about assimilation. Movement is what causes a person to go to the next step Movement is how someone is handed off from one level of commitment to a greater commitment."⁸

The movement described in *Simple Church* is about moving people through a process for making disciples. What is needed for First Baptist Catoosa is a Great Commission vision that moves people through a process for making disciples. The new vision for the church must be about the process for making disciples. In order to instill a new vision for making disciples and bringing lasting change, movement must be addressed. Without movement plans go nowhere. Movement does not just happen; it must be intentional.

⁷Thom S. Rainer and Eric Geiger, *Simple Church: Returning to God's Process for Making Disciples* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2006), 72-73.

⁸Ibid.

Definitions and Limitations

Limitations to this project must be addressed. The first limitation was the length of this project, fifteen weeks. Some of the full effects of the new vision were not completely realized. Furthermore, the desire for the project was to bring about real change. Real change is lasting and, without more analysis far beyond the fifteen-week deadline, real and lasting change cannot be assessed. A thorough analysis was conducted on the congregation prior to the project's completion as well as after in order to determine change.

In order to communicate clearly, the term “evangelism” must be defined and explained. Throughout the project, the terms “evangelism” and “evangelism” are used to mean the same as at the Lausanne Gathering in 1974 in the Lausanne Covenant.⁹ The gathering produced the Lausanne Covenant and defined evangelism as follows:

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 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 so 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.¹⁰

⁹Lausanne Covenant, “The Nature of Evangelism,” accessed November 11, 2011, <http://www.lausanne.org/en/documents/lausanne-covenant.html>.

¹⁰Ibid.

Not only must “evangelism” and “discipleship” be defined, but the term “missional” as well. For the purposes of this project, “missional” is defined and understood according to Ed Stetzer’s *Missional Manifesto*:¹¹

God is a sending God, a missionary God, who has called His people, the church, to be missionary agents of His love and glory. The concept missional epitomizes this idea. This manifesto seeks to serve the church by clarifying its calling and helping it theologically understand and practically live out God’s mission in the world today. Although it is frequently stated [that] “God’s church has a mission,” according to missional theology, a more accurate expression is “God’s mission has a church” (Ephesians 3:7-13).

Missional represents a significant shift in the way we understand the church. As the people of a missionary God, we are entrusted to participate in the world the same way He does—by committing to be His ambassadors. Missional is the perspective to see people as God does and to engage in the activity of reaching them. The church on mission is the church as God intended.¹²

The *Missional Manifesto* was formulated to give clarity to the meaning of the term as well as the missional movement associated with the term.¹³ Finally, I define the terms “small groups,” “cell groups,” and “community groups” as a group of believers and non-believers who are seeking what it means to be a Christ-follower.

Research Methodology

The goal of the project was to move First Baptist Catoosa from a church that had lost its passion for making disciples to a church that embraces a vision to fulfill the Great Commission. The four stated goals of this project were to help bring about lasting change away from complacency and lack of missionary zeal. The first of these weeks assessed the church’s current vision and mission. The second week assessed the attitude

¹¹Ed Stetzer, “Preamble,” *Missional Manifesto*, accessed November 26, 2011, <http://www.missionalmanifesto.net/>.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.

of the church towards the mission and direction of the church. Ten of the remaining weeks were used to develop a Great Commission vision for the church by reorganizing and retaining the small group ministry. The final two weeks were devoted to assessing any change in the congregation's knowledge and understanding of the church's mission and vision.

The first goal was to have the congregation know a simple process of making disciples. A simple, three-step process was developed and used by all ministries of the church. The leaders of the church ministries were trained in how to plan their ministries around the new discipleship process. They were asked to develop a ministry plan that reflects the process for developing a disciple. To increase the knowledge of the church on the subject of discipleship, more leaders were expected to be participating in the training and developing of a ministry plan. These leaders aided in the increase of knowledge as the leaders became active in the discipleship process. To measure the success of this goal, the congregational survey revealed the congregation's change in knowledge of the church's discipleship process from the start of the project to its conclusion.

The second goal was for the new attendees to acquire knowledge of the mission, purpose, and ministry plan of the church. The establishment of a membership class was the means of assimilating new members and prospective members into the life of the church. The curriculum for the membership class was developed as part of this project. One class was conducted during this project. The class consisted of one three-hour session. Success was measured by the class participants becoming more involved in the church.

The third goal was changing the congregation's attitude towards the purpose of small groups. The end result was the establishment of a small group ministry. The small group ministry forms the bases for ministry, evangelism, and discipleship for the church. This goal was realized when there were adequate leaders for the ministry. In addition to leadership structure that was recognized, an education structure that gives the leaders

directions to establish the new small groups was created. Leaders were trained and the training material was written. The leaders were asked to develop a mission strategy that reflected their training and the new process for developing followers of Christ. Success of this goal was measured the leaders' development of a ministry plan that reflected the process for developing disciples. Included in the measurement was a change in attitude of the congregation towards the purpose of small groups.

The fourth goal was a personal leadership goal for me as pastor. I believe that the amount of ownership the congregation takes in the new vision is a measurement of my leadership. The congregation was surveyed at the beginning of this project and at the end to measure the change in the congregation's commitment to the Great Commission. The success of this goal was the change of attitude in the congregation toward my leadership. The success of this goal was also measured through a focus group made of church leaders as well as ordinary church members. The focus group of 5 members was a mixture of recently activated leaders, time-honored leaders, new church members, and a life-long member.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL RATIONALE FOR THE GREAT COMMISSION IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

If the Christian community and First Baptist Catoosa were to be honest and examine their acts as they relate to the Great Commission, they would have to admit they were not obedient. Many churches say they are a Great Commission church but what one does is another matter. David Horner, in his book *When Missions Shapes the Mission*, makes a similar point: “Nearly all evangelicals love the idea of missions. Something about it is noble and shows off the best we have to offer—that is, if we get around to doing anything about the idea so that it moves from theory to practice!”¹ In order to change behavior, a fresh look at the Scriptures will help chart a new course of action.

Prior to starting this project, some background research was needed. An important question was first asked: “Is establishing a church committed to fulfilling the Great Commission biblical?” In other words, Is leading a church that adopts as its mission to make disciples of all nations an appropriate church mission or should its mission be something else? Every church that claims Christ as Lord should have as its mission the Great Commission for the following reasons. First, the Bible has many themes that are developed from Genesis through to Revelation. One major theme is that God’s people, Israel, are to be a blessing to the nations. This theme continues throughout

¹David Horner, *When Missions Shapes the Mission: You and Your Church Can Reach the World* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2011), 11.

the Bible and ends with God's people coming from every tribe and nation, praising God having received the promised blessing. The "blessing to the nations" theme reveals the passion of God and calls God's church to be about his mission. The second theme is that Jesus' personal life reveals the mission of God. Jesus interacts with others to demonstrate a contextual model of genuine passion for the Great Commission. The third theme is that Jesus' life is a ministry model that gives his followers directions on how to fulfill the Great Commission and make disciples. The actions of the apostles form the foundation for the church's main mission. The mission of the church is God's mission and is seen in the life of Jesus and his followers. All reflect a passion for the Great Commission. Finally, without leadership from church leaders, Christ's followers will fail to accomplish the mission of the church. The Bible provides an example for current church leaders. The leadership section of the project explores more in depth the mission of God as the Great Commission and how it becomes the mission of First Baptist Church Catoosa and for the church as a whole. The biblical texts highlighted in the current paragraph will be more fully expanded. The hope is that an in-depth examination of these texts will provide the foundation for this project.

Missions Is Reflected in the Overarching Understanding of the Bible

Missions in the Bible is the mission of God and is seen in the context of the whole Bible.² Sometimes Christians are guilty of proof-texting biblical passages to support a particular point of view. The limited scope of this project does not allow for an

²Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 22.

in-depth survey of the Bible on the mission of God. What is attempted here is to select key passages and bring to light clear biblical insights for the support and growth of biblical missions. The passages were selected to help in discovering the mission of God. Others passages could have been selected as well that would help, but the scope of this project does not allow for the extra content. These insights will guide First Baptist Catoosa to become a church whose values and ministry practices reflect a passion for missions.

Some make the claim that the Old Testament describes outreach through coercion that occurred when the enemies of Israel were punished and taken as servants then expected to convert to Judaism. This type of understanding is not biblically accurate and fails to communicate the heart of God. The Old Testament text reveals a passion for missions. The desire for Jehovah to be known and worshiped among the nations is a consistent theme of the entire Bible. God's covenant with Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3 is a pivotal text for Genesis as well as the salvation history of God for all peoples. It reveals God's universal purpose, which is to bring salvation to all the nations.³ In God's covenant with Abraham, God promises to bless Abraham and build a great nation through him and his ancestors. The last phrase, "[I]n you all the families of the earth will be blessed" (Gen 12:3 NASB), reveals not only a concern for Abraham and his people, but a concern for the entire world. God's mission is to bless all nations through the seed of Abraham.⁴

³Arthur F. Glasser, *Announcing the Kingdom: The Story of God's Mission in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 59.

⁴Wright, *The Mission of God*, 193.

Not only is God's concern for the nations in Genesis, but Isaiah also speaks to the theme of God's concern for the entire world and God's desire to bring salvation. A pattern is established with the people of God helping others experience God's salvation. He writes, "It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a light of the nations so that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth" (Isa 49:6). The "Servant" in this passage is Israel's "deliverer" who will fulfill Israel's intended purpose, namely to restore and bring salvation "to the end of the earth." God demonstrates his desire for Israel to reach out to the entire world through the prophet Isaiah and points no longer to the nation itself but to an obedient "Servant."⁵ God makes clear through "the tribes of Jacob" that he is going to "make [Israel] a light of the nations" and bring God's salvation "to the end of the earth" (Isa 49:6). Jesus is the servant of God who will "be a light of the nation . . . so that (God's) salvation may reach the end of the earth" (Isa 49:6).

The use of the nation of Israel to impact the world was part of God's plan to restore his creation and to bring "salvation" to a lost world (Isa 49:6). It is for the world that God called Abram from the land of Ur.⁶ The development of the theme of God bringing salvation through Israel is seen throughout the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New. Isaiah mentions that the "Servant" was to bring "salvation"; Paul furthers this theme when he makes the point in Romans that Jesus is the one through whom God's salvation will come to the world. Paul mentions that Christ confirmed "the promises

⁵John N. Oswalt, *Isaiah*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 547.

⁶Alan J. Roxburgh and Scott Boren, *Introducing the Missional Church: What It Is, Why It Matters, How to Become One*, ed. Mark Priddy (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 45.

given to the fathers,” with the main promise being the one God made to Abraham in Genesis 12. God makes the promise to bless those that bless and curse those that curse Isaac and Jacob. Additionally, this promise extends to the nation of Israel. Paul mentions in Romans 15:9 that the promise was “for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy” (Rom 15:8-9). Paul goes on to conclude from Isaiah that the promise “shall come from the root of Jesse” (Rom 15:12). The one who is to come from “the root of Jesse” (Rom 15:12) is a descendent of King David and is Jesus (Matt 1:6). Jesus is the fulfillment of the promise given to Abraham, which also includes the Gentiles (Gen 12:3).⁷ In Romans 15:8-12, Paul brings to light more of God’s plan as promised in Genesis 12. He makes clear Jesus is the “hope” or savior to the Gentiles (Rom 15:12). Jesus is to be worshiped and praised by “all the people” of the world (Rom 15:11). For Paul, the promises and plans of God for Israel to be his people extend to the Gentiles. Paul’s point is that God has always had a plan, and Jesus was a fulfillment of that plan. God’s plan to bring salvation to all nations was important for the Jews and Gentiles of his day and is important for the present time as well. Jesus is the “Servant” of whom Isaiah spoke and was entrusted with the mission of hope to the Gentiles. Jesus communicated that mission to the early church in Acts (Acts 1:8).⁸ According to Schreiner, many scholars say Romans 15:7-13 is a summation of the major themes of the book of Romans.⁹ Romans is also considered the major theological book in the New Testament. A key theological teaching in Romans is the fulfillment of God’s promises that comes through the gospel

⁷Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 756.

⁸Wright, *Mission of God*, 520.

⁹Schreiner, *Romans*, 753.

being a blessing to the Jews and the Gentiles.¹⁰ Today's generation needs the promise of "hope" just as much as the people in the first century and adds to the call of the church to make the Great Commission its own mission.

This message of salvation for the world continues throughout the biblical text. In Revelation 5:9, John makes clear that all nations are going to worship Jesus because he was the one who was slain and purchased for God with his blood "men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (Rev 5:9). The conclusion and final fulfillment of the promise to Abraham is seen in John's vision of the end times revealed to us in Revelation. Revelation 5:9 reads, "And they sang a new song, saying, 'Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.'" This passage is significant to the major theme of God's concern for the entire world and reveals the fulfillment of God's mission. The opening scene in Genesis describes God's creation and the fall of his creation, and, in the closing scene of Revelation, God's mission is fulfilled through the reclaiming of creation.¹¹ We see the slain lamb, who is Christ Jesus, the "Servant" in Isaiah, taking his rightful place of honor by receiving the scroll from the Lord.¹² He is worthy of this honor because of his suffering, and the result of his shed

¹⁰Douglas J. Moo, *Romans*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 478.

¹¹Johnny V. Miller, "Mission in Revelation," in *Mission in the New Testament: An Evangelical Approach*, ed. William J. Larkin and Joel Williams (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1998), 227.

¹²David E. Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 52 (Dallas: Word, 1997), 336.

blood is that redemption extends to those “from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.”

The church is waiting for the final fulfillment of John’s vision. Christians wait for Christ’s return, but they do not wait complacently. They have a role to play in God’s master plan. The church is to proclaim the good news of God’s plan to save the world. Jesus is the promised Messiah sent from God to save both the Jews and non-Jews (Gentiles). What one has to do is believe in Jesus as the Son of God who died in his or her place. Believers do not have to face the punishment for their sins because when they believe on Jesus, God forgives them. The penalty for sin has been paid through the blood that Jesus shed on the cross. Johannes Blauw, secretary of the Netherlands Missionary Council, makes this relevant statement: “It is the ‘justification of godless’, the justification by faith, that opened the road to the nations We cannot get away from the conclusion that from now on only he who belongs to Christ can be of the seed of Abraham, . . . the people of God.”¹³ The gospel message is good news to everyone who believes, not just Jews. Jesus preached the gospel in his earthly ministry, and, in his life, one finds an example of how the church is to share this good news of salvation to the world.

Jesus Christ Is a Visual Example of Passion for the Great Commission

Jesus Christ is the example that gives the church a visual picture for what it means to have a passion for the Great Commission. Jesus’ life and ministry reveal a

¹³Johannes Blauw, *Foundations of the Christian Mission: The Missionary Nature of the Church* (London: Lutterworth, 1962), 98.

passion for the Great Commission. Matthew 9:35-38 records the compassion he felt towards humanity and passion for God's mission to bring salvation to all nations. Matthew brings together his recording of Jesus' ministry to the masses with Jesus' discipleship ministry in Matthew 9:35-38.¹⁴ Matthew reveals Jesus' actions and motivation for his ministry. His actions and attitude were an example for his disciples to follow. Matthew records one of Jesus' main motives in chapter 9. In Jesus' ministry, he went out and sought after people: "Jesus was going through all the cities" (Matt 9:35). He was seeking people so he could show them mercy. The motivation of Jesus should motivate the church. John Piper makes an excellent point about missions. In reference to this passage, he writes, "A servant's spirit and heart of mercy motivates world missions."¹⁵ Jesus proclaimed the "gospel of the kingdom" and healed "every kind of disease and every kind of sickness" (Matt 9:35). According to Matthew, Jesus was filled with compassion "because [the people] were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd" (Matt 9:36). Jesus was motivated by his concern for people and their condition, not himself. Jesus felt compassion toward them because the spiritual leaders had neglected them, and they had no real relationship with God.¹⁶ He was concerned for their spiritual needs and their physical needs (Matt 14:14; 15:32). Jesus spoke to the people's hearts and his motive for ministry was his concern for the each person's spiritual

¹⁴John F. MacArthur, *Matthew 8-15, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1987), 107.

¹⁵John Piper, *Let The Nations Be Glad! The Supremacy of God in Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1993), 34.

¹⁶Michael J. Wilkins, *Matthew, The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 375.

condition. He made them aware of what they were before God.¹⁷ The task of proclaiming the gospel is great and the “harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few” (Matt 9:37). Jesus’ answer for more workers is to “beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest” (Matt 9:38). The Lord of the harvest has a mission and his desire is for a harvest. Even though believers are expected to follow Jesus’ example by going out into the harvest field of their world to help lost individuals find salvation, the harvest is still the Lord’s. The Great Commission is God’s mission. Workers will always be needed, and it is the Lord who sends them “into His harvest.” The work of the church is in God’s harvest; he is the harvester. Jesus calls us to pray for God to send more workers. The human reaction is not to pray but to look inward for more help. The mission is God’s mission, and one of Jesus’ central ministries was to usher in his father’s kingdom. What Jesus’ ministry teaches us is that the mission of God has an eternal consequence and that the hearts of individuals need to be awakened to the redemption that is offered through belief and repentance.¹⁸

The need for more workers is always a need in churches. God knows the need for workers, and he is calling out workers every day. In Mark 6:30-44, Christ trained his apostles for the task. Mark writes that Jesus had “compassion for them” (Mark 6:34) because he cared that the people were perishing.¹⁹ Jesus sent his apostles out to minister. When they returned, they gave Jesus a report (Mark 6:30). Jesus continued to teach them

¹⁷Arthur F. Glasser, *Announcing the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids Baker, 2003), 202.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 186.

¹⁹David E. Garland, *Mark*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 255.

about compassion by engaging them in ministry to feed people. The large crowd that came to hear Jesus became a classroom for Jesus to teach his disciples about compassion, ministry, and faith. The disciples recognized that there was a problem. They came to Jesus to tell him about the problem. It was getting late in the afternoon, and people were going to need food. The disciples' answer was to send them away "into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat" (Mark 6:36). Then the instructions came from the master teacher to his disciples, "You give them something to eat!" (Mark 6:37). The people following Jesus had been outside all day. They were going to need food in order to have the strength to get home or they needed to be sent home to give them time to get to a nearby town before the food vendors closed. His disciples expected Jesus to give them the answer and take care of the problem (Matt 14:15-16). The disciples did not expect Jesus to lay the responsibility back on them. The disciples declared to Jesus the impossibility of his instruction by telling him, "Shall we go and spend two hundred denarii on bread and give them something to eat" (Mark 6:37). No doubt the disciples saw the task Jesus had given them to feed the large crowd as an impossibility or too high a cost. It appeared to be an unreasonable command. The disciples' reaction to this command created the desired teachable moment. The promise is that whatever believers have is enough when they are obedient to God's mission. What the disciples had was clearly not enough, but when Jesus blessed the "five loaves, and two fish" (Mark 6:38) it became enough to accomplish the assignment. The point is that when it comes to the Great Commission personal ability is not enough. When one surrenders to God's will, however, God's mission gets accomplished. Jesus continues to

involve his disciples to teach others how they should accomplish the task to “[g]o make disciples” (Matt 28:19).

Jesus not only wanted his disciples to experience ministry alongside him, but also wanted them to understand their role in accomplishing God’s mission. Jesus gave his disciples a clear picture of their roles in Matthew 16:13-20. In this text, Jesus shows them how they have access to God’s power after he is gone. With God’s power, the church will not fail in its task. Jesus started out with another test question designed to teach a lesson. Jesus asks, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” (Matt 16:13). Peter’s response sets up a more personal and direct question (Matt 16:14). Jesus’ next question was to teach a lesson about where the power to accomplish their mission was to come. Jesus asked Peter, “Who do you say that I am?” (Matt 16:15). Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt 16:16). Jesus’ point is “My Father who is in heaven” (Matt 16:16) is the one who revealed that truth to you, not “flesh and blood” (Matt 16:17). The disciples were going to need God’s power to accomplish the Great Commission. The Christian’s own efforts will not accomplish God’s mission. God works through believers as they follow God’s command to “make disciples” (Matt 28:19).

God’s mission is to build “the church.” The neighborhood church is a localized manifestation of the universal church, of which all disciples of Jesus Christ are a part of. Jesus makes the church’s mission very clear. The mission of the church gives the church its purpose for existing.

Jesus Gives Christians the Purpose for Missions in the Great Commission

Christians live in the church age, which Jesus announced when he preached that “the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt 4:17). At the close of his ministry here on earth, Jesus commissioned his followers to make disciples of all nations (Matt 28:19). His commission was not a single statement in one occurrence in Scripture but is seen in all the gospels and in Acts (Mark 16:15; Luke 24:44-49; John 20:21; Acts 1:8).²⁰ In examining the texts that deal directly with what is traditionally thought of as the Great Commission, one cannot mistake the significance of the fact that Jesus presents this great assignment at the close of his time here on earth. A person’s last words could be seen as a priority. In this case, it is an imperative given the context.

In Matthew 28:16-20, the words of Jesus come after his resurrection and before his ascension into heaven. Jesus directs his command towards the believers he is leaving behind. Any biblical discussion about the Great Commission must contain these parting words in Matthew 28. It is Jesus’ most definitive instruction to what he expects from his followers. Matthew 28:18 sets up the charge. Jesus said, “All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth” (Matt 28:18). Jerome’s comments on the Great Commission are helpful at this time: “This authority was given to one who had just been crucified, buried in a tomb, laid dead and afterwards had arisen. Authority was given to him in both heaven and earth so that he who once reigned in heaven might also reign in earth through the faith of his believers.”²¹ Jerome rightfully sees earthly authority coming “through the

²⁰Walter C. Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as a Light to the Nations* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2000), 7.

faith” of Jesus’ disciples. The establishment of God’s church, his kingdom, comes through the fulfillment of the Great Commission. Jesus emphasizes that his authority is being transferred to his followers because the task is a fulfillment of his preaching that the “Kingdom was at hand” (Matt 4:17). Matthew often used the introductory “go” to setup a command or charge, and it is to be translated “go and make.”²² The emphasis is not on the “go” but on the “make disciples.”²³ Grammatically, “make disciples” is the action verb of the sentence, and all other parts are subordinate. The essence of the Great Commission is disciple making; what follows is the essentials of making disciples. Jesus’ followers are “to baptize” and “to teach.” Jesus taught his disciples and gave them the Holy Spirit to remind them of what he taught them. He did these things so that the disciples could teach others. His followers were not only to have knowledge of the commands, but they were to “observe” them. The teaching was to go beyond the knowledge of the demons. They only had knowledge of the facts about Jesus. The teaching of Jesus must be lived out in a life of obedience and faith. For a church to put all its evangelism energy into salvation and baptism and then not have the added resources and leadership in place to make a follower of Jesus (disciple), that church has not fulfilled the Great Commission as given by Jesus. From Jesus’ charge in Matthew, the primary focus of the Great Commission is the reproduction of devoted followers who are baptized

²¹Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew 28:18-20*, Corpus Christianorum, ed. Manlio Simonetti, vol. 4 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002), 313.

²²Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 431.

²³Ibid.

and taught to obey the teaching of the Bible. The church is to go to all people with the gospel message of salvation that comes through faith in Christ's death and resurrection.

The Great Commission is not stated more clearly than in Matthew, but Mark's description does help reinforce and add understanding. In Mark, there is a striking resemblance to Matthew, where one finds the participle affirming "go" and the inclusionary comments for followers to "go into all the world . . . to all nations" (Mark 16:15). Mark's version includes in the discipleship-making process the preaching of the gospel. Paul echoes Mark's commissioning statement in Colossians by stating that "the gospel which has come to you, just as in all the world . . . the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven" (Col 1:5b-6; 23). Paul's ministry and obedience to the Great Commission is centered on the proclamation of the gospel as the primary means of faith (Rom 10:14-16). The cross is at the center of the gospel and points to the great cost for this Great Commission. God's mission is a cross-centered mission. Christopher Wright makes this point clear: "So the cross was the unavoidable cost of God's mission. But it is equally true and biblical to say that the cross is the unavoidable center of our mission. All Christians mission flows from the cross—as its source, its power, and as that which defines its scope."²⁴ The concluding verses of Mark 16 include a promise that Jesus will be with them in the process of going. Mark gives a glimpse into what Jesus meant when he said in Matthew 28:20 that he would be with them. Mark notes that "they went out and preached everywhere" and that while they were out "the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the word by the signs that followed"

²⁴Wright, *The Mission of God*, 314.

(Mark 16:20). In these words of Mark's Gospel, the disciples are seen obeying the Great Commission. Even though Mark 16:9-20 does not have universal acceptance as part of Mark's Gospel, all the elements of the Great Commission are contained within this text.

Not only is the design of the Great Commission seen in Mark 16 and Matthew 28, but it is witnessed in Luke 24. In Luke, there are many of the same elements of God's mission. He writes that "repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations" (Luke 24:47). Although Luke does not mention the preaching of the gospel, he is being consistent with Jesus' calling for his followers to teach all he has commanded (Luke 24:44-49). Jesus was "sending forth the promise of (his) Father upon" them and they were "to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). This statement is consistent with Jesus' promise to be with them in Matthew 28:20 and with Jesus' promise of power from the Holy Spirit in Acts 1:8.

More on Jesus' missionary charge to his disciples is developed by Luke in Acts 1:8. First, he reassures his followers that they will not be alone as they "witness" about him because they "will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon [them]" (Acts 1:8). The introduction of the Holy Spirit gives them power, and this power follows the same theme in Matthew 28:20 that Jesus would be with them "to the end of the age." Jesus communicates here in Acts the understanding that God works through his disciples because God's power is going to come upon them to enable them to do great "signs and wonders" (Mark 16:17). These signs and wonders are seen throughout the book of Acts; Luke also describes them in Luke 24:48. For the church today looking to understand how it is to fulfill its own mission, Jesus is telling his followers that they are not alone in their

mission. Christians are not alone when the church makes the Great Commission their own mission. The church becomes a witness for God's power as he works through the obedient lives of believers. God works through the church to teach heaven about himself (Eph 3:10). Jesus was assuring his followers that they would have power from heaven to accomplish mighty works and the preaching would have its result.²⁵ The similarities of Jesus' instruction to be a witness are observed "in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8), in the commands to "[g]o into all the world and preach the gospel" (Mark 16:15) and "[g]o therefore and make disciples of all the nations" (Matt 28:19). In all three instances, Jesus projects an image of his followers out in the world that moves beyond their current location. The image presented is Jesus' disciples impacting the people of the entire world. Jesus' words should compel all who claim Jesus as Lord and who want to be his faithful followers to want to go out and be used by God to make an impact. When examining the different components in each account of Jesus giving his mission, it would be difficult to miss their similarities to each other. Ajith Fernando makes a similar point: "All Christian ministry depends on the activity of the Spirit in the minister and in the one being ministered to."²⁶ In Mark 16 and Luke 24, readers encounter the preaching of the gospel. Salvation comes when one believes in Jesus and repents of his or her sins. Salvation leads into the discipleship process.

²⁵F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 36.

²⁶Ajith Fernando, *Acts*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 50.

John's account of Jesus is the most dissimilar of the four gospels, yet his recording of Jesus' missionary challenge is no different. The context of Jesus' statement does come after his resurrection and before his ascension. The major contribution to the Great Commission is the succinct statement, "As the Father has sent Me, I also send you" (John 20:21). The theme of going out in God's authority is revealed here as well as in other commission texts already discussed. The Great Commission is God's commission because the Father sent Jesus, and Jesus is sending his followers. It is with the Father's authority that was given to Jesus that he is sending his followers out (Matt 28:18).

Tertullian connects Jesus' charge to the disciples to the church and the multiplying of churches:

Then in this same way the apostles went out to found churches in every city possible. It is from these apostolic churches that all subsequent churches, one after the other, derived the rule of faith and the seeds of doctrine. Even so to today they continue to derive from the apostles that which is necessary in order that they be churches.²⁷

What was true for Tertullian in his time is still true today. It is through the response of that same call from Jesus to "Go and make disciples" (Matt 28:19) that Christians are commissioned, and it is the mission of the church to respond to this call by using its resources to be as effective as it can to fulfill that commission.

²⁷Tertullian, *Prescription against Heretics*, Ante-Nicene Fathers, ed. Phillip Schaff (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature, 1885-1896; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 10:252, as cited in vol. 2 of *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, ed. Thomas C. Oden and Christopher A. Hall (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998), 250.

The Church's Reaction to the Ministry of Jesus and His Commission

One major contribution of this Great Commission discussion is the addition of the church. The parallels to the church and the kingdom of heaven are obvious. The kingdom of God is not the church, but it is an earthly representation of the kingdom.²⁸ God calls people out from the world to be a part of his church, which he does so through the preaching of the kingdom and the gospel (Mark 16:15). There is an obvious connection here with Jesus' words to Peter, "Upon this rock I will build my church" (Matt 16:18). In response to Jesus' words, the first disciples obeyed the Great Commission, and they went out preaching and teaching. As a result, local churches were developed, and these churches became local manifestations of the universal church that Jesus stated he was going to build. The reaction of the first disciples to Jesus' commission offers little understanding into how obedience to the mission was lived out in the local church.

After Jesus' ascension, his disciples obeyed by going to Jerusalem and waiting on the Holy Spirit to come. At Pentecost, Peter preaches the gospel to those gathered and 3,000 people became believers that day, forming the first New Testament church. Acts 2:42-47 describes the birth of a first-century faith community. In this new church, one characteristic that is developed was *κοινωνία*, which can be translated as "fellowship." Fellowship is an essential element to church life and to a faith community. The first church "had all things in common" (Acts 2:44). They shared meals together and spent time in each other's homes (Acts 2:42, 46). The first church shared life together that was

²⁸Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), s.v. "Kingdom of Christ, God, Heaven," by George E. Ladd.

reflected by their “continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching” (Acts 2:42). The fulfillment of the Great Commission is interwoven into a lifestyle built around the faith community. The faith community in Acts spent time together learning the word from the “apostles teaching” (2:42) and learning to observe “all that Jesus had commanded” (Matt 28:19). The apostles’ teaching was the teaching of Christ. What the first church was doing was following the command of Jesus to teach the newly-baptized believers to obey the commands of Scripture. This faith community worshiped in the temple and in homes and had a “sense of awe” (Acts 2:43) at what God was doing among them. The unity of belief and purpose was obviously on the Great Commission. The first church in Acts 2 developed an environment whose end result was making disciples, and “the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47). So much of what is needed in today’s church is found in Acts 2:42-47. Lifestyles may have changed, but the mission of God has not changed. The faith community that produced and reproduced disciples in the first century will do the same in the twenty-first century. The apostle Paul followed the mission of God to make disciples of all nations as he became a missionary to the Gentiles.

Jesus’ followers worked to fulfill the Great Commission. Paul and Barnabas were obeying the Great Commission by going “out,” speaking boldly “the word of God” (Acts 13:46). Their act of going “out” corresponds to the “go” in the command to “go make disciples” (Matt 28:19) and to the becoming “witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth” in Acts 1:8. The content of their message was that the “Word of God” (Acts 13:46) no doubt referred to the teaching of Jesus and the gospel. Not only was the message of Paul and Barnabas in line

with the Great Commission to preach the gospel and to teach the commandments of Jesus, but, through their going out and preaching “the Word of God,” churches were started and disciples were made. Paul and Barnabas went to the Gentiles or to “all nations” (Matt 28:19) in order to “bring salvation to the end of the earth” (Acts 13:47). The actions of Paul and Barnabas, along with Peter and the others, demonstrated the Great Commission. They preached the gospel, people believed in Jesus and were baptized, and many became disciples of Christ through their obedience to the Great Commission. To be missional and live obedient lives must include going out into the community with the gospel message with the intent to make disciples. The first-century church and their missionary endeavors teach Christians today how to live out the Great Commission in a faith community and live missional lives. Paul’s letters to the churches further develop an understanding of the Great Commission in present faith communities.

In Ephesians, Paul gives the church their most direct instruction in how the Great Commission is to be lived out in the context of real life. Ephesians 4 calls the church to uphold the unity of the body of Christ, and the church should do all it can to “to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph 4:3). This call for unity by Paul is consistent with the unity found in the first church in Jerusalem in Acts 2:42-47. Paul calls for unity but not uniformity. Jesus intends for Christians to be unique while remaining unified in the mission of the church and in the identity of what it means to be a disciple of Christ. Klyne Snodgrass makes a similar point: “Paul’s concern for unity is balanced by an emphasis in diversity and responsibility for each person.”²⁹ A primary

²⁹Klyne Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 200.

theme in Ephesians is that Jesus has equipped his followers with the gifts needed to build up the body of Christ (Eph 4:11-16). A body that is built up is one that is not “tossed” or “carried about by every wind of doctrine”; further, it is “to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ” (Eph 4:14-15). The connection to the Great Commission is the process of building up the body and the making of disciples. A disciple is one who uses his or her gifts to serve God’s kingdom. The body of Christ and God’s kingdom are the same in many ways. The oneness of the body and the diversity of its gifts challenges Christian individualism. John Stott makes the point that the purpose of the many gifts are for the benefit of building up the one body.³⁰ There is no mention of the gifts as being a benefit solely for the individual. So much of how Christians see the church is how it can benefit them, not how each one can use his or her talents for the one body. Christians often view the body of Christ as many, not as one. What is revealed in Paul’s description of “gift” in Ephesians 4 further details what it means to be a disciple and gives clarity to what Jesus meant when he told his followers to “make disciples . . . teaching them to observe all” that he commanded (Matt 28:19-20). Paul continues the conceptual metaphor of the church as a body for the purpose of making mature disciples of Christ throughout his letters to the churches.

Ministry Leadership As It Relates to the Great Commission

What kind of leader is a Great Commission leader? Paul is greatly qualified to be a model of Great Commission leadership and is therefore worthy to be studied. In

³⁰John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians: God’s New Society*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1979), 171.

most cases, he should be imitated. In Acts 20, Paul calls a meeting with the elders at the church in Ephesus in which he recounts his missionary journey (Acts 20:17). In his discourse with the church leaders, he describes his leadership and issues a challenge to them (Acts 20:17-38). He puts his reputation and his work out to the elders to be tested as a standard. Paul is on his way back to Jerusalem, and he wants to hurry and get there “if possible, on the day of Pentecost” (Acts 20:16). Paul knows he may not be back to see them again and so these parting words to these leaders might be his last with them. Paul is reminiscent about his affection for them, reminding them of the time he spent with them and the humble attitude with which he ministered (Acts 20:18-19). In the midst of persecution, Paul preached boldly “repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:19-21). He did not fail to preach to everyone possible because he taught “publicly and from house to house” (Acts 20:20). Paul also challenged the elders to be bold, strong overseers and to “be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock” (Acts 20:28). Paul is saddened by his departure, but, in his departure, he braces them with these words of direction: “I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified” (Acts 20:32). Paul points them to God as the one who will build them up to be the leaders God intends. Paul reminds the elders of how he did not lift himself up to remind them that their job as leaders and overseers was going to require effort (Acts 20:35). As an overseer, one is challenged to be focused on the job to protect and serve faithfully. The self-sacrifice that Paul demonstrated and with which he challenged the elders of the church at Ephesus

should also challenge church leaders today. Pastors are to lead with humility. They must remember that they are to serve and protect the church from enemies from within as well as from the outside. They must rely on God and be faithful to the end.

In Romans 12:1, living lives for God is described as an act of worship with which God is pleased. Paul writes, “Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship” (Rom 12:1). Paul describes the Christian life as a life of obedience to God’s plan. As Christians live out God’s plan, their lives are being consumed. They are to spend their lives and creative energies to accomplish things in this world that bring glory to God. At the end of their lives, after they have used up all their time and energy, what will they have to show for it? Will God be pleased with them? Great commission leadership is about sacrifice and being faithful to the mission of God to preach the gospel (2 Tim 2:1-7). Paul modeled Great Commission leadership and called on those who followed after him to do the same. He called them to fight the good fight and keep the faith so that, in the end, they would have an eternal reward for their labors (2 Tim 4:7-8).

Conclusion

In order to achieve a successful change in attitude and practice towards the Great Commission at First Baptist Catoosa, it is going to take biblical leadership. Laying the foundations for changes must start with Scripture and understanding one’s purpose. The purpose of the church and the Christian life is to bring glory and honor to God by fulfilling his mission to see his name praised by all nations. This mission is accomplished by making disciples of all nations. Jesus’ life and ministry is an example of someone who

had a passion for the mission of God and for his disciples. Jesus taught his disciples how they were to live and fulfill the Great Commission. His disciples in turn planted churches throughout the Middle East and Eastern Asia. Those churches spread the gospel throughout the world. The work is not finished, and there are still people who need to hear the gospel message of how they can experience new life through a relationship with Jesus Christ and become a child of God.

CHAPTER 3

CHURCH MOVEMENTS THAT HAVE INFLUENCED
THE LOCAL CHURCH'S VIEWS ON
THE GREAT COMMISSION

After leading a Bible lesson on the Great Commission, a church member asked, “Why should we be concerned about the salvation of people in other countries? Shouldn’t we just focus our ministries on the lost people around us?” Her question was more of a statement than a question. The woman was expressing a lack of understanding of the Great Commission. The mission God reveals is his concern for the entire world and the Great Commission is a reflection of that same concern. William Carey states, in his famous *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*, that “I question whether all are justified in staying here, while so many are perishing without means of grace in other lands.”¹ Carey's statement reveals the heart of God and is an appropriate answer to the church member’s question.

The Great Commission has had a long history in the local church. The church has not always had a proper focus on the mission or an understanding of its meaning. The church has never abandoned the Great Commission, but it has gone through times where

¹William Carey, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* (Dallas: Criswell, 1988), as quoted in Daniel L. Akin, *10 Who Changed the World* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2012), 3.

its focus has not been on fulfilling the Great Commission.² In his book, *10 Who Changed the World*, Akin comments,

The words found in Matthew 28 constitute the last words of Jesus in this Gospel. They are intended to be lasting words and the final marching orders for Christ's followers until he returns. I once heard Adrian Rogers in a sermon say that in this passage we find the "heartbeat of the Son of God." Here we are told that "we are all to bring all men by all means to Jesus by any cost."³

The Great Commission should change the lives of Christians and how they look at their purpose for living, which is to help bring people to Christ and to disciple them.

History of the Great Commission in the Local Church

The past always impacts the future. When one looks into past movements and ministry methods one can see the impact they have had on current church ministries and future ones. The impact on the church is not limited to church movements in North America. Overseas missions have influenced the church as well. The revival movements of the 17 and 1800s still have their influence in today's church culture.

In the seventeenth century there were many men of God who were influential to the missionary movements. These include Jonathan Edwards in the first great awakening, the Moravians, and John Wesley. Even though these men were instrumental in carrying on the gospel of Christ, it is William Carey who received the honor of being called "the 'Father of Protestant Missions' even though others had engaged in such

²Douglas A. Sweeney, "Introduction," in *The Great Commission Evangelical and the History of World Missions*, ed. Martin I. Kaulber, Scott M. Manetsch (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Academic, 2008),

³Akin, *10 Who Changed the World*, 3.

missions earlier.”⁴ Carey, after being rebuked by a respected minister, was not deterred in his mission to reach people for Christ. He wrote, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use means for the Conversion of the Heathens*,⁵ which discusses the Great Commission text in Matthew 28:16-20 and still has benefit for churches today. In his enquiry, Carey states,

This commission was as extensive as possible, and laid them under obligation to disperse themselves into every country to the habitable globe, and preach to all inhabitants, without exception, or limitation. They accordingly went forth in obedience to the command, and the power of God evidently wrought with them. Many attempts of the same kind have been made since their day, and which have been attended with various success; but the work has not been taken up, or prosecuted of late years (except by a few individuals) with that zeal and perseverance with which the primitive Christians went about it. It seems as if many thought the commission was sufficiently put in execution by what the apostles and others have done; that we have enough to do to attend to the salvation of our own countrymen; and that, if God intends the salvation of the heathen, he will some way or other bring them to the gospel, or the gospel to them. It is thus that multitudes sit at ease, and give themselves no concern about the far greater part of the fellow sinners, who to this day, are lost in ignorance and idolatry.⁶

Carey understood the meaning of the Great Commission and was willing to sacrifice his life so that others would know the love and saving grace of God. Michael Wilder and Shane Parker, in *Transfomission: Making Disciples through Short-Term Missions*, remind Christians that “as we actively participate in spreading the story of Christ’s redemptive work, we are also somehow transformed in the process. Just as William Carey’s attitudes, values, and life purpose were changed when he engaged a

⁴Paul Pierson, “A History of Transformation,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, 4th ed., ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009), 282.

⁵Carey, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*, 2.

⁶*Ibid.*, 2-3.

nation with the gospel, so it will be for us as we begin to fulfill the Great Commission of Jesus.”⁷ The church needs to have the same willingness to sacrifice so that others know the love and saving grace of God.

Overseas Missionary Movements

In 1806, there was a group of college students at Williams College in Massachusetts who were concerned about foreign missions. These four men were caught in a thunderstorm and decided to gather under a haystack to pray. Since that time their meeting has been referred to as “The Haystack Prayer Meeting.” This prayer meeting was very influential in the overseas missionary movement. These young men developed the first student missionary society in America and were the first student volunteers for foreign missions.⁸

Kenneth Scott Latourette, the foremost historian of the Church’s worldwide expansion, states, “It was from this haystack meeting that the foreign missionary movement of the churches of the United States had an initial impulse.”⁹ One of the movements that had a far-reaching influence on the North American church is the Student Volunteer Movement, which has a distant connection to the 1806 Haystack Prayer Meeting.¹⁰ Fred Beuttler, in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*,

⁷Michael S. Wilder and Shane W. Parker, *Transformission: Making Disciples through Short-Term Missions* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Academic, 2010), 3.

⁸David M. Howard, “Student Power in World Missions,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009), 307.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid.

observes that “in 1886, at one of Moody’s conferences, one hundred students pledged to become missionaries. Princeton collegian Robert P. Wilder, the son of missionaries in India, was delegated to recruit additional workers, and two years later, in 1888 the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions (SVM) was formed.”¹¹ The Student Volunteer Movement continues to be an influence on students today. David M. Howard, in his book *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, explains that in the 1980s the Caleb Project was started to help university students be committed to world evangelism:¹²

At the turn of the millennium, yet another band of student leaders formed a mobilization effort called “The Traveling Team” which has continued to challenge students on hundreds university campuses every year. Such student mission mobilization has begun to flourish as well in Korea, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and parts of Latin America.

Today’s students have the great privilege of standing on the shoulders of those who have gone before. With thanksgiving for what God has done in the past, they can look ahead to the future with confidence that God has greatly used student movements to evangelize the world.¹³

Each summer college students have the chance to go out and do local and foreign missions through different campus ministries. The International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention sends out recent college graduates through the Journeyman program. This enables college students to continue doing what the Student Volunteer Movement did in the earlier centuries.

¹¹Fred W. Buettler, “Evangelical Missions in Modern America,” in *The Great Commission-Evangelical and the History of World Missions*, ed. Martin I. Kaulber and Scott M. Manetsch (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Academic, 2008), 114.

¹²David M. Howard, “Student Power in World Missions,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, 4th ed., ed. Steven C. Hawthorne and Ralph D. Winter (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009), 311.

¹³*Ibid.*

The Great Awakening had a significant influence on the local church and the overseas missionary movement. It took place in the early eighteenth century and consisted of efforts to spread the gospel that resulted in widespread revival.¹⁴ The impact of revival on the church was seen in the Great Revival. Jonathan Edwards writes about revival in his church: “Private religious meetings are greatly multiplied. The public assemblies (especially lectures) are much better attended; and our auditors were never so attentive and serious. There is indeed an extraordinary appetite after ‘the sincere milk of the word.’”¹⁵

During the First Great awakening, new churches emerged that had “new forms of fellowship. Individual freedom and fraternal union went hand in hand. The new sense of brotherhood and sisterhood was expressed in new church covenants.”¹⁶ The itinerant preacher became commonplace in the First Great Awakening.¹⁷ McLoughlin writes that “throughout the colonies the awakening began when itinerant, though ordained, ministers offered new styles of preaching and a new rhetoric that ostensibly called people back to God but in effect redefined their relationship to him.”¹⁸ One well-known itinerant preacher was the Reverend George Whitefield.¹⁹ McLoughlin reminds us that “perhaps the major contributing force to the general outbreak of the itinerant aspect of the

¹⁴Sweeney, “Introduction,” 4.

¹⁵Jonathan Edwards, *Jonathan Edwards Revival* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1999), 82.

¹⁶William G. McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings and Reform: Chicago History of American Religion*, ed. Martin E. Marty (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), 59.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 60.

¹⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 61.

awakening was the Reverend George Whitefield, who had already established a reputation as a sensational preacher in England.”²⁰

The traditional method of evangelism is to have spring and fall revivals that include having an evangelist to come and preach. This is similar to the itinerant preacher in the Great Awakenings. Many churches schedule their events around these revivals. This method has not been successful at making disciples and growing the congregation in many churches today. It has not had the success it once did. For the supporters of this method who want to follow tradition and the people who have seen success in the past, revival meetings are something that they want to see again.

The Revival Movement’s Impact on the Church

The revival movement is a “movement within the Christian tradition which emphasizes the appeal of religion to the emotional and affectional nature of individuals as well as to their intellectual and rational nature.”²¹ Charles Finney, in *Experiencing Revival*, defines revival as “the renewed conviction of sin and repentance, followed by an intense desire to live in obedience to God. It is giving up one’s will to God in deep humility.”²² Finney states that “a revival can be expected when Christians are willing to make the sacrifices necessary to carry it on. They must be willing to sacrifice their feelings, business, and time to help the work.”²³ Revival may be expected but true revival

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), s.v. “Revivalism,” by Melvin E. Dieter.

²²Charles Finney, *Experiencing Revival* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1984), 12.

²³Ibid., 21.

only happens at the will of God in his releasing of the Holy Spirit at the time of his choosing.

In the seventeenth century, it was believed that Reformation faith highlighted “personal commitment and obedience to Christ and a life regenerated by the indwelling Holy Spirit. They also emphasized witness and missions as a primary responsibility of the individual Christian and the church.”²⁴ This revival movement was important in expanding the church.²⁵ McLoughlin explains that “when Jonathan Edwards described the outbreak of revivalistic fervor in his parish in 1734 as ‘a surprising work of God,’ he spoke for most Americans.”²⁶ Edwards was astonished when God extended forgiveness and salvation to thousands in 1734.²⁷

In the eighteenth century, “the appeal for a personal, public response to the gospel that came to characterize revivalism sprang up almost simultaneously in both England and America.”²⁸ Many churches today call for a public response to their acceptance of Christ by coming forward in the church. Baptism is an ordinance of the church that is a public expression of one’s faith in Christ.

Defining the Great Commission

The Great Commission is defined by DeYoung and Gilbert as follows: “[T]he mission of the church is to go into the world and make disciples by declaring the gospel

²⁴Dieter, “Revivalism.”

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings and Reform*, 45.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸Dieter, “Revivalism.”

of Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit and gathering the disciples into churches, that they might worship and obey Jesus Christ now and in eternity to the glory of God the Father.”²⁹ Mare defines the Great Commission as “the command of the Lord to carry and proclaim his gospel to all nations.”³⁰ The Great Commission is the mission of the Church to advance the kingdom of God by proclaiming the gospel message to all nations and making disciples from all nations.

Methodologies for a Great Commission Church

The methodologies for organizing the church and its ministries have taken many forms. These methodologies have come from many movements that have started with much excitement only to slow down and another movement start. The church today needs to learn from these movements, good and bad, to formulate a structure that can be used in their community to fulfill the Great Commission.

Church Growth Movement

Another influential movement is the Church Growth movement that originated from Donald McGavran’s work overseas.³¹ McGavran was a missionary to India.³² He was an overseer of missionaries, hospitals, schools, and evangelism.³³ He asked the question How does one account for growth and non-growth in identical situations where

²⁹Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert, *What is the Mission of the Church?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 241.

³⁰Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), s.v. “The Great Commission,” by W. Harold Mare.

³¹Thom S. Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth: History, Theology, and Principles* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1993), 31.

³²*Ibid.*

presumably missionaries have been equally faithful?³⁴ This is still a question that is asked when doing church growth research. Thom Rainer reminds us that “had it not been for the dismal outlook of his missionary work, the Church Growth Movement as we know it probably would not have been conceived.”³⁵ MacGavran saw that there were opportunities for evangelism that were not being seized daily. This gave him a sense of urgency, which led him to do church planting.³⁶

The Church Growth Movement has made many contributions in helping the church fulfill the Great Commission. Asking the question Why is a church not growing? comes from the Church Growth movement. This question has helped churches make changes and develop ministry strategies to fulfill the Great Commission. If a church is not growing, then asking why will help the church to identify reasons why they are not growing and make changes that will help them to fulfill the Great Commission. Towns, Wagner, and Rainer observe that

[t]he Church Growth Movement seeks to find the answers to the obvious question: Why? . . . We believe God wants his lost sheep found, and he wants every church to be winning lost people to Christ, adding them to their fold, and consequently growing. Healthy churches should be growing. If a church is not growing, it is sick for some reason or another. If it is, let’s find out what is wrong and, if the particular disease is curable, let’s cure the illness!³⁷

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid., 30.

³⁶Ibid., 31.

³⁷Elmer Towns, C. Peter Wagner, and Thomas S. Rainer, *The Everychurch Guide to Growth* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1998), 33.

The question “Why?” makes the assumption that a healthy church will grow and will then begin to fulfill the Great Commission. If a church is not growing, then it is not healthy and there is a need to determine what is stopping the church from growing. Hemphill, in *The Antioch Effect: 8 Characteristics of Highly Effective Churches*, states that “healthy churches are committed to building kingdom community relationship The church has the opportunity to reach and assimilate vast numbers of hurting and lonely people if we truly become the family we are called to be.”³⁸

Church Health Movement

The church health movement extends from the Church Growth Movement with a focus on making a church healthy. The belief is that if a church is healthy it will naturally experience proper growth. In Matthew 16:18, Jesus says, “I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it” (Matt 16:18). In the Scriptures, Jesus himself establishes his church, and he makes the promise that he will be the one who builds his church. Since Jesus keeps his promises, Christians can know that the church will grow to its “natural God-given size.”³⁹ If a church is fulfilling the Great Commission, it will grow. Hemphill further writes,

Thus we can say that church growth is at once natural and supernatural. It is supernatural because God gives the growth and it is natural because the church is created as a living body to grow. The church must grow in such a manner that it fulfills the Great Commission in its own community. I have come to believe that church growth is natural and that artificial measures must be taken to keep a church from growing.⁴⁰

³⁸Ken Hemphill, *The Antioch Effect: 8 Characteristics of Highly Effective Churches* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1994), 105.

³⁹Ken Hemphill, *The Bonsai Theory of Church Growth* (Nashville: Broadman, 1991), 14.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 15.

Ed Stetzer, in his paper “The Evolution of Church Growth, Church Health, and the Missional Church: An Overview of the Church Growth Movement from, and Back to, Its Missional Roots,” writes that “the most significant of all Church Health tools is the Natural Church Development (NCD).”⁴¹ Natural Church Development helps the church diagnose its internal problems that have prevented it from growing. “NCD, successful pastors, and the Church Health Movement in general, focus largely on ecclesiology in order to grow.”⁴²

One of the criticisms of the Church Growth Movement is that because a church is growing does not necessarily mean the church is making disciples. The Church Health Movement addresses the ecclesiology of the church, which helps the church become more in line biblically by addressing the church’s internal problems. It is a major contribution to helping the church fulfill the Great Commission.

Missional Movement

The missional church movement focuses on living as a Christian. The desire of this movement is to influence the Christian community to move out into the culture to impact the culture. The church is to help train and equip the Christians to be authentic witnesses in the secular culture. Alan Roxburgh and M. Scott Boren, in their book *Introducing the Missional Church What it is, Why it Matters, How to Become One*, write that “on the missional church journey we want to ‘pitch our tent’ beside the people in our

⁴¹Ed Stetzer, “The Evolution of Church Growth, Church Health, and the Missional Church: An Overview of the Church Growth Movement from, and Back to, Its Missional Roots,” accessed November 11, 2012, http://www.effectivechurch.com/fileadmin/free_resource/word_docs/ChurchGrowth-stetzer.pdf, 14.

⁴²Ibid., 15.

neighborhoods and communities as Jesus did (see John 1:1-14), not as a program but as a way of being the church.”⁴³ Christians need to be out in the community, living, working, and ministering to others around them, not separating themselves from the lost. Boren, in his quest for a more authentic small group experience, makes this statement: “I had to find out how to live in community with others in a way that impacts the world around me.”⁴⁴

Dave and Jon Ferguson explain that a “missional movement begins by becoming an apprentice of Jesus.”⁴⁵ The word “apprentice” is defined as “one bound by indenture to serve another for a prescribed period with a view to learning an art or trade and one who is learning by practical experience under skilled workers a trade, art, or calling.”⁴⁶ Ferguson and Ferguson explain further that

[t]he very first action that Jesus took to start his movement was to recruit twelve apprentices. “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of men” (Matt. 4:19). Jesus called twelve men into an apprenticeship and then taught them the basics of his message and his ministry so that they could do the same things he had done. Two thousand years later the Jesus movement has reached billions and billions of people, and it continues to impact new generations with an unchanging message. Through apprenticeships, people are empowered to reach their leadership capacity and influence as many others as possible to accomplish the mission.⁴⁷

⁴³Alan J. Roxburgh and M. Scott Boren, *Introducing the Missional Church: What it is, Why it matters, How to Become One* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 32.

⁴⁴M. Scott Boren, *Missional Small Groups: Becoming a Community that Makes a Difference in the World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 17-18.

⁴⁵Dave Ferguson and Jon Ferguson, *Exponential: How You and Your Friends Can Start a Missional Church Movement* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2010), 44.

⁴⁶*Merriam-Webster*, “Apprentice,” accessed January 27, 2013, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/apprentice>.

⁴⁷Ferguson and Ferguson, *Exponential*, 44.

Church leaders need to strive to be more like Jesus. It is important for them to spend as much time as possible studying God's Word, spend time in prayer, and listen to what God says. To be a missional church leader and start a missional church movement one has to dream big.⁴⁸ When leaders dream big it changes the questions they ask, their prayers, others, and themselves.⁴⁹

Roxborough and Boren explain that "all the church does and is should live out God's life in the midst of the world. This includes worship, preaching, communion, loving one another, social justice, caring for the poor, and sharing Jesus's gospel. Being missional is about all of it, not part. This is the missional imagination."⁵⁰ The missional church movement should push church leaders to reach out to the community around them, see the need, and develop a vision to reach their community. This in turn encourages the church to engage in the Great Commission.

Emerging Church Movement

The emerging church movement seeks to engage the culture where they are, but some of its views challenge traditionally-held church doctrines. Mohler explains that "[t]he 'Emerging Church' has become a focus of intense evangelical interest, as the nascent movement has grown in both size and influence."⁵¹ Emergent critics believe that

⁴⁸Ibid., 46.

⁴⁹Ibid., 46-49.

⁵⁰Boren, *Missional Small Groups*, 54.

⁵¹R. Albert Mohler, "What Should We Think of the Emerging Church?" accessed October 10, 2012, <http://www.albertmohler.com/2005/06/29/what-should-we-think-of-the-emerging-church-part-one/>.

the emergent church is just another fad.⁵² Epistemology, which is from the Greek words *epistēmē* and *epistanai*, meaning “knowledge” and “to understand” respectively,⁵³ is used to describe the views of some of the emerging church leaders.⁵⁴ Mohler also makes clear that

the very nomenclature of the movement betrays a sense that evangelicalism must be cast aside in order for something new, radical, and more authentic to emerge. “For almost everyone within the movement,” Carson argues, “this works out in an emphasis on feelings and affections over against linear thought and rationalities; on experience over against truth; on inclusion over against exclusion; on participation over individualism and the heroic loner.”⁵⁵

Mark Driscoll, in his article “Navigating the Emerging Church,” defines four types of emerging churches.⁵⁶ Driscoll explains that there are three types of churches that “are not interested in reconsidering major Christian doctrines such as those that view the Bible as God’s Word, God as triune, Jesus as God and the only means of salvation, humanity as sinful, all sex outside of heterosexual married (including homosexuality) as sin, and heaven and hell as literal, conscious and eternal.”⁵⁷ Driscoll calls the fourth group the “emergent liberals” and refers to them as being on the theological fringe of

⁵²Jason Byassee, “The Emerging Model: A Visit to Jacob’s Well,” *Christian Century*, September 19, 2006, 21.

⁵³*Merriam-Webster*, “Epistemology,” accessed January 27, 2012, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/epistemology>.

⁵⁴Mohler, “What Should We Think of the Emerging Church?”

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 2.

⁵⁶Mark Driscoll, “Navigating the Emerging Church,” accessed November 11, 2012, <http://theresurgence.com/2011/03/14/navigating-the-emerging-church>.

orthodoxy to heresy that crosses the line by critiquing key evangelical doctrines such as the Bible as authoritative, divine revelation, God as Trinity, the sinfulness of human nature, the deity of Jesus Christ, Jesus' substitutionary death on the cross to pay the penalty for sin, the exclusivity of Jesus for salvation, the sinfulness of homosexuality, sex outside of heterosexual marriage, and the conscious, eternal torments of hell.⁵⁸

There are some positive and negative aspects to the Emerging Church Movement that one can learn and utilize in his or her church. One concern that churches today have about the emerging church is the place of theology in the movement.⁵⁹ Another concern with the movement is that it refuses to answer important questions related to the gospel such as the exclusivity of the gospel, the authoritative character of Scripture as written revelation, and homosexuality.⁶⁰ These negative aspects have led some mature, biblically-sound Christians to stay away. Jacob's Well (JW) is an example of an emerging church in Midtown, Kansas City Missouri, which attracts about 1,000 people each week to its services.⁶¹ Andy Crouch of *Christianity Today*, who is a critic of the emerging church movement, "praises JW as the 'best singing white church I've ever been to.' JW's effort to make music participatory rather than performance-based struck a

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Kevin Ward, "It might be Emerging, but Is It Church?" *Stimulus: The New Zealand Journal of Christian Thought & Practice* 17 (November 2009): 5.

⁶⁰Albert Mohler, "'A Generous Orthodoxy': Is it Orthodox?" accessed December 12, 2012, <http://www.albertmohler.com/2005/06/20/a-generous-orthodoxy-is-it-orthodox/>.

⁶¹Byassee, "The Emerging Model," 20.

chord with Crouch, who also signaled his awareness that JW is rooted in its own particular neighborhood and could not be easily replicated elsewhere.”⁶²

John Burke, in his book *No Perfect People Allowed creating a Come As You Are Culture in the Church*, shows us a more positive side to the Emerging Church Movement. He explains that the

emerging generations, like never before, crave this sense of community inside a spiritual family. If they don't experience hope for authentic relational support, I don't have how hip the service, or how rippin' the music, or how vintage the vibe...they won't stick. The challenge for leaders is first to learn how to live in the community with others, and then to provide ways to ensure that nobody stands alone.⁶³

This reminds Christians that they should be more relational when new people come to the church and provide an atmosphere of acceptance. Mark Devine explains that “many doctrine-friendly emerging churches attempt to provide a safe place for unbelievers while maintaining covenant-shaped, church discipline-regulated membership within their congregations.”⁶⁴ Burke reiterates to the leadership of churches that “the challenge ahead of us has to do with culture creation: creating a come-as-you-are culture that reflects biblical priorities for the church, functioning as Christ re-presented in community. Only then will we help people overcome their struggles with Trust, Tolerance, Truth,

⁶²Ibid., 21.

⁶³John Burke, *No Perfect People Allowed: Creating a Come As You Are Culture in the Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 46.

⁶⁴Mark Devine, “The Emerging Church: One Movement—Two Streams” in *Evangelicals Engaging Emergent: A Discussion of the Emergent Church Movement*, ed. William Henard and Adam Greenway (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2009).

Brokenness and Aloneness.”⁶⁵ It is important for people to know of God’s goodness.

Burke adds that he is

convinced that if people are not better persuaded of God’s goodness, they will never take steps toward trusting him. But if we can convince them to take steps toward trusting him, he will meet them and reveal more of himself. Their spiritual eyes will begin to see. So a large part of creating a culture of hope has to do with painting accurate, compelling pictures of the loving, compassionate nature of God toward hurting, wayward people.⁶⁶

The Emerging church movement is not for every church. The part of the movement that is embracing to others as they are, teaching them the goodness and love of Christ and leading them to a personal relationship with Christ, can be and should be practiced by every member of every church.

A Simple Discipleship Process

The Great Commission gives the church its mission, which includes making disciples. Chuck Lawless points out that “those who obey the Great Commission make disciples through evangelism, leading to baptism and teaching that results in obedience.”⁶⁷ The Great Commission is twofold—Christians are to baptize disciples and teach them (Matt 28:19-20). Lawless explains that “baptizing represented conversion and commitment to a crucified and resurrected Christ (Rom.6:3-4) [while] teaching was the task of instructing. Teaching was not limited to imparting information; assumed in the

⁶⁵Burke, *No Perfect People Allowed*, 47.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 212.

⁶⁷Chuck Lawless, *Discipled Warriors: Growing Healthy Churches that are Equipped for Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002), 46.

teaching was a command *to obey* all that Jesus taught. Head knowledge was to become heart knowledge and changed lifestyle.”⁶⁸

If a church fulfills the Great Commission then it will make disciples. Churches today have calendars that are packed with activities to bring people in but are not designed to disciple them. This makes it necessary for churches to develop a simple discipleship plan that will not only bring people in but help them grow spiritually.

Characteristics of a Disciple

According to the Webster’s dictionary a disciple is defined as “one who accepts and assists in spreading the doctrines of another: as one of the twelve in the inner circle of Christ's followers according to the Gospel accounts.”⁶⁹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer describes discipleship in his book, *The Cost of Discipleship*, as “the adherence to Christ, and, because Christ is the object of that adherence, it must take the form of discipleship.”⁷⁰

Lawless states that “biblical discipleship is a *lifestyle* best described in Jesus’ words: ‘A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, *will be like his teacher*’ (Luke 6:40, emphasis added; see Matt. 9:9; 19:21; Mark 1:17, 2:14, 8:34; Luke 5:27; John 1:43). A disciple is a committed follower who seeks to model his life after his teacher.”⁷¹ A true disciple wants to spend time with his mentor, the one

⁶⁸Ibid., 45.

⁶⁹*Merriam-Webster*, “Disciple,” accessed January 27, 2013, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/disciple>.

⁷⁰Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Touchstone, 1995), 59.

⁷¹Lawless, *Discipled Warriors* 45.

who is training him, to get the task set before him completed. Jesus is the mentor and Christians should be eager to be disciples of Jesus.

Brad House explains that “by keeping our eyes on the vision of being disciples in community, we remain focused on Jesus, following him and enjoying the fruit of being his disciples.”⁷² Robert E. Coleman, in his little book *Master Plan of Evangelism*, reminds Christians that Jesus’ “concern was not with programs to reach the multitudes, but with men whom the multitudes would follow. Remarkable as it may seem, Jesus started to gather these men before he ever organized an evangelistic campaign or even preached a sermon in public. Men were to be his method of winning the world to God.”⁷³

Discipleship is about being called by Jesus to live out his vision of the advancement of the kingdom of God. Bonhoeffer explains that “when we are called to follow Christ, we are summoned to an exclusive attachment to his person.”⁷⁴ In Acts 1:3, Luke speaks about the forty days after the resurrection and states that Jesus was “speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3). Looking further in Acts, Luke records Jesus words to the disciples concerning the Great Commission: “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

⁷²Brad House, *Community: Taking Your Small Group off Life Support* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 93.

⁷³Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Revell, 1993), 27.

⁷⁴Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 59.

Church Structure That Develops Disciples

Disciples are developed through small groups, including Sunday School and cell groups. Hemphill observes that “once a church reaches people through the front door of worship, the church still must assimilate them into the small group structure. Otherwise they will exit through the back door of apathy.”⁷⁵ Hemphill states that the “purpose of Sunday School is to fulfill the Great Commission.”⁷⁶ He says that the primary Great Commission tool is Sunday school.⁷⁷ He gives eight reasons, when implementing a Great Commission plan, as to why one should use Sunday School in this way.⁷⁸ Some of these reasons are that “[t]he Sunday School has the organizational structure to hold together the three elements of the Great Commission—evangelizing, assimilating, and discipling A Great Commission focus gives life to the Sunday School and thus counteracts stagnancy”⁷⁹ and a “Great Commission focus gives your Sunday School a clear purpose.”⁸⁰

A New Members class can assist in assimilating new members into the church and Sunday School. New Members classes are held either during Sunday School for an agreed upon time or can be done during an afternoon, usually on Sunday afternoon following morning worship. Topics during these classes cover the direction of the

⁷⁵Ken Hemphill, *Revitalizing the Sunday Morning Dinosaur: A Sunday School Growth Strategy for the 21st Century* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1996), 21.

⁷⁶Ibid., 4.

⁷⁷Ibid., 39.

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹Ibid., 39-41.

⁸⁰Ibid., 43.

ministry opportunities of the church, the ministry context of the church, stewardship, and the ordinances of the church. It explains to the new members what is expected of them as a member. Some churches have classes for people who are interested in learning about the church before they join.

Chuck Lawless, in his book *Membership Matters*, states that the membership classes that were studied for his book stressed that membership brings responsibility, and “members learn they must preserve the unity of the church, regularly attend its meetings, serve in its ministries, contribute a tithe for its work, guard its name, and pray for and support its leaders.”⁸¹ New members classes should empower the congregation to do the work of the Great Commission.

Cell groups meet outside the church usually on a different night than Sunday, or they can meet during the day. These are normally held at someone’s house but some have met in coffee shops or restaurants. Brad House says that when developing small groups, “we want to develop a clear vision for community groups from our convictions and build communities toward that goal.”⁸² He reminds small group leaders that “if we begin with a picture of community that is formed out of the image of God and who we are in light of the cross, then we are sure to meet the particular needs of the church.”⁸³

Hemphill explains that whether one’s church has a traditional Sunday School or a cell group structure, it will stagnate if it does not have an evangelistic purpose

⁸¹Chuck Lawless, *Membership Matters: Insights from Effective Churches on New Member Classes and Assimilation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 75.

⁸²House, *Community*, 88.

⁸³*Ibid.*, 89.

statement.⁸⁴ He states, “Many cell-group churches have also experienced stagnation in their cell groups. The issue here isn’t Sunday School versus, small groups; the issue is the Great Commission focus versus a lack of focus. Without a Great Commission focus the church, whether organized through cells or traditional Sunday School structure, will stagnate.”⁸⁵

Another important way to develop disciples is through living in a faith community. This includes living connected lives with others in the church with like values and a common faith. House explains that “community takes sacrifice and intentionality, our view of community must be bigger than a way to belong, making church feel smaller, or closing the back door of the church. We need to see the eternal purpose in order to inspire the devotion to community that we see in Acts 2.”⁸⁶

Conclusion

In summary, the Great Commission was given to all Christians, not just to pastors, deacons, and teachers. Coleman reminds Christians that “the Great Commission of Christ given to his church summed it up in the command to ‘make disciples of every creature’ (Matt 28:19). The word here indicates that the disciples were to go out into the world and win others who would come to be what they themselves were—disciples of Christ.”⁸⁷ Coleman also states that “only as disciples are made could the other activities

⁸⁴Hemphill, *Revitalizing the Sunday Morning Dinosaur*, 41.

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶House, *Community*, 31.

⁸⁷Coleman, *Master Plan of Evangelism*, 101.

of the commission fulfill their purpose.”⁸⁸ Teaching, baptizing, and going to the ends of the earth will follow once a Christian is discipled.⁸⁹

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹Ibid.

CHAPTER 4

BUILDING A CHURCH THAT MAKES THE GREAT COMMISSION ITS PRIORITY

This ministry project was designed to develop a Great Commission culture. The sections of the project consisted of a pre-survey, post-survey, a New Member class, and enlisting small group leaders. These leaders developed ministry plans that will assist in making disciples. These sections were based on the project's four goals: (1) the congregation will know a simple, effective process for making disciples; (2) new attenders will understand and know the biblical standards for church membership; (3) church leaders will be skilled in the process of making disciples through small groups; and (4) I will become a more effective leader. Each of the elements mentioned above was instrumental in accomplishing these goals.

Timeline of the Project

The ministry project began on March 17 and continued through to July 6,

2013. A timeline for the project's sections consisted of the following:

1. Week 1—A survey of the congregation was taken to measure the congregation's attitude towards the Great Commission.
2. Weeks 1-4—I developed criteria for evaluating my current leadership, a plan for building a small group ministry, curriculum for the leadership training sessions, and a simple three-step plan for making disciples.
3. Week 5—I led a Ministry Rally to present the Great Commission vision for the church in which I introduced a simple, three-step plan for making disciples. The three

goals of the church that pertain to the Great Commission were presented to the congregation at this rally.

4. Weeks 2-4—I recruited leaders for all the small groups and read material on leading change in an organization or church.
5. Weeks 4-6—Leaders were trained in the new discipleship process on how to lead their small groups and develop a Great Commission strategy plan for their groups.
6. Week 5—I led a Ministry Rally on April 14 to present the Great Commission vision for the church in which I introduced a simple, three-step plan for making disciples. The three goals of the church that pertain to the Great Commission were presented to the congregation at this rally. I also organized a New Member’s class.
7. Week 6—The first membership class was held.
8. Weeks 7 and 8—The leaders met with their groups and made plans to implement their Great Commission strategy plan.
9. Weeks 9-12—Some small groups planned their events that were part of their Great Commission ministry strategy plan.
10. Weeks 13 and 14—I met with small group leaders to finalize the plans for their events as part of their ministry strategy.
11. Week 16—The post-survey was given to the congregation. The survey was given to the adults who attended the Sunday morning worship service. I also met with the leadership focus group to receive the results of the leadership criteria survey.

The Pre-Project Survey

The survey was composed of 17 questions (see Appendix 1). The survey was designed to measure the congregation’s knowledge of the Great Commission, the mission of the church, and their understanding of discipleship. The first three questions were biographical in nature. They were used to determine the different views based on gender and age. Questions 4, 5, 6, and 7 allowed participants to put in their own words their understanding of how the church is to be involved in fulfilling the Great Commission, making disciples, and their knowledge of the mission of the church. For example,

question 6—What would you say is the mission of First Baptist Catoosa?—was designed to measure the participant’s knowledge of the mission of the church. Question 7—What is the church’s plan for making disciples?—was designed to determine whether or not the participant knows what the church is doing to make disciples. The last 10 questions attempted to measure one’s personal commitment to the Great Commission and one’s opinion of the church’s commitment to the Great Commission. For example, question 9 reads, “I am willing to commit to at least two hours a week to personally help another Christian become a mature believer in Christ.” The congregation was asked to respond to the question based on the Likert scale.¹

The pre-survey was administered to the church during the worship hour on March 17. The surveys were deposited by the congregation in a box in the foyer as they exited the church. Only those who were considered to be young adults or older participated.

Criteria for Developing Current Leadership

From my leadership reading, I devised criteria to measure my leadership (see Appendix 2). The criteria were presented to the small group leaders who functioned as the leadership focus group. The criteria consisted of four major areas of leadership. Each area was covered with two questions—an opinion question and a short-answer question. These questions focused on my leadership and how I have led the church toward a Great Commission focus. For example, Question 3—A leader’s success is determined by the leaders he/she has gathered around them. How well have I trained the small group leaders

¹M. K. Trochim, “Research Methods Knowledge Base: Likert Scaling,” accessed July 23, 2013, <http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/scallik.php>.

to develop a ministry plan that leads the church to fulfill the Great Commission vision?—was designed to evaluate whether the small group leaders believed they had been trained well enough to fulfill the plan to lead the church and their group to be Great Commission focused. The answers to this question was important because it allowed me to determine if more training was needed to lead the church to be a Great Commission-focused church.

Question 5—An effective leader must have the quality of character to be trusted and respected in order to be followed as a leader. How well have I demonstrated Christ like character worthy to shepherd the flock of God—specifically measures my leadership skills as pastor of the church. The overall basis for the leadership criteria was to improve my leadership skills.

Small Group Ministry Plan

The goal for our small group ministry was for the leaders to develop a master plan for a Great Commission small group ministry at the church. They also developed a small group ministry strategy for their own small group. We developed the ministry plan by working through the “Developing a Great Commission Small Group Ministry” planning guide that I wrote (see Appendix 3). The plan consisted of a three-step process that focused on three questions. Step 1 asked, “Where have we been?” In Step 1, the leaders examined what God had done in the church’s small group ministry. In Step 2, the leaders sought to answer the question, “Where do we want to go as a Great Commission church?” In Step 3, we created a ministry plan that would develop a Great Commission small group ministry. One question that we asked as a group was, “If we were successful at our mission, what would our church look like?” This question led the group to focus on what is needed to move forward and become a Great Commission church.

Our first Small Group Leadership session laid out the three-step process. In our first class exercise, the leaders were asked to look at the community for things that did not honor God. This exercise was designed to challenge the leaders to seek the sin and pain in their communities. It also helped underline the need for change. The things they listed that did not honor God were taped to a map of the city of Catoosa on the wall. I then placed a sign with the name “Jesus” on the map as the answer to the dishonoring list. I then gave a short lesson on the church’s and Christian’s roles as priests to the nations from 1 Peter 2:9 and their roles as God’s ambassadors from 2 Corinthians 5:18-21 to remind the group that their job was to intervene in this world and make an impact for God. This exercise was just one of many that helped the group connect with the importance of their roles as leaders to the community and the church. We then looked at the demographics information from the community. We also looked at the history of the yearly average Sunday school and worship attendance from the last ten years. This process allowed the church to examine when the church’s high point of growth was and what ministries the church was doing at that time.

In Session 2, the leaders looked through *On Mission* magazines for information that would help them understand their target group better and give them ideas of how to reach them. This exercise helped the leaders to begin to think strategically about reaching their target groups, and they became more aware of the *On Mission* magazine as a ministry resource.

In Session 3, the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats or SWOT analysis was introduced. A SWOT analysis is a managerial device used in strategic

planning and project management (see Appendix 4).² Ryan Goodrich, from the BusinessNewsDaily.com, states that the SWOT analysis “allows professionals to identify all of the positive and negative elements that may affect any new proposed actions. . . . The key role of SWOT is to help develop a full awareness of all factors that may affect strategic planning and decision making, a goal that can be applied to most any aspect of industry.”³ Strengths and weaknesses are for internal evaluation. I asked the question, “What are the strengths of our current small group ministry and what are the weaknesses?” The SWOT analysis helped the leaders look at what opportunities the church could take advantage of in the community and what might be threats to our small group ministries—those things that are preventing growth or stopping it altogether. The church’s organization has many factors, positive and negative, that influence the decisions that are made within the church. These factors come from external sources, like the community, and from internal sources, like different views held by particular church members that do not support the main vision of the church’s leaders.

The Great Commission Small Group Ministry planning guide is a system for the small group leaders to use to lead their ministries. This allows them to set goals and make plans for their small group ministries. This system helps the leaders stay focused on making disciples. The Great Commission Small Group Ministry planning guide consists of a ministry matrix, a goal matrix, and an event matrix (see Appendices 5, 6, and 7). The ministry matrix allowed the small group leaders to focus on the purpose of their

²Ryan Goodrich, “SWOT Analysis: Examples, Templates & Definition,” *Business News Daily*, accessed July 6, 2013, <http://www.businessnewsdaily.com/4245-swot-analysis.html>.

³Ibid.

individual ministries as well as the purpose of the church. The ministry matrix leads them through a structured format that requires them to develop a target group and a plan to reach them. The leaders listed the time that their small group meets, their leadership structure, and a purpose statement. The ministry matrix required them to develop three goals based on their SWOT analysis. The ministry matrix was to become a planning guide for the next six months to a year, then another SWOT analysis and ministry would be conducted. As the small group ministry seeks to maximize its strengths and eliminate its weaknesses, the ministry will be on a path to fulfill its purpose. The path the groups are on is one of improvement and greater effectiveness.

Steps for Making Disciples

I put together a three-step plan for making disciples that would make a Great Commission impact (see Appendix 3). We made disciples through relationships. In Step 1, we built intimacy with God through worship. We taught people how to worship God publically through the morning worship service and to have an intimate, personal worship with God. This includes introducing them to Jesus Christ by sharing the gospel. The goal was for them to have a personal relationship with Christ that is real and meaningful. In Step 2, we tried to connect others in a small group. In the small groups they learned biblical truths and connected with other believers. In Step 3, we served others with our talents and gifts. This three-step process allows the disciples' progress to be tracked. This was tracked by recording their worship attendance, Sunday School attendance, and their involvement in serving.

Project

In Weeks 2 and 3, I recruited leaders from all the small groups. This leadership group consisted of the teachers and assistant teachers from each small group who are currently meeting at our church. This leadership group included children's and youth ministry leaders as well as adult ministry leaders.

It was important to strengthen my leadership skills. I chose to strengthen my leadership skills by reading leadership books by respected authors, including prominent theologians, popular leadership authors, and secular leaders. Timothy S. Laniak, in *Shepherds after My Own Heart*, examines the concept of the shepherd metaphors found throughout the Old Testament as a means of gaining understanding of the biblical model of shepherding. One truth that I gained from Laniak's book was that as a pastor, I am a shepherd of God's flock, and, like Moses, I am God's under-shepherd who is responsible to protect, provide, and guide the flock.⁴

A leader needs to be a change agent, and the task that I have before me is to change the church from being complacent towards the Great Commission to a church that is focused on the Great Commission. John P. Kotter, in his book *Leading Change*, lists eight mistakes that leaders make in their organizations. The mistake that he listed that had the most impact on my leadership was the failure to anchor change firmly in the culture of the church.⁵ The spiritual dimension of leadership is important in my role as a leader. J. Oswald Sanders addresses the characteristics and qualities that make a good spiritual

⁴Timothy S. Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart: Pastoral Traditions and Leadership in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2006), 24.

⁵ John P. Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1996), 14.

leader. One of the qualities I learned from Sanders was that I must develop self-discipline. Sanders states, “Without this essential quality, all other gifts remain as dwarfs: they cannot grow. . . . Before we can conquer the world, we must first conquer the self.”⁶ Mohler, in his book *The Conviction to Lead*, seeks to “redefine Christian leadership.”⁷ Leaders need to lead from the conviction that their role is to persuade people to embrace the truth.⁸ As a pastor, I am a leader, not a manager.⁹

One of the popular leaders that I examined was John C. Maxwell. His book, *Developing the Leaders Around You*, inspired me to take special care in the process of developing leaders and a strategy plan for these small group leaders.¹⁰ Ed Stetzer and Thom Rainer, in their book *Transformational Church*, offer effective advice on how to become a transformational leader. In my situation, the following words were helpful in confirming and guiding my leadership: “Transformational leadership is focused on the outside of the leader’s world. . . . TC leadership is missional in perspective and action oriented.”¹¹ I am an action-oriented leader but teaching other leaders to be that way has been a challenge. Their advice helped me to lead others to be action leaders and be outward-focused.

⁶J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership: Principles of Excellence for Every Believer* (Chicago: Moody, 2007), 52.

⁷R. Albert Mohler, *The Conviction to Lead: Principles for Leadership that Matters* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House, 2012), 20.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid., 16.

¹⁰John C. Maxwell, *Developing the Leaders around You* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995).

¹¹Ed Stetzer and Thom S. Rainer, *Transformational Church: Creating a New Scorecard for Congregations* (Nashville: B&H, 2010), 76-77.

In Weeks 4 through 6, I met with leaders and trained them in the new discipleship process. It was decided that we would meet on Saturday mornings at 9:30 a.m. In session 1, I opened the training by asking the leaders, “Why is FBC Catoosa here?” We looked at Scripture from Matthew 22:37-40. These verses tell us that we exist to love God and to love others. Matthew 28:19 was studied, and we determined that we are here to make disciples of all ethnic groups.

In Week 5, I led a Ministry Rally. I described the character of the church. During the Ministry Rally, we looked at the history of the church to see how the church developed and in what mission opportunities it was involved. This rally was used to encourage the church members and to help them see what our church needs to be in the future. We want the members of FBC Catoosa to build intimacy with God through worship, connect with others in small groups, and to serve others with their talents and gifts. These three ideas were carried over to the New Members class. Two teams, the missions team and small group ministry team, were introduced during the Ministry Rally. The missions team will lead the church in developing service opportunities, and the small group ministry team will develop a small group ministry strategy and coordinate the small group’s ministry. Some of the material used in the Ministry Rally was used to develop the New Members class.

At the end of Week 6, a New Members class was held. This class was titled “The Next Step” (see Appendix 8). Deciding on a name for this class was difficult because I did not want the name of the class to limit its appeal. The class was not only for new members but for attenders and uninvolved members. Lawless, in his book *Membership Matters*, points out that most churches he surveyed did not name their

membership class “New Members Class” because that name would limit the class’s appeal.¹² Therefore, naming the class “New Members Class” would exclude those from the church who wanted to be involved in the class. According to Lawless’s research, most membership classes targeted guests, new members, uninvolved members, and long-term, involved members.¹³ In this class, I addressed two questions that are important for someone who is considering joining our church. The two questions were “Who is First Baptist Church?” and “What is next for me if I become a member?”

The class was designed to provide information to anyone who was considering joining the church, new members who recently joined, and for those who wanted to know more about the church. I introduced the church by telling them the objective of the church was to “be empowered by the Holy Spirit to share Christ with as many people as possible in our church, community, and throughout the world” (see Appendix 7). I then presented the means by which people become members of the church. The church objective and membership was taken from the original church bylaws. These statements were not known by most of the congregation and were not a directing force in their thought and practice. Reviving these statements from the bylaws helped to contextualize the history of the church. I presented a short history of the church to illustrate what the church has done in the past so that we could improve in the future. From its history, it was easy to conclude that the church was the healthiest when it was reaching out to the community through missions and proclaiming the gospel (see Appendix 7). The class further

¹²Chuck Lawless, *Membership Matters: Insights from Effective Churches on New Member Classes and Assimilation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 59.

¹³*Ibid.*, 57.

explained that the purpose of the church was to obey the Great Commandment and obey the Great Commission. Passages from Matthew, Mark, and Acts were used as a foundation to explain the purpose. The Great Commandment explains to us how we are to live. In Matthew 22:37-38, one reads, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment.”

In Matthew 22:39, Christians are told how to love others: “The second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” The Great Commandment lets Christians know how they are to see their relationship to God and their relationship with their fellow man. The Great Commission helps them understand what they are to do as believers. We looked at Matthew 28:19-20, Mark 16:15, and Acts 1:8 as the basis for the Great Commission. The Great Commission was summarized as follows: “Through the power of the Holy Spirit and the proclamation of the gospel, we are to make disciples from all ethnic groups by baptizing them and teaching them to obey all the teaching of the Bible.” This study of the Scriptures helped the class understand how we are to view the Great Commission.

A plan of discipleship was also introduced. The three-step process is a summary of what is expected from members. The first step was to “connect to God through Worship.” At this point, a presentation of the gospel and an invitation to trust Christ as Savior was given. Step 2 of the discipleship process was to “connect people to each other through missional small groups.” They were told that in order to grow in their relationships with God they should become part of a small group. A short description of what was expected in a small group was given. The third step was to “connect people to

the world through serving.” The church made a commitment to help them find their “place.” At this point, the class was given an opportunity to ask questions about the ministries of the church and then asked to check an area of service on their handouts. Our closed group discipleship ministry was introduced to the class. We call these classes Life University. The classes are not ongoing but have a specific start time and ending time. Participation in these classes requires an enrollment when the class is offered.

In weeks 7 and 8, the leaders met with their groups and made plans to implement their Great Commission strategy plan. A ministry matrix was created to be used by the small group leaders. The ministry matrix was used as a guide to help small group leaders develop a ministry plan that consists of events and goals based on the group’s purpose. Each group’s ultimate purpose was to develop disciples. The ministry matrix motivated each group to name their small group and to describe the people that each small group was targeting for their ministry. Then the small group leaders were asked to list the current leaders or teachers and how they fit into the current leadership. The ministry matrix urged the leaders to look forward and envision what they saw the group looking like in six months to a year. The ministry matrix included three goals that each small group determined.

A goal matrix was developed to be used after the ministry matrix was completed (see Appendix 6). A goal matrix was completed for each goal that was agreed upon in the ministry matrix. The goal matrix took each goal and started with stating the goal. Each goal needed to connect to the purpose of the whole ministry. One important question on the goal matrix was how the goal aided in accomplishing the vision of the ministry. The purpose of the goal matrix was to state a goal, to make an evaluation of the

progress of the goal, and to list actions needed to accomplish the stated goal. An event or activity matrix was developed for each event or activity to accomplish each goal (see Appendix 7).

In Weeks 9 through 12, small groups planned their events or activities by using the event matrix. The event/activity matrix was a planning guide that was used to plan an event based off of each goal from the goal matrix. It helped expand the activity that was attached to the goal. The first item that the event/activity matrix established was who was sponsoring the event. A description of the event, including the event date, time, and location, were then determined and placed on the church calendar. The event/activity matrix helped determine the estimated cost of the event, number of workers needed, and number in attendance at the event. Some of the events will be ongoing. For example, if the goal was to promote more fellowship, then the event could be to have a coffee shop that allowed people to socialize with others coming to church. This event would fit into the event/activity matrix by determining when the ongoing date, time, and location would be, such as Sunday mornings at 10:00 a.m. in the foyer. The estimated cost would include chairs, tables, coffee, and snacks. The chairs and tables would not be an ongoing cost. The event/activity matrix was designed to be a guide to fulfill the goals that help accomplish the overall ministry plan to make disciples.

In Weeks 13 and 14, I met with the small group leaders to complete their event plans that were a part of their ministry matrixes. The expectation for this meeting was that the leaders would have already met with their small groups. Each small group would have at least one event planned that would focus on bringing people to their event. One of the goals at this meeting was to determine if the matrixes were workable and if

they were helpful in planning events. We had decided, as a group, to come back to the table with the different event matrixes from each group. It was important to ensure that these events could fit into a workable plan for the church. These group meetings were included as part of their leadership training. This training was to help the leaders learn to work together to plan and execute an event. At that meeting, we all agreed that an event was needed to give all the groups an opportunity to reach out to their prospects and invite them to church. We decided to call the event “Back to Church Sunday.” We ordered promotional material and asked the church secretary to update all the prospect lists and enrollment books for each small group. The leaders agreed to contact the prospects and small group members to invite them to attend church on “Back to Church Sunday.” We scheduled the event for August 18. Included in this event was a back to school party for the kids and a family fellowship following the morning worship. As each group worked through the matrixes, they determined that this event would allow them to energize their group to do outreach and focus on connecting with new people. We had hoped to have an event planned and conducted within the timeframe of the project, but we were only able to have an event planned.

In Week 16, the post-project survey was handed out to the congregation. The survey was given to the Sunday School classes and to those in the morning worship service. The survey was then collected during Week 16. This survey was the same as the pre-survey and was given to measure the change in attitude of the congregation (see Appendix 1). I met with the leadership focus group to receive the results of their leadership criteria surveys.

Conclusion

The need for churches to become Great Commission-focused is great. The task of calling churches back to their evangelistic roots requires strong pastoral leadership. The great thing is that, if we courageously raise the Great Commission banner at FBCC, God's people will respond. I feared calling the church to adopt a Great Commission mission would be met with hollowed silence. All through the process, however, the people were noticeably eager to return to the days when the church was united for the cause of Christ.

CHAPTER 5

FINAL EVALUATION AND ANALYSIS

This chapter concludes this project by evaluating it. First, I will present the evaluation of the project's purpose. Second, I will evaluate the four project goals. The third and fourth sections will evaluate the project's process, attempting to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the project. In the fifth part of the evaluation, I will explain how the project could be strengthened for future use. The sixth section will be a theological reflection of what I learned about God and how he is working in the church. Seventh, I will share how this project impacted me as a leader in my pastoral role. Lastly, I will conclude by suggesting implications for future use.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The project's purpose was to lead the members of First Baptist Church of Catoosa, Catoosa, Oklahoma, to become more involved in the Great Commission. In order to accomplish this purpose, a strong pastoral leadership was needed. The success of the project depended partly on how much influence I had as pastor. Influence is not just based on the positional authority I have as pastor, it depends on the quality of relationships that I have been able to develop within the church, particularly with the leaders. I have determined that one of the roles of the pastor is to cast a vision for the church to follow. It is the pastor's responsibility to be the "vision caster." This role carries a great deal of responsibility and requires faith. How effective I was in leading the

church to adopt the Great Commission vision was evident in the small group leaders' participation in developing their own Great Commission ministry plans. Even though no event was completed within the time frame of this project, I believe that the planned events will reflect greater participation in and awareness of the Great Commission from the church's members.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

The majority of this project's evaluation comes from the analysis of the four goals of the project. For each of the goals, a separate evaluation mechanism was used. The pre- and post-Great Commission Surveys were used as evaluation tools for many of the goals. The Leadership Evaluation Criteria were used to measure the success of the third and fourth goals.

First Goal

The first goal was to develop a simple discipleship process that the church would adopt. The process for making disciples was presented in different formats but there was no formal vote by the church body to adopt this process. I presented the discipleship process to the church body at the Ministry Rally, to new attendees in the Next Step Class, and to the small group leaders in the Small Group Ministry Planning Guide. I believed that presenting this process in these formats would be sufficient to accomplish this goal. The evaluation of this goal comes from the pre- and post-Great Commission surveys. The participation of the surveys was small. Just 7 people filled out the pre-survey, and 2 filled out the post-survey. The pre-survey answers did not show any consistency in the knowledge of the church's plan for making disciples. For example, one

question asked, “What is the church’s plan for making disciples?” in which all the surveys had a different answer. The post-surveys had consistency in their responses that reflected knowledge of a disciple-making plan (see Appendix 8). The post-surveys revealed their knowledge of Step 2 in the discipleship process, which called for connecting to others through small groups. I concluded from this evaluation that more communication is needed regarding the discipleship process. I will need to find different avenues and media forums to repeat the discipleship process. The discipleship process will need to be on banners, and classes will need to be developed for each step in the discipleship process.

Second Goal

The second goal was to help new attendees know what it means to be a member of First Baptist Catoosa. To accomplish this goal, I developed the Next Step Class. The success of this goal was determined by the increased involvement in the ministry of the church by those who attended the class. We had 4 participants in the class. Two of the participants were new members having joined within the past year. The 2 others were regular attenders but were not members. The class was three hours long with a fellowship meal included. I led the class, and 3 other members were there to assist with the fellowship meal. The members who were there to help with the fellowship meal also participated in the class. The class started with each person introducing themselves and telling how they became involved in the church. This process allowed the members present, who had been members for several years, to interact with the other participants in the class. The interaction created relational bonds within the group. One of the goals for the class was to help assimilate new attendees into the church body. The personal

exchange aided greatly in assimilating the new attendees that were at the class. The content of the class provided needed information about the church and what was expected from those who joined the church. The main benefit of the class was the relationships that were formed. The participants were able to get to know me personally, to know the members present, and to know other participants in the class better. The class accomplished its intended purpose. After the class, one of the attendees joined the church and is now active in the children's ministry. Another participant, who was a new member, committed to evangelizing her classmates.

Third Goal

The third goal was for the church leaders to be skilled in the process of making disciples by developing a small group ministry plan that is focused on the Great Commission. To accomplish this goal, I developed a Small Group Ministry Planning Guide as a leadership training curriculum for the small group leaders. It is also a process for the leaders to develop a small group ministry plan that is Great Commission focused. The success of this goal is measured by the participation of the leaders in the training and the development of their small group ministry plans. All the small group leaders participated in the class.

In the leadership evaluation criteria, Question 4 asked the leaders to describe how the training would help them become a more effective leader. This question helped each leader evaluate themselves and what they learned. The answers revealed appreciation for what they learned and a feeling that they are better equipped to lead (see Appendix 9). Not only did the small group leaders participate in the class, but all the small groups developed a ministry plan, goals for their ministry, and planned an event.

From a negative perspective, I lacked the necessary means to measure the effect of the new discipleship process. I was not able to observe the leaders working with people through this process. The skill could not be accomplished, but the change in the leaders did reflect knowledge of the discipleship process. I made this conclusion based on the leaders' responses on the Leadership Evaluation Criteria.

Fourth Goal

The fourth goal was a personal goal to improve my leadership skills. I asked the small group leaders to evaluate the success of this goal. From my reading, I developed leadership criteria. They were asked to evaluate my leadership and give feedback on what they observed. The first question on the leadership criteria form dealt with my role as a vision caster. According to the average of the scores by the small group leaders, I cast a Great Commission vision that makes disciples "very well" (see Appendix 9). Question 2 asked the small group leaders to give their understanding of the Great Commission vision. Two common themes from question 2 were given from the small group leaders. These were "reaching out to the community" and "making disciples." Evaluating the leaders' responses to this question makes me conclude that they understand the vision and the responsibility of being a Great Commission church.

The second criterion of leadership development was evaluated in Questions 3 and 4. Question 3 asked participants to evaluate how well they thought they had been trained to be leaders during the small group leaders training and their ability to develop a Great Commission ministry plan. They responded by giving an average of 9 on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being "very well" (see Appendix 9). Question 4 asked them to tell how the leadership training made them a more effective leader. I determined from their

answers that the leadership training helped them see the need for the small group leaders to be more organized when planning events for the church. The small group voiced a greater understanding of what is expected of them as leaders in the church. The intent of the class was not meant to lay out leadership expectations. To my surprise, the small group leaders concluded that organization and strategic planning were their responsibilities. Their answers reflected a deeper ownership and grasp of their role as a leader than I expected.

The third leadership criterion evaluated my moral character in Questions 5 and 6. According to the small group leaders, the expected moral character needed as pastor was met “very well” (see Appendix 9). Of the leadership criteria questions, question 5 scored the highest with an average of 9.6. Question 6 asked the small group leaders to state the qualities they had seen reflected in me and to list areas where improvement was needed. I know I am not perfect, and I am always looking to improve my behavior. I want my behavior to reflect the character of Christ. I know there are areas of character that I need to improve. None of the small group leaders offered any suggestions for improvement. The leaders described me as “passionate,” “sincere,” and having a “love for people” inside and outside the church. I feel unworthy of this level of respect. I do understand, however, that in order to lead the church and be their pastor I must maintain this level of character or higher.

The last evaluation criterion examined leading change in the church’s culture toward the Great Commission. According to the opinion of the small group leaders, I was able to effect a cultural change extending from “well” to “very well” by the average of the leaders’ scores being 8.6 (see Appendix 9). This criterion was scored the lowest by

the leaders. The leadership evaluation criteria ask the leaders to give specific changes in actions and attitudes they had observed in the church's commitment to the Great Commission. The leaders observed a change in attitude and understanding of the Great Commission. They had seen an enthusiasm and excitement about church and an increase in outreach activity (see Appendix 9). The leaders' responses to this criterion reflect some success in changing the culture, but more work is needed in order to see lasting change.

Leadership involves moving people from point A to point B and charting the course of how to get to B. According to this evaluation, there has been an improvement in my leadership skills, and, through my leadership, some changes have occurred in the congregation's attitudes and actions toward the Great Commission. The leaders described changes they observed in the congregation toward the Great Commission. Their observations tell me that I was able lead the people to make changes. I did not develop a means to measure my leadership skills before the project, but, from the leaders' observations and my personal observations, I can say I have been able to improve my leadership skills.

Strengths of the Project

A major strength of the project was its focus on church leaders. I interacted with the leaders of the small groups, who are also key leaders of the church. We spent time talking about the ministries of the church and the overall health of the church. By spending time in a training-type setting, we were able to have a healthy dialogue, and the leaders developed a deeper understanding of who I am and what I think. The leadership training classes enabled me to establish a means to lead the church through further change.

A second strength of the project was the Great Commission awareness the project has brought to the church leaders. The leaders developed a greater understanding of the need to focus on the Great Commission. The leaders expressed understanding that the Great Commission is the mission of the church. As the leaders developed their goals and followed ministry plans, involving others in the church, they were able to see changes in their small groups when a plan was formulated for them to use. The greatest impact of this project is yet to come. As the leaders follow through with their ministry plans, the congregation will become more involved in and aware of the Great Commission.

Another strength of this project focuses on future work. The project itself has created a platform to build on. The leaders are now Great Commission focused. As we evaluate other ministries in the church, we will be asking, “How can we as a church be Great Commission focused?” The leaders are equipped with skills to use the ministry matrixes and leadership training. This skill equipped the leaders to lead their small groups to fulfill the Great Commission even into the future.

Weaknesses of the Project

The evaluation mechanisms had several weaknesses. I expected the pre- and post-Great Commission surveys to become very reliable tools for the overall project and be used for all the goals, but they were not. The first and most important weakness is that the pre-Great Commission Survey did not accumulate a broad enough sample of the congregation. The post-Great Commission Survey had a lower response than the pre-survey. The average attendance was 45 people, with 7 responses. The pre-survey represented only 15 percent of the congregation responding while the post-survey sample

represented 0.04 percent of the congregation. The reason for doing a pre- and post-survey was to measure change in the church's attitude toward the Great Commission. Given the small sample size of returned surveys, any change in the attitude of the church was difficult to determine.

Another weakness of the survey came from the fact that only 2 people answered the post-survey, so there was not a good way to measure the change in the attitude of the church towards the Great Commission. Since names were not recorded on the surveys, it was impossible to know if the two people who had filled out the post-surveys had filled out the pre-surveys. In order to determine if a change occurred in the attitudes towards the Great Commission, it would have been necessary to know that those who filled out the post-survey had filled out the pre-survey. The lack of participation in the pre- and post-surveys by the congregation reflects apathy toward the Great Commission and this project. Given that apathy still exists, more work is needed in order to bring about lasting change.

A third weakness pertains to the length of the project. One of the purposes of the project was to cause the culture to be more evangelistic. In order to make a change in the culture, a longer evaluation time is needed. Cultural change must be a lasting change, not just for 16 weeks, because, while change can occur among the members, they also can quickly back to their original attitudes. The training process for the leaders, getting others in the church involved, and having time for all the groups to be able to meet created a constraint because of the time limitation. Due to this time constraint, the event was done after the 16-week project window. The change in the congregation will occur as a result of the events that the leaders planned and executed. Any change in the

congregation that would have resulted from the event could not be measured during the 16-week project.

What I Would Do Differently

In order to have conducted a more efficient project, I would have tied the project more to the benefit of the church rather than to an academic exercise. I would have taken more time to explain the benefits of the project for the congregation. This explanation would have brought about more participation in the surveys. If the church could have seen the benefit this project had for them, I believe they would have been more apt to engage in the surveys, which would have given more insight into whether there were changes in the pre- and post-surveys.

Additionally, I would have made the project more personal to the congregation. This change would have helped them to know that this project would help equip them to reach their lost friends and others in the community. I would have explained the steps of the project and the goals of the project at the beginning. I believe that I did not explain where we were going as a church with this project and what the end result would look like.

Finally, I would have tried harder at getting the leaders to complete an event during the project. If an event would have been conducted, the church would have been able to see the Great Commission vision in action. The congregation would have understood the purpose of the small group planning meetings with the leaders. The small group leaders would have been able to see their plans become a reality. The leaders would have had prospects and new people to try to reach with the gospel. The passion and conviction to fulfill the Great Commission would have had an outlet of expression

through the event and the follow-up of the event. The event would have provided an excellent platform for evaluation. Fulfilling the Great Commission is about reaching people, not planning to reach people. The joy that comes from being used by God to impact people with the gospel is much more motivating and life-changing than merely planning to impact people.

Cultural change cannot be accomplished nor measured within the project's time frame. Therefore, in order to overcome the time limitations of this project, I would change my expectations. I would focus on the change within the leadership. I would have sought to measure the leadership's attitudes and actions toward the Great Commission.

The Next Step Class for newcomers to the church was more focused on orientation rather than building relationships and connecting people. I see the advantage of making the class longer than one evening and teaching more on what it means to be a follower of Jesus. More time spent with one another would allow for deeper relationships to develop between the class members, other church members, and myself. I would have included more of the leadership by having the deacons and small group leaders participate in the class. I would intentionally introduce them and explain their role.

Theological Reflections

From a theological standpoint, two areas need evaluating. God has ordained the role of pastors. I have always known the importance of my role as pastor and the biblical expectations. As I reflect on my role as shepherd over God's people, that role has become more personal. I have come to realize that my actions affect the congregation more than I realize. A natural desire exists for people to want a leader, one who will lead them to do God's work. I do not believe this leading should be in a selfish, arrogant way

but in a Christ-like manner. When I read the Bible and reflected on passages that talked about shepherding the flock, it became more real. It gave me a hunger to be a better shepherd, and I began to think more about the congregation than myself. The calling of the pastor is a divine calling. The pastor is not just a leader of any organization but the leader of God's church. This fact has convicted me to lead to the best of my ability and to continually study about the topic of leadership.

This ministry project has reinforced and renewed my commitment to being a Great Commission-focused church. A thorough examination of the Scriptures shows a consistent theme of going out and telling others about Jesus and making disciples, which is the Great Commission. The Great Commission is the mission of God. I sensed a hunger from the leaders to want the church to be more Great Commission focused. As we went through the small group leadership training, it was not my intent to tell them that the Great Commission was their job, but they became convinced through the Scriptures that we examined during the training that the Great Commission was their responsibility. They also determined that it was their responsibility to lead their classes in being Great Commission focused.

Personal Reflections

I feared at the beginning of the project that the people would ignore the project's work and not participate. Leadership involves risks, and I feared that I would get to the end of the project with no results and no impact on the church. I underestimated the impact the leadership training would have on those participating. The project gave me new insight into how to lead this congregation to become more evangelistic and committed to the Great Commission. The small group leadership team that developed

through the training is the greatest impact of the project. This impact was the result of the fact that I spent most of the project's time with them. The personal relationships I developed with the leaders changed as a result of the leadership class. The leaders came to realize that I really do believe in the Great Commission and that the church should be committed to it.

When I reflect back on all the goals, Goal 3 was the most successful. There was 100 percent participation with the leaders, and they were able to develop ministry plans. My only regret with Goal 3 was that we were not able to complete an event within the time frame of the project. There came a point in the class where I had to make a decision whether to finish the teaching agenda or to go ahead and have an event. Since having an event could result in the leaders not fully understanding the importance of the Great Commission, I decided to forego the event and spend more time teaching.

In order for change to occur, leaders need to be changed. I realized that I needed to invest in the leaders. Jesus modeled this action when he chose the twelve disciples and spent time with them and poured his life into them. He started with a small group to get his message out to the crowds. I realized that I needed to start with a small group that would eventually affect the whole church. Personally, I saw the change in the leaders when I invested in them. It gives me hope that change will occur in the congregation as well.

I have become more confident in my leadership skills. Before this project, I had doubts that I was a good leader. I know that a person never becomes the perfect leader, but a leader needs to have the confidence to take risks. In order to do big things for God, I must take risks so that God can use me to do big things for him. Before this

project, I did not have the confidence to take risks because I feared no one would follow. Therefore, I chose to take small, safe steps. Now, I want to take big steps for God that will impact the kingdom.

The project has helped me to develop a discipline for reading. Before the project, I struggled in my personal development as a leader. This project reminded me of the need to continue learning through reading books. Reading on leadership, including both secular and prominent Christian authors, will continue to sharpen my skills and is necessary for continued growth.

Lastly, this project has challenged me in the area of time management. I have always had a problem with this discipline, and this project has brought this fact to the forefront. I pastor a small church where I am responsible for many things that take up a lot of my time. I had to work hard at balancing time spent on the project, sermon preparation, and family time.

Conclusion

This project has made an impact on the church leaders and their understanding of what it means to be Great Commission focused. I realize that there is more work that needs to be done for the other members of First Baptist Catoosa to grasp what it means to be a Great Commission-focused church. With the help of the leaders who already understand the importance of being Great Commission focused, we should be able to lead the church to be focused on the Great Commission as well. I believe that once the church embraces the vision of being a Great Commission church, we will see a real change in our culture.

APPENDIX 1

GREAT COMMISSION SURVEY

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to assess the views of the congregation on the Great Commission as well as the leadership ability of the pastor and staff at First Baptist Church of Catoosa. This research is being conducted to assist the pastor and the leadership to understand the areas of effectiveness in their leadership and the church's commitment and participation in the Great Commission. The information collected will assist Pastor Marcus in completing his Doctorate of Ministry Evangelism and Church Growth project, which is a partial fulfillment of his Doctorate of Ministry degree program. In this research, you will be asked to give your opinion on your understanding of missions, your personal views about missions, the church's mission educations and the pastor and staff's over all leadership. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you will be free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

By your completion of this survey and signing your name below, you are giving consent to the use of the information in this research.

Name _____
Signature _____
Date _____

Minor Inform Consent

By signing your name below, you are giving informed consent for the designated minor or member of a vulnerable population to participate in this research if he or she desires.

Participant Name _____
Parent/Guardian Name _____
Parent/Guardian Signature _____
Date _____

Please complete this survey and place it in the Church Survey box in the church foyer. The results of this study will aid the church and the pastor in understanding what the church believes about certain Christian doctrines and beliefs.

Circle the answer that most applies to you.

Sex: M F Age: 12-17 18-20 21-30 31-40 41-50 51-60 61-69 70+

Are you a member of this church? Yes No

How long have you been a member or attending this church? _____

What are some things you would like the church to do that would help you become more involved in fulfilling the Great Commission?

What prevents you from being actively involved in the Great Commission?

What would you say is the mission of First Baptist Catoosa?

What is the church's plan for making disciples?

Answer the following question by writing in a number based on the following scale of 1 to 10.

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

- A. _____ I share my faith at least once a month with un-churched or none believers.
- B. _____ What keeps most Christians from sharing the gospel and inviting people to trust Christ as their Savior is fear of not knowing how to share.
- C. _____ I am willing to commit to at least two hours a week to personally help another Christian become a mature believer in Christ.
- D. _____ I am willing to go to the parks and invite others to a church event and talk to them about their relationship with Christ if they give you an opportunity.
- E. _____ I am willing to walk through neighborhoods praying silently for the people as I walk.

- F. _____ The church is passionate about the Great Commission and demonstrates its passion by getting outside the church walls.
- G. _____ The job of fulfilling the Great Commission is the job of the church leadership.
- H. _____ I have physical limitations that prevent me from participating in prayer walks.
- I. _____ The church has a strong vibrant passion to see others have a personal relationship with Christ that is real and meaningful
- J. _____ I have seen the pastor lead the church to be active in the great commission.

APPENDIX 2

LEADERSHIP EVALUATION CRITERIA

As part of my Doctorate of Ministry Project, I have sought to lead the church to become Great Commission focused. The following is a criterion for evaluating my leadership. The criterion is a compilation of various dimensions of pastoral leadership. I developed this criterion from many different books and thoughts from many leadership authors and thinkers. Please take the time and thoughtful critique to give your unvarnished opinion of my leadership during the project and my time as your pastor.

Answer the questions below by circling a number based on the following scale of 1 to 10 or with a written response.

1. A leader is not a manager. A leader charts a course and cast a vision for getting there. How well have I cast the vision for First Baptist Catoosa to become a Great Commission church that makes disciples?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not Very Well		Not Well		OK			Well		Very Well

2. Describe the vision of the Great Commission vision for the church as you understand it.

3. A leader's success is determined by the quality of leaders he/she has gathered around them. How well have I trained the small group leaders to develop a ministry plan that leads the church to fulfill the Great Commission vision?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not Very Well		Not Well		OK			Well		Very Well

4. Describe how the leadership training will help you be a more effective leader.

5. An effective leader must have the quality of character to be trusted and respected in order to be followed as a leader. How well have I demonstrated Christ-like character worthy of being called a shepherd of the flock of God.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not Very Well		Not Well		OK		Well		Very Well	

6. List the Christ-like character that you have seen and those that you feel I need to improve on.

7. Leadership requires leading change. For real change to occur, the change must become part of the church culture. How well have I been able to change the culture of the church to become committed to fulfilling the Great Commission?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not Very Well		Not Well		OK		Well		Very Well	

8. What changes in actions and attitudes have you seen in the church's commitment to the Great Commission?

APPENDIX 3

DEVELOPING A GREAT COMMISSION SMALL GROUP MINISTRY

The goal is to develop a master plan for a Great Commission Small Group Ministry at FBC Catoosa and to lead each small group ministry to develop a plan for their group.

3-Step process

Step 1: Where have we been?

What has God done through the small group ministry in the past? What are we currently doing in our small group ministry?

Step 2: Where do we want to go?

What is the mission of the ministry? What are some strategic objectives for the ministry?

Step 3: How do we get there?

Session 1

Rediscovering the task

What are the societal sins of our community? What are the things people are doing or saying that are not God honoring? What are the societal sins that are harming our community?

Why is FBC Catoosa here?

To obey the Great Commandment

- To love God

Matthew 22:37-38

“You shall love the Lord God with all you heart, and with all your soul, and with all you’re your mind.”³⁸ This is the great and foremost commandment.”

- To love others

Matthew 22:39-40³⁹

“The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”

To fulfill the Great Commission

- Make disciples of all ethnic groups

Matthew 28:19

¹⁹ “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Mark 16:15

“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.”

Acts 1:8

“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

Summary of the Great Commission

Through the power of the Holy Spirit and the proclamation of the Gospel we are to make disciples of Christ Jesus from all ethnic groups by baptizing them and teaching them to obey all the teachings of the Bible.

Making a Great Commission Impact

Making Disciples through Relationships

1. Building Intimacy with God through worship
2. Connecting with others in a small group
3. Serving others with your talents and gives

Session 2

Where are we?

What are the people like that we are trying to reach?

Look through the On Mission magazines for information on people we are trying to reach?

Develop a profile of the typical person for your group?

What does a health church or small group look like?

Acts 2:42-47

“All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer. ⁴³A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders.

⁴⁴And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. ⁴⁵They

sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. ⁴⁶They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity ⁴⁷all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.”

What are the defining makes of a biblically healthy group of believers based on Acts 2:42-47?

1.
What are the marks of a healthy small group ministry?

History of First Baptist Catoosa

The First Baptist of Catoosa Indian Territory church was established in November of 1881 in the Spunky Creek community area in a log house in the woods. In 1902, land was bought or given to the church and a building was built on Cherokee Street at the corner of Cherokee and Denbo. The church was inactive from 1926-39 only meeting when an minister came through for a revival. In 1939, Mrs. Lelia Hedge encouraged the church to start meeting again and they hire a pastor and launched a mission in Keatonville, which became Hilldale Baptist Church. In 1940, a new building was built. In the early 1940s, the church sponsored the Boy Scouts, held a youth revival, had their first VBS, burned a church note, started a library, hired their first music minister and had their first nursery in the corner of the one-room building. In 1944, a lot with a house at the corner were our current building is located was donated. The house was moved and became the first parsonage. The new auditorium was built in 1946, which is the current fellowship hall. The church building was paid off in 1948. The church started Rolling Hills Mission, which became First Baptist Rolling Hills in 1960. In 1962, a new education building was built which is the current nursery, Ruth room area, and upstairs youth area. In 1970, the current worship center, office, and education classrooms were built. The church experienced growth in the early 1970s and in the 1980s through early 1990s. In 2005, the church voted to build a Family Living Center. A committee was formed for the purpose of fundraising and developing a plan for the building. The purpose of the building is to be a ministry center for youth and children. The FLC will contain a gym and a kitchen. Currently, the church is in a rebuilding phase of its ministries. The goal is to be a church that reaches out to today’s culture with relevant ministries and reclaim the Great Commission as it own mission.

Session 3

Where do we want to be?

What is the mission of the church?

What is the mission of the Small Group Ministry of First Baptist Catoosa?

What is the mission of your Small Group?

If we were successful at our mission, what would our church look like?

If our Small Group Ministry was successful at its mission, what would it look like?

APPENDIX 4
SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths- What are the strengths of our current small group ministry?

Weaknesses- What are the weaknesses of our current small group ministry?

Opportunities- What are the opportunities that our small group ministry could take advantage of in our community or church?

Threats- What are the threats to our current small group ministry not being successful?

APPENDIX 5
MINISTRY MATRIX

What is name of the ministry or group?

Describe the people targeted by this ministry.

Current groups meeting (list times, dates, number enrolled and currently attending)

Current leaders and leadership structure

What is the purpose of the ministry?

What are the goals of the ministry?

What do you envision the group looking like in the next 6 months to a year?

Please describe how the ministry works to make disciples by connecting people to worship, connecting people to others in small groups, and connecting people to the world through serving.

APPENDIX 6
GOAL MATRIX

What is the stated goal?

How does this goal connect with the purpose of the ministry?

How does this goal aid in accomplishing the vision of the ministry?

What are the means of measuring the goal's success? Estimate when this goal will be accomplished and what success of this goal looks like.

How will you evaluate the progress of this goal and make adjustments?

List action step needed to accomplish this goal. What are the events, activities, etc. associated with accomplishing this goal?

List the events, with approximate dates, associated with accomplishing this goal (use the event matrix for each of the events associated with the goal).

APPENDIX 7

EVENT MATRIX

Ministry(s) sponsoring the event:

Name and description of the event:

Event Date: _____ Event Time: _____

Event Location: _____ Estimated cost: _____

How many do you estimate will be attending the event? _____

What other church events will be conducted on the day of the event? (Check the church calendar before answering)

Please list the amount and names of the chaperones needed for this event (if applicable).

List action step needed to plan and complete the event.

What are the resources or supplies that will be needed?

What are the goals associated with the event?

How does this event connect with the purpose of the ministry?

How does this event aid in accomplishing the vision of the ministry?

APPENDIX 8

THE NEXT STEP

Who is First Baptist Catoosa?

What is next for me if I become a member?

The Next Step class is designed to provide people with an understanding of what First Baptist Catoosa is all about. We will be discussing a brief history of the church, the vision, organizational structure, ministry leadership, membership expectations, etc.

Church Objectives

To be empowered by the Holy Spirit to share Christ with as many people as possible in our church, community, and throughout the world.

Membership

Any person may offer themselves to be a member

- By professing faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and then is baptized
- By being a member of good standing from a Baptist church of like faith and practice
- By statement of faith of prior conversion and baptism in a Baptist church of like faith and practice.

History of First Baptist Catoosa

The First Baptist of Catoosa Indian Territory church was established in November of 1881 in the Spunky Creek community area in a log house in the woods. In 1902, land was bought or given to the church and a building was built on Cherokee Street at the corner of Cherokee and Denbo. The church was inactive from 1926-39 only meeting when an minister came through for a revival. In 1939, Mrs. Lelia Hedge encouraged the church to start meeting again and they hire a pastor and launched a mission in Keatonville, which became Hilldale Baptist Church. In 1940, a new building was built. In the early 1940s, the church sponsored the Boy Scouts, held a youth revival, had their first VBS, burned a church note, started a library, hired their first music minister and had their first nursery in the corner of the one room building. In 1944, a lot with a house at the corner were our current building is located was donated. The house was moved and became the first parsonage. The new auditorium was built in 1946, which is the current fellowship hall. The church building was paid off in 1948. The church started Rolling Hills Mission which became First Baptist Rolling Hills in 1960. In 1962, a new education building was built which is the current nursery, Ruth room area, and upstairs youth area. In 1970, the

current worship center, office, and education classrooms were built. The church experienced growth in the early 1970s and in the 1980s through early 1990s. In 2005, the church voted to build a Family Living Center. A committee was formed for the purpose of fundraising and developing a plan for the building. The purpose of the building is to be a ministry center for youth and children. The FLC will contain a gym and a kitchen. Currently, the church is in a rebuilding phase of its ministries. The goal is to be a church that reaches out to today's culture with relevant ministries and reclaim the Great Commission as its own mission.

FBC Purpose

- To love God

Matthew 22:37-38

“You shall love the Lord God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.”³⁸ This is the great and foremost commandment.”

- To love others

Matthew 22:39-40³⁹

“The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”

To fulfill the Great Commission

- Make disciples of all ethnic groups

Matthew 28:19

¹⁹ “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Mark 16:15

“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.”

Acts 1:8

“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

Summary of the Great Commission

Through the power of the Holy Spirit and the proclamation of the gospel, we are to make disciples of Christ Jesus from all ethnic groups by baptizing them and teaching them to obey all the teachings of the Bible.

Process of making a Disciple

1. Connect to God through worship.

- Help people connect to God through a personal relationship with Christ that is real and meaningful.

What does it mean to have a personal relationship with Christ that is real and meaningful?

(Gospel Presentation)

2. Connect people to each other through missional small groups.
 - Share life together in faith community.

Missional Small Groups

- Everyone will be a part of a Small Group.
- Small Groups are for missions, discipleship, and evangelism and sharing life together in faith community.
- They will be age graded to group people in similar life stage for deeper connections.
- They will meet regularly for Bible study, fellowship, and plan ways to reach inactive member and prospects.
- The purpose of these groups is to fulfill the Great Commission.

3. Connect people to the world through servicing
 - Serve God through serving others

Opportunities to serve

There is a place for everyone.

I would like to serve in the following area(s):

- Sunday School Teacher
- Nursery
- Preschool Ministry
- Children's Ministry
- Vacation Bible School
- Club K.I.C.K for Children
- Student Ministry
- Music Ministry
- College/Career Ministry
- Singles Ministry
- Women's Ministry
- Men's Ministry
- Fellowship Meals
- Next Step Class
- Hispanic Ministry
- English Language Learner
- Substance Abuse Support Group
- Community Home Repair ministry
- Repair on the church building
- Painting
- Electrical
- Carpentry

___Tile

___Drywall

Other_____

Get Fit For Life

Our individual responsibility as a Disciple

As part of the Body of Christ we have responsibilities as an individual believer.

STEWARDSHIP

- Be good stewards over the resources God has given us.
- We should use the money God has entrusted us with to bless others and tithe to the local church.

PERSONAL HOLINESS

- Live a life obedient to God
- We should spend time praying and reading the Bible regularly.

PHYSICAL HEALTH

- Take care of our bodies because our bodies are the temple of God.
- We should not do things that abuse our bodies but the things that protects and improves our health.

SERVANTHOOD

- Embrace Jesus' call to be a servant.
- Serve others through the ministries of the church and

RELATIONSHIPS

4. Have healthy relationships in your family and at church.

Have a love and concern for other members of the church and the entire body of Christ.

LIFE UNIVERSITY

This is where we get fit for life and equip ourselves to be used by God. Each class will be organized for a specific time and last for a specific time. They will not start and be on going. This does not mean the class will not be offered again at another time. The classes will be grouped under each of the five Getting Fit for Life categories.

APPENDIX 9

PRE- AND POST-GREAT COMMISSION SURVEY RESULTS

Pre-survey

Total: Number of males: 3 Number of Females: 4

Ages 12-17: 0 18-20: 0 21-30: 0 31-40: 1 41-50: 0 51-60: 0 61-69: 1 70+:
5

Members: 7 Nonmembers: 0
Number of yrs: 33, 45, 32, 15, 48, 3, 20

Short Answer Questions

1. Not Sure; To have activities that would involve meeting new people; (blank); I don't know of anything that would help me be more involved; by having a special visitation time, encouraging members to witness as much as possible; do more outside activities;
2. Maybe need to be more focused on the goal; (blank); nothing; nothing; nothing but we all need to be inspired spiritually by all who are led by the Holy Spirit to do what we can for those we see in need; I think life restricts me from being as involved as I would like to be, work, kids, just everyday things just makes me feel like there aren't enough hours in the day;
3. To proclaim the gospel message, make disciples and meet the needs of people with the love of Christ; Meeting to get them for worship, reach out to the needy in our community, and reach out with the Gospel of Jesus; To win people to Christ and tell people about what Christ has done for them and can do for them as well; Reaching lost people for Jesus and assisting church members and others in need, both physical and spiritual; Prepare food baskets for all occasions, have a food bank for those in need; I think that FBC's mission is to go out and make disciples. I think that we do a lot of things to get to get the word of God out in the community!;
4. Sunday School, Life University, Wednesday evening Bible Study; Having new members classes to disciple new Christians; They work at it all the time; Encouraging, teaching, and praying for new Christians; Invite people to our church service, tell them about our Savior Jesus Christ; To not just be constricted to the inside of the church. We try to move outside the walls and let the community know we are here and that God is working in the community and that God loves them

Post-survey

Total: Number of males: 0 Number of Females: 2

Ages 12-17: 0 18-20: 0 21-30: 0 31-40: 0 41-50: 0 51-60: 1 61-69: 0 70+:
1

Members: 2 Nonmembers: 0

Number of yrs: 10, 3.5

Short Answers Question

1. (blank); Evangelism training
2. Lack of time and energy; time constraints.
3. Spreading the Gospel, make disciples, teach members to serve; to bring people to a point of knowing God so that they can be saved and to disciple
4. Small group ministry, First Step Class; develop small groups

Table A1. Great Commission survey results
Pre-Project

Survey Questions											
Survey #	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	Total
1	6	9	6	3	3	6	6	7	10	10	66
2	10	7	8	4	8	3	2	8	2	9	61
3	4	8	5	4	4	7	3	6	6	1	48
4	2	4	4	5	5	4	5	5	7	8	49
5	10	10	10	7	8	9	8	1	9	9	81
6	6	8	6	6	6	6	6	3	6	10	63
7	9	6	1	6	9	9	6	7	10	10	73
Average	6.7	7.4	5.7	5.0	6.1	6.3	5.1	5.3	7.1	8.1	

Table A2. Great Commission survey results
Post-Project

Survey Questions											
Survey #	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	Total
1	3	7	5.5	5.5	6	9	2	2	9	9	58
2	5	10	8	9	8	10	1	1	5	10	67
Average	4	8.5	6.75	7.25	7	9.5	1.5	1.5	7	9.5	

APPENDIX 10

LEADERSHIP EVALUATION CRITERIA RESULTS

Question 2—Describe the Great Commission vision for the church as you understand it.

- a. For us to go out and reach the people of Catoosa and surrounding area to help make them disciples of Christ.
- b. To make disciples, to send them out to the community.
- c. To go out to the community and save people and make disciples
- d. To reach people in our community, in the USA, and overseas; to tell others about Christ and to disciple them.
- e. To make disciples by leading people to know Christ and by helping meet the needs of our fellow man.
- f. Small groups working together to reach the church's goal of fulfilling the Great Commission by reaching out to inactive church members, the lost, and un-churched in the community and through scriptural salvation, education and training, make disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- g. Make disciples of those in our church and disciple those being brought into our church

Question 4—Describe how the leadership training will help you be a more effective leader.

- a. It has helped me to better understand what is expected of me and what my parameters are in this position.
- b. It has helped me understand how to lay out plans, set goals, and organize events. This helps make the goal seem more attainable.
- c. It has given me a direction to go as a leader
- d. Helped me see the need to be more organized when planning events
- e. It will help us catch the vision to love God and our neighbors in a deeper more committed way.
- f. By providing me a plan for organization of my small group in order to have all members of my group active in our outreach efforts.
- g. By setting goals to work toward, understanding the need to train people that are coming to our church to be disciples.

Question 6—List the Christ-like character that you have seen and the character traits you feel I need to improve on.

- a. I have seen a true love for your members, non-members, and everyone in general. You have a passion for our church and its future.
- b. Trustworthy, accepting, understanding, not judgmental, always a great role model.
- c. Just about everything I have seen you do have been for the glory of God. Your attitude is based on how it will glorify God.

- d. Lead by demonstration, you show forgiveness and love toward the flock
- e. A professed and proven love for Jesus and the gospel. Faithfully teaching and preaching of the word of God. A willingness to make sacrifices of self for the good of the church.
- f. I believe you are sincere in your calling and work at leading the congregation to do the will of Christ.

Question 8—What changes in actions and attitudes have you seen in the church's commitment to the Great Commission.

- a. I have seen enthusiasm return to the church that has been missing for a number of years.
- b. Changes in actions-is that there actually is some changes. Some people are starting to seem excited about the church again.
- c. There has been more outreach and changes in the service
- d. I see more people wanting to share their faith and wanting to be shown how to do this. More excitement about bringing people to church. I think there is still more resistance to what the church's vision is but it is getting better.
- e. Most people realize that is your mission and ours as taught in the Great Commission.
- f. A better understanding of the Great Commission. More awareness of the church's goal. More interest in being involved through small groups in fulfilling the Great Commission.
- g. Those that went through the class have seen the need to be committed to fulfilling the Great Commission and hopefully committed to the congregation

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ABSTRACT

DEVELOPING A GREAT COMMISSION CULTURE AT FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF CATOOSA, CATOOSA, OKLAHOMA

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Chapter 1 is an introduction to the project, containing information about the current state of the church and providing the rationale for the project. Included are the ministry context and demographic information of the Catoosa community. The goals of the project are also provided.

Chapter 2 provides a biblical basis for the project. The basis for the project centers on Jesus' command to make disciples in Matthew 28:19-20. Similar commands found in the Old Testament are examined.

Chapter 3 gives the current trends in the church's structure. The thrust is to expose current successful ministry models and apply new insights from current ministry trends to today's culture.

Chapter 4 gives the details of the project and its implementation of the goals of the project. The goals of the project work together for the development of a Great Commission culture. The congregation survey measured the commitment level of the church to the Great Commission. Through the implementation of the goals in the project, significant change resulted and a true Great Commission culture developed.

Chapter 5 evaluates the effects of the project on the attitude of the congregation toward the Great Commission. Included in this chapter are an assessment of the goals' impacts on the congregation and the effectiveness of the plans to achieve each of the goals.

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