PLANTING A GREAT COMMISSION CHURCH

QUEENS, NEW YORK

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A Project

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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Doctor of Ministry

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by

Stephen Kim

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APPROVAL SHEET

PLANTING A GREAT COMMISSION CHURCH

QUEENS, NEW YORK

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Date_____

To the glory of God.

To my dear wife, Michelle,

I love you very much.

And to Faith, Alethia, Timotheus, and Titus

Daddy loves each one of you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

In the best of times, we feel energized to do great things for God. Idealistic fervor often runs high when a preacher is in the midst of proclamation. About four years ago, I was the guest speaker at a winter conference for young people. The Holy Spirit was doing amazing things during the week through the proclamation of the Word of God. Prior to approaching the pulpit one evening, I vividly remember standing in front of my chair and thinking to myself, "Getting a doctorate will honor God."

The obvious fear of pursuing an advanced degree is that its attainment will shift glory from the Creator to the creature. It was, after all, Peter and John's lack of any formal theological education that caused the Jewish council to recognize in amazement that the two men were disciples of Christ (Acts 4:13). Interestingly, Jesus condemned his opposition (the teachers of the Law) for loving respectful greetings as they strolled through the marketplace (Luke 20:46). In two thousand years, things have not changed much within the human heart. It is amazing to behold how a small, two-letter title in front of a name can quickly cause the bearer of the title to imbibe erroneously from the cesspool of pride. With the potential of such catastrophic spiritual dangers, the scarcity of time, and the immensity of the unfulfilled task of making disciples for Christ of all nations; one could easily posit the question, "Why even endeavor to attain an advanced degree?"

While it is true that God used fishermen like Peter and John, he also used the likes of the apostle Paul. Indeed, what would the New Testament look like without the writings of Paul? Gifting, opportunities (both for enrollment into a doctorate program

and for church planting), a loving and understanding wife, young children, my parents, a faithful church, caring seminary professors, and the sovereign hand of God upon my life all worked together to make the attainment of this degree a reality. At the Last Day, each man must answer personally to God for the stewardship of his unique talents. Comfort and ease are ever-present temptations, yet reading through Scripture, I am constantly reminded that there will unequivocally be a divine reckoning for the talents distributed by God (Matt 25:27). God gifts require careful stewardship.

During my last year of elementary school, my teacher (a Jewish woman named Mrs. Simon) called me out into the hallway for a private conversation. I had been sitting with a scowl on my face during a class assignment requiring us to write about our talents. I recall angrily telling my teacher that I had no talents. She looked at me and said, "Sure you do, you're smart."

From that point, I went on (by God's grace) to becoming the school's valedictorian, attending one of New York City's three specialized high schools, receiving a four-year full academic scholarship to a college in Manhattan, being selected as a New York City Teaching Fellow and thereby receiving full tuition coverage for a graduate school education in secondary education, and finally becoming a Master Teacher of mathematics at Long Island City High School (the promotion and pay raise coming at precisely the same semester in which I began my doctorate education). Far from vain boasting, I give all this personal information to make a point. Although I am not (by any stretch of the imagination) the smartest man in New York City, I do recognize that I at least possess some measure of a gift—a gift for which I am called to be a humble, good steward.

Upon my completion of the M.Div. program in 2010, I came to the prayerful conclusion that the best use of my gifts would be to pursue a doctorate in ministry. Desires, however, mean nothing without God's hands opening doors of opportunity. In the fall of 2010, when Southern Seminary waived the three-year, post-M.Div. full-time

ministry work experience requirement and accepted me right away into their new D.Min. program in Urban Ministry, I saw it as God's confirmation that I was pursuing rightly. In 2012, when God graciously enabled me to plant a church in New York City, and the classroom lessons, books, discussions, and assignments all seamlessly contributed to my real-world church planting experience, I truly saw the providential hand of God. I saw that God had put me into the doctoral program because He knew that He would eventually call me to plant a church. Words cannot describe how immensely the D.Min. program equipped and assisted me in my church planting work. There were so many times I utilized the same work that I had done for class in the church setting. Additionally, much of what was taught in class was geared towards church planters (in fact, one of the four doctoral seminars was completely devoted to the issue of urban church planting). For all this and more, I am truly grateful to The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

When life here is done and my body is in the grave, all of my achievements (including this doctorate) will not be remembered. I am keenly aware of that impending reality. What will be remembered into eternity, however, are the acts done for Jesus. It was therefore my joy to do a project about planting a Great Commission Church in New York City. The time, work, study, and effort that went into this D.Min. project were all worth the effort simply because the project's ultimate goal was eternally worthy. The church is Jesus' bride and even the gates of hell shall not prevail against her (Matt 16:18). I am a worm. It was a high honor and privilege for this worm to be able to center this project on the Bride who was redeemed by the infinitely precious blood of Jesus Christ.

Stephen Kim

Little Neck, New York

December 2014

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to plant a Great Commission church in New

York City, with the hopes of addressing the theological famine and the spiritual lostness

in the greater metropolitan New York area.

Goals

This project attempted four goals. All of the goals were derived from the Great

Commission given by Christ found in Matthew 28:18-20. The Great Commission

impelled the church plant in all its initiatives. As instructed by Christ, Mustard Seed

Church strove to be disciples of Jesus, who were making disciples for Jesus. Even a

cursory reading of the Great Commission will quickly reveal that church planting is

imminently necessary in order to fulfill the Great Commission. The primary means God

uses to reach the lost world and disciple converts is the local church. The main aim of

this project was to plant a Great Commission church. Therefore, each of the four goals

targeted one of the three critical components of the Great Commission: evangelism,

discipleship, and church membership.

The first goal was to teach a biblical worldview to the body of the newly

planted Mustard Seed Church. This goal stemmed out of a desire to teach believers to

observe all things that our Lord Jesus commanded. Due to a lack of discipleship in their

formative years, many Christians in the New York City area are tremendously confused

when it comes to issues of biblical fidelity. Many believers in the New York

metropolitan area have known Christ for many years, but remarkably still have neither a

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biblical worldview nor do they have a biblically guided personal decision making process in place. Syncretism has seeped into the lives of many believers and this has led to lukewarm churches, entertainment-driven worship services, feeble and disinterested attempts at godliness, apostasy, and an overall ineffective witness in a sin soaked culture.

The second goal was to guide the attendees of Mustard Seed Church into doing actual evangelism. The strategic location and cosmopolitan nature of New York City will mean that Mustard Seed Church will have an ideal opportunity to reach the nations for Christ. Due to an abysmal understanding of terms such as "evangelism" and "gospel," many Christians in New York City are not partaking in actual evangelism. Many often suppose that they are evangelizing, but are in actuality doing nothing more than works of mercy or justice. This dearth of understanding is epitomized in the difficulty of finding a concise, yet theologically accurate, gospel tract.

The third goal was to create within the attendees of Mustard Seed Church a biblical understanding of church membership. Simply put, biblical discipleship cannot occur without a proper understanding of church membership. North American churches have an anemic perspective and understanding of church membership. In our vastly biblically illiterate context, many churches have succumbed to a capitalistic and consumer-driven ecclesiology. Biblical notions of church membership and church discipline have fallen by the way side. This has sadly led to the weakening of churches and to an overall loss in zeal to see the Great Commission fulfilled.

The fourth goal was a personal one. As a result of doing this project, I hoped to see my own worldview become more biblical, my zeal for personal evangelism increase, and my understanding of church membership to crystallize biblically. As Mustard Seed Church moved forward from inception, I hoped and prayed that God would use me to guide it to becoming a Great Commission church.

Context

From a secular perspective, the word "culture" has no simple definition. Studies and much literature have been devoted to the different definitions of the seemingly simple word, "culture." We could define culture from a historical perspective, that is, the traditions that are passed on to future generations; we could define culture from a behavioral perspective, that is, the learned, shared ways of behaving in life; we could define culture from a symbolic perspective, that is, the arbitrarily assigned meanings that are shared by a society.[1] Fred Jandt also believes culture could be defined from a structural perspective (i.e., patterns, symbols, interrelated ideas, or behaviors) or from a normative perspective (i.e., the ideals, values, and rules for living).[2] The local church gathers because of the gospel of Jesus Christ. In that sense, the universal church of Jesus Christ is of one culture. Yet, on a more nuanced, practical, and micro level; there are indeed a variety of different cultures gathered at any given church, on any given Sunday. Every local church has intercultural interactions occurring within it. Whether the intercultural interactions are happening across racial lines, socio-economic lines, gender lines, generational lines, or even worship style lines; intercultural interaction and communication is definitely going on.

My project's ministry context springs from a setting that is reflected best in what Hoover Wong of Fuller Seminary calls a "multiethnic church." According to Wong, a multiethnic church combines two distinct monocultural, monolingual groups as one congregation with an agreed, common third culture and language, for example, Western English.[3] Paul Hiebert's definition of a multiethnic church also helps to clarify

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[1]Fred E. Jandt, *Intercultural Communication: A Global Reader* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2004), 1.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Manuel Ortiz, *One New People: Models for Developing a Multiethnic Church* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 150.

the ministry context. He writes, "There is (1) an attitude and practice of accepting people of all ethnic, class and national origins as equal and fully participating members and ministers in the fellowship of the church; and (2) the manifestation of this attitude and practice by the involvement of people from different ethnic, social and national communities as members in the church."[4]

Mustard Seed Church was planted with a core team of people who were part of the intercultural and multiethnic ministry of Agape Mission Chapel. Agape Mission Chapel (identified as Agape) began in 1989 when the Korean Central Presbyterian Church of Queens (identified as KCPCQ) recognized the need for an English college group ministry for its second generation children in the Elmhurst neighborhood of Queens. The Korean Central Presbyterian Church of Queens was, and still is, a first generation Korean immigrant church. They are denominationally part of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

Though many of their Caucasian American denominational counterparts are liberal (and have forsaken belief in the full authority of Scripture), the majority of the Korean Christians in America are relatively conservative evangelicals. Korean Christians are often Presbyterian and they compose a "somewhat cohesive entity."[5] Agape's future, however, as a second generation church in America was inevitably impacted by its denomination. KCPCQ was originally planted in the Elmhurst neighborhood of Queens, New York City. Its senior pastor, Chang Eui Ahn, has been in ministry for over thirty-five years. The Korean-speaking congregation currently consists of a Sunday attendance of slightly below 200 members. According to the senior pastor's daughter, the Korean-speaking congregation once peaked in its attendance at roughly 300 persons.

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[4]Ibid., 149.

[5]Harvie Conn et al., *The Urban Face of Mission: Ministering the Gospel in a Diverse and Changing World* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2002), 313.

In 1995, the church moved to its current location in Bayside, Queens. The church bought land and built a new edifice in the Bayside community. The facility consists of a balconied sanctuary which seats 600 people. The senior pastor wished for the second generation Koreans to one day impact the English-speaking Bayside community in a manner the Korean-speaking population could not. The church is strategically located in a very heavily Korean populated community. As of the 2000 Census, Caucasians made up 58.8 percent of Bayside's population.[6] In addition, there is a large Asian American (non-Korean) population. According to census data, "Around the mid-1990s, a significant number of Korean families began moving into the area. As of the 2000 Census, Asian Americans made up a significant 22.7% of the neighborhood's population, most of which were Korean Americans, who made up 10.4% of the population and Chinese Americans who made up 9.2% of the populace."[7] The church is also located conveniently on the corner of one of New York City's most renowned expressways: The Long Island Expressway. Across the street from the church is New York City's highly touted Benjamin Cardozo High School.

Korean immigrant churches are common with immigrant churches of other ethnicities in that they prioritize the first-generation immigrant. After planting an immigrant church, the children of immigrants often accompany their parents to church. Church is a central religious and social activity within the lives of many Korean American families and is therefore, often a family function. The children often require a separate service for their spiritual growth because of their preference for English. The need for a separate worship service also arises due to the youths' assimilation into the majority New York City culture. Assimilation is defined as, "The intentional process of engaging in a new culture, becoming part of the mainstream of the new society one has

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[6]U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Community Facts," http://factfinder.census.gov (accessed August 10, 2011).

[7]Ibid.

adopted."[8] Assimilation forces a new contextualization of ministry as the gospel is taught and life is lived within a new language and culture. Successful gospel discipleship of young people within immigrant churches is directly correlated with how the church addresses the assimilation issue.

As students graduate high school and return from college, a separate young adult ministry is often required. In most Korean churches, this ministry is known as the "English Ministry" or simply the "EM" for short. Depending on the immigrant church's ability to provide for the spiritual needs of the second generation, the church will either retain or lose their second generation young adults. If they choose to leave their parents' church, many of these young adults generally tend to join one of three types of churches: a second generation Asian American church, a generationally minded church, or an established multiethnic church.

The second generation Asian American church is usually led by an Asian American pastor, who planted his own church after spending some time serving under a Korean senior pastor within an immigrant church. The generationally minded church is also usually a recent plant, but its distinguishing characteristics include: homogeneity of age and marital status (most of the attendees are often under 40 and are single), a Caucasian lead pastor, and an overt use of popular culture. In New York City, this will be a church like The Journey, whose Sunday sermon one week was entitled, "Friends with Benefits: Discovering God's Plan for Sex."[9] (The Journey frequently goes to see movies together and the sermon title was based on the recent movie, *Friends with Benefits*.) The third option is an established multiethnic church. As a backlash to some of

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[8]Glenn Rogers, *Evangelizing Immigrants: Outreach and Ministry among Immigrants and their Children* (Bedford, MA: Mission and Ministry Resources, 2006), 11.

[9]The Journey Church, http://www.queens.journeymetro.com (accessed July 28, 2011).

the insufficiencies they have experienced in the immigrant church, the typical second generation Korean American young Christian will desire deeper and more authentic spirituality. This desire for a deeper and clearer teaching of God's word is often combined with their generally academic dispositions.

Asian Americans are ". . . highly educated: one of every seven Asian Americans twenty-five and older have advanced degrees—that adds up to one million of you; 78 percent of the 1999 high school graduating class of Asian-Americans went right into college—the highest proportion of any race group."[10] Due to their inherent value of education as a people group, many Korean Americans will flock to churches that nourish their minds as well as their souls. Expository preaching is sought out and genuine biblical community is yearned for. For many post-college Asian Americans, a true "biblical community" must be multiethnic (or at least not all Korean) in a city as diverse as New York. Hence, they look for such a church. In New York City, the best example for this type of church would be Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Manhattan. Some distinguishing characteristics for this type of church are: multiethnicity (though Redeemer is comprised of mostly Caucasians and Asians—few other ethnicities comprise their body), a Caucasian lead pastor, and a far more liturgical and biblically guided church life than "contemporary casual" churches such as The Journey.

At Agape, as more high school students entered college and subsequently graduated into the workplace, the young adult group at the church grew in number. Financial support was provided by KCPCQ for this specialized ministry as the number of second generation Korean Americans grew. In addition, Chinese Americans began joining the young adult ministry. Upon moving to Bayside in 1994, Oliver Im was placed to serve KCPCQ's English Ministry as its pastor. In 1995, KCPCQ's English Ministry was formally named "Agape Mission Chapel." This formation came shortly after Agape

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[10]Paul Tokunaga, *Invitation to Lead: Guidance for Emerging Asian American Leaders* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 15.

decided to call a full-time ordained minister to specifically pastor them. Soon after the minister's arrival, Agape Mission Chapel was born. Agape however, never became a an independent church, but remained as a ministry of KCPCQ.

In 1997, Agape became financially self-sustaining as a ministry. Pastor William Mallick (who was trained with Campus Crusade for Christ and Prison Fellowship) began to serve as their pastor in 2000. For several years, he helped develop younger leaders with discipleship training and mentorship. By 2004, Mallick had retired and Agape began filling its pulpit on a weekly basis. During the past ten years, Agape has had interim pastors such as Daniel Ahn (the senior pastor's son) and William Mallick, but no real permanence was ever established in the pastoral role. Without a pastor, Agape was about to close its doors and shut down in April of 2011. Before doing so, however, one last effort was put forth to find a pastor to lead Agape. As part of that effort, the senior pastor of KCPCQ contacted me and requested that I pastor Agape. At the time of the request, I was a member of The Gallery Church in Manhattan. Subsequent to prayerful consideration, my home church's blessing and approval, and my sense of God's calling; I accepted Agape's call. On my first visit to a Sunday service at Agape, the total attendance was nine.

On April 24, 2011 (Easter Sunday), I began my role as the pastor of Agape Mission Chapel. Following an encounter with God through Joshua 1:6, in which God affirmed my call to Agape, I saw God do some amazing things. Attendance grew (peaking at about 60 attendees), but the most encouraging sign was the extraordinary interest in God's Word. Upon commencing Friday night Bible studies, the studies became formative, inquisitive, and spiritually developmental. An end time for the studies had to be set at 11 p.m. after one study went until 3 a.m.! After years of insufficient discipleship, there was a genuine thirst for growth in God's Word. Attendance at the Bible studies averaged at about twenty persons every Friday night.

After my arrival at Agape, the church's denomination (the Presbyterian Church

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(USA)) made a tragic decision. *The New York Times* reported on May 10, 2011 that "after 33 years of debate, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has voted to change its constitution and allow openly gay people in same-sex relationships to be ordained as ministers, elders and deacons."[11] This unbiblical decision caused many churches to depart from the denomination. It forced all faithful Christians within the denomination to take a position. Orthodox, biblical Christianity was at stake. Subsequent to the tragic news, I pled with the church's Korean-speaking leadership (including the senior pastor) to leave the denomination. At a meeting where all the leaders were gathered, I made a clear plea to the senior pastor and said, "As a brother in Christ, in love, I ask you to leave this denomination." The senior pastor responded in anger and said, "If you want me to leave this denomination, then you leave this church!" His instructions were clear.

After multiple pleas for them to leave the denomination, and another meeting with senior leadership, I was faced with a decision. Fidelity to Christ and His Word was on the line. Therefore, on April 8, 2012, after preaching my Easter message, I notified the senior pastor of my resignation. I could no longer, in good conscience, serve within such a denomination. My last sermon was preached on April 29, 2012.

Upon my resignation from the church, a core team of people who were under my pastoral care at the church also announced their imminent departures. They were committed to setting out with me to plant a gospel-centered, biblically faithful, Southern Baptist church in the heart of Queens, New York City. My wife and I underwent and passed the church planter's assessment given by the North American Mission Board. By God's grace, many key people were very supportive of the plan to church plant. It all culminated with Freddy T. Wyatt, my then pastor at The Gallery Church, commissioning my family on May 6, 2012 for the work of planting Mustard Seed Church.

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[11]Laurie Goodstein, "Presbyterians Approve Ordination of Gay People," *The New York Times*, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/11/us/11presbyterian.html (accessed May 7, 2012).

Rationale

Rationale for this project comes directly from the Great Commission of Jesus Christ. In Matthew 28:19, Jesus says, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."[12] Comprehending and believing that the call to make disciples is universal to all believers, this project is quite simply an act of obedience. Discipleship falls particularly on the shoulders of the local church and its pastor. In Ephesians 4:12-14, Paul says that the job of a pastor is, "To equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes."

The means by which God creates disciples is through the local church. Discipleship should always be occurring concurrently with evangelism among unreached people groups, and hence, it is incumbent for a church to be planted among the people. Upon reflection, therefore, on a very foundational level, this endeavor is far more than just a project. It is a call and an act of obedience. Additionally, it goes without saying that the project is a vital part of what God is going to do in New York City.

The rationale for this project is also seen by examining a few questions. Is there a need for a church plant in New York City? Why is now the time to plant a church? What benefits do I expect for the global Church through this project?

Timing is a critical component to harvest. Currently, God is moving in unprecedented ways in New York City. The Values Research Institute recently reported that the percentage of people in center-city Manhattan who identify themselves as evangelicals has more than tripled (from less than 1 percent to about 3 percent) sinc

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[12]Unless otherwise noted, all quotations of Scripture are from the English Standard Version.

1990.[13] This literally translates into thousands of people in New York City.

Although the growth in the number of self-identifying evangelicals is encouraging, it still leaves New York City in an overall abysmal spiritual condition. Regardless of the figures (which range from 2.3 percent to 3 percent), New York City is still one of the most unreached places in the world. According to one source, New York City has a smaller percentage of evangelical Christians than all of Beijing, China.[14] The same source reports that, "Throughout the south and Midwest U.S., there is roughly one evangelical church per every one thousand people. In order to achieve that same ratio in NYC, approximately twenty thousand churches would need to be planted."[15] Twenty thousand churches! There is irrefutably a colossal need for church planting in New York City.

The timing for church planting in New York City is now. New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg said it best when he said, "With more than half the world's people now living in cities, and with three-fourths of the people on Earth expected to be city dwellers by midcentury, cities around the globe, including New York, must confront all the effects of this urban growth."[16] As Christians however, we do not see the need to confront the effects of urban growth, but rather, we see the need to seize the opportunities that such growth brings and proclaim the gospel. It is no secret that the success of early Christianity was inextricably linked to the fact that it targeted the major cities of its day. The need to target the major cosmopolitan cities of the world is acutely felt today.

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[13]North American Mission Board, "Will The 9/11 Legacy Be A Church-Planting Movement?" http://www.namb.net/nambblog1(accessed May 3, 2012).

[14]The Church at Brook Hills, "New York City," http://www.brookhills.org/global/church_planting/nyc/index (accessed May 5 2012).

[15]Ibid

[16] Henry Goldman, "New York Tops London As City With Most Global Clout, Index Shows," *Bloomberg*, http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-04-02/new-york-tops-london-as-city-with-most-global-clout-index-shows.html (accessed May 5, 2012).

According to *The New York Times*, "With national languages and English encroaching on the linguistic isolation of remote islands and villages, New York has become a Babel in reverse — a magnet for immigrants and their languages."[17] The nations have gathered in New York City, and the scope is simply massive. *The New York Times* went on to report that, "While there is no precise count, some experts believe New York is home to as many as 800 languages — far more than the 176 spoken by students in the city's public schools or the 138 that residents of Queens, New York's most diverse borough, listed on their 2000 census forms."[18] Mustard Seed Church was planted in Queens—New York's most diverse borough. Mustard Seed prayerfully and intentionally seeks to fulfill the Great Commission by being strategically present in this borough.

Another perspective that is noteworthy is the perspective of influence. Where does New York City rank with regard to cities of global influence? Multiple rankings of the world's major cities have consistently put New York as number one in global influence. The latest survey, done by Bloomberg Rankings, put New York ahead of London, Paris, Tokyo and Hong Kong on the Global Cities Index (66 of the world's busiest commercial urban centers were judged each on the scope of its business activity; labor force; access to media and information; cultural amenities; and political influence).[19] We can effectively say that what occurs in New York City affects the rest of the world.

With regard to size, New York City proper is composed of five boroughs: Manhattan, Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens, and Staten Island. The city has a population of about 9 million people. According to one source, however, the New York metropolitan

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[17]Sam Roberts, "Listening to (and Saving) the World's Languages," *The New York Times*, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/29/nyregion/29lost.html?pagewanted=all (accessed May 5, 2012).

[18]Ibid.

[19]Goldman, "New York Tops London."

area (which includes portions of New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Connecticut) has an estimated population of nearly 22 million people—making it the most populous metropolitan area in the United States and the sixth most populous in the world.[20] Taking all this into account, New York is a vast mission field.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

Fred Herron once said, "Church planting is actually strategic warfare and is similar to attempting to establish a beachhead in enemy territory."[21] Spiritual warfare is a reality and is very much a part of church planting, but why does Satan hate church planting so much? Perhaps discovering the definition of "church" might give us insight as to why Satan opposes it. "A local church is a group of baptized kingdom citizens in a particular geographical area who understand and identify themselves as the local expression of the body of Christ and agree to live together as the body of Christ according to the kingdom ethic provided in the Scriptures," says J. D. Payne.[22] Payne goes on to clarify "kingdom ethic" by saying, "The New Testament ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper as well as other kingdom issues—such as worship, leadership, ministry to others, structure/organization, teaching and discipline, and evangelism and missionary work—are governed by this ethic, which involves love for God and neighbor (Matthew 22:37-40)."[23]

What is a church plant? The Canadian National Baptist Convention says that a "Church plant is a core group with a recognized leader who has been assessed and

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[20]The Church at Brook Hills, "New York City."

[21]Fred Herron, *Expanding God's Kingdom through Church* Planting (New York: Writer's Showcase, 2003), 223.

[22]Jervis D. Payne, *Discovering Church Planting: An Introduction to the Whats, Whys, and Hows of Global Church Planting* (Colorado Springs: Authentic Publishing, 2009), 42.

[23]Ibid.

senses God's call to plant a reproducing congregation that transforms people and communities into Christ-likeness."[24] J. D. Payne defines biblical church planting as "evangelism that results in new churches."[25] Payne's definition, however, is not a comprehensive one. Although Payne's definition was often the New Testament model for church planting, one cannot conclusively say that it was *always* the New Testament model. Many scholars, for example, debate and are unsure of how the church in Rome began. One conjecture is that the church there was planted by believers who had converted to Christ through the apostle Peter's Pentecost sermon.[26] If the conjecture is correct, then the church in Rome was not planted by evangelism. We would not say that the apostle Peter (who was the evangelist at the day of Pentecost) planted the church in Rome. Underneath the conjecture, the church at Rome was simply planted by a group of believers (likely Jews) who travelled back from Jerusalem to Rome and subsequently decided to gather together as a body. By reading the letter to the Romans, we can see that the Roman church was already flourishing by the time Paul wrote the epistle to that church. The definition, therefore, for a church plant is simply the formation of a new church (with "church" having been defined above).

Evangelism is the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Lausanne Covenant of 1974 defines 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 Saviour and Lord, with a view to persuading people to come to

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[24]Canadian National Baptist Association, http://cnbc.ca/start/seeds-congregations (accessed May 7, 2012).

[25]Payne, *Discovering Church Planting*, 4.

[26]Crossway Bibles, *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 2151.

him personally and so be reconciled to God.[27]

Limitations and Delimitations

The length for this project was limited to fifteen weeks. A thirteen week biblical wordview class that integrated teaching with actual evangelism took place during that time. There was one week to evaluate the attendees prior to the start of the thirteen weeks. There also was one week to assess the project after the twelve weeks was completed. Another obvious limitation was the inability to know in fifteen weeks whether or not a true biblical worldview was genuinely embraced by all.

A delimitation was the class size. The number of participants was limited to twelve. This enhanced class discussion and allowed for maximum group interaction. This also enabled me to assess the group with greater efficiency at the end of the fifteen weeks.

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[27]The Lausanne Movement, "The Lausanne Covenant," http:// www.lausanne.org/en/documents/lausanne-covenant.html (accessed May 7, 2012).

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL ISSUES

New York City. This massive convocation of humanity on the eastern

seaboard of the United States has consistently been a site of attraction for decades.

Tourists, immigrants, starlets, vagabonds, politicians, and residents all gather in New

York with aspirations as diverse as their origins. Yet through it all, New York remains *a*

city. While definitions for the word vary, the city has always had a polarizing effect on

the populace. Many are mesmerized by it and could see themselves in no other context.

These are those who fully imbibe the life, activity, flow, libertine views, and yes—even

the dregs of the city. Then, there are those who live in the city out of sheer pragmatism.

With no particular affinity for the city, these are those who recognize the utilitarian value

of a colossal conglomeration of humanity and appreciate its financial benefits—no

questions asked. Lastly, there are those who avoid the city like the plague. Already

having an initial skepticism toward any gathering of fallen humans, these are those who

see the city as the epitome of all that is wrong with our world today. In their minds, the

city is a haven for criminals, a breeding ground for the sexually immoral, a cesspool of

diseases and outbreaks, a showcase for poverty, and an enemy of families and the natural

order.

As Christians in a fallen world, what ought to be our perspective of the city? It

goes without saying that a Christian perspective of the city ought to be a biblical

perspective of the city, and hence the inevitable question arises, "What does the Bible

have to say about the city?" In this endeavor, one ought to strive for a biblical theology

of the city.

In the early eighties, my father (who is an ordained minister) settled in New York City. Not too long after, he travelled back to Seoul, South Korea where I had been in the care of my grandparents and brought me to live with him in New York City. My father was a church planter, and he had a heart for the nations. He recognized the pivotal nature of New York City for the Great Commission, and as a result of this awareness; he planted a church named The World Evangelization Church. My father's motive was embodied in the church's name. I was three when I arrived in "The Big Apple." Since my arrival, I have never lived anywhere else. My wife was born and raised here, our children were all born here, and all my formal education (outside of seminary) has all been in New York City. For better or for worse, this city has been my home.

My father's church plant struggled numerically for many years. The young congregation was situated in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, and I lived and grew up in the Bushwick neighborhood of Brooklyn (roughly two miles from the church). Prior to the gentrification that is now taking place in these neighborhoods, criminal activity ruled the day (and night). New York City was gripped by a heroin and cocaine epidemic and Bushwick, in particular, was under siege. Although those two neighborhoods represented a microcosm of the city-at-large, I was nonetheless given a front row seat to the cosmopolitan that is New York City. A recurring question in the minds of many Christian New Yorkers during that era must have been, "Has God forsaken New York City?"

The Christian's Posture Towards The City

Does God forsake cities? What is His view of cities and in particular, what does the Bible say about cities? Are cities truly bastions of wickedness that deserve God's righteous condemnation? What should be the Christian's posture towards the city?

Cities, or large towns, are no strangers to the inspired Scriptures. Were they,

however, God's good design or are they symbols of human rebellion? In Genesis 1:28, we see God issuing a divine mandate to the freshly created human couple. The text reads, "And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."[1] In Genesis 9:1, the same command is given again to Noah after the globally cataclysmic Flood: "And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and *fill* the earth" (emphasis added). As image bearers of God Himself, humanity is commanded by God to fill the earth for the sake of its Creator's glory. What follows the command is anything but obedience.

Having lived in New York City for almost thirty years, I know full well that the pride and boast of a city is its population. As the largest city in the United States, New York is not known for its humility. When humans congregate, they begin to collaborate. Strength in numbers frequently translates into strength in technology. The concept is simple: own the technology and you will control the world. The technological skyscrapers that line the Manhattan skyline are simultaneously beauties and tragedies. It highlights the innovation of man who reflects the innovation and wisdom of his Creator, but it also highlights the pride of man. The Manhattan skyline (or any "downtown" area in a major city) is a declaration of man's pride. The illusions of humanity's permanence, autonomy, and invincibility are in full display through the Manhattan skyline. In sharing what I am about to disclose, my intent is to help make palpable the emotions present when a city comes under attack and the symbol for its financial prowess is decimated.

September 11, 2001, was the most horrific atrocity my eyes ever witnessed personally. On that day, nearly 3,000 people were killed in the most brutal terrorist attack on American soil. The day plays back vividly in my mind. As a college senior

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[1]Unless otherwise noted, all quotations of Scripture are from the English Standard Version.

that day, I was about to get a haircut prior to heading to classes at Bernard Baruch College in mid-town Manhattan. As I walked into my neighborhood barbershop, every eye was glued to the television screen as I saw—what I thought at the time—was a Hollywood movie. The news channel was broadcasting footage of both the World Trade Center and the Pentagon emitting plumes of smoke after al-Qaeda terrorists hijacked four planes and flew them into the nationally symbolic structures (United Airlines flight 93 crashed in a field in Pennsylvania). As we watched the television in disbelief, at 9:59 a.m., less than an hour after being hit by a hijacked airliner, the South Tower (2 World Trade Center) crashed before our very eyes on the television screen. My barber, Paul, hurriedly finished cutting my hair and promptly told the other waiting customers to go home—he was closing for the day. A man then walked into the barbershop, yelled an expletive and declared war. For better or for worse, it felt as if the entire city banded together that day. Strangers gave strangers rides over each of Manhattan's bridges. New Yorkers were banded together—perhaps out of fear as much as for comfort. As soon as I got out of the barbershop, I ran towards the Brooklyn-Queens border where I knew I could get an unobstructed view of lower Manhattan. When I got there, it was nothing like anything I have ever seen. The smoke of the Twin Towers ascended in thick clouds into heaven.

Over ten years later, September 11 has become a notorious memory for most New Yorkers. The city now looks forward to the day when One World Trade Center (previously known as the Freedom Tower) will be completed. Walk into lower Manhattan today and you can see the tower under construction. It is already the tallest building in New York City. When completed, the 104-story skyscraper will be the tallest building in the Western Hemisphere and the third tallest building in the world. To commemorate the year of the American independence, the tower will stand at a symbolic 1,776 feet. One World Trade Center was supposedly inspired to show the resiliency and pride of New Yorkers, but I cannot help but to think about another tower that went

up in pride many years ago. I write all this to demonstrate that humanity has not changed much in 4,000 years. Towers that reach up to heaven, even after they are decimated, are almost obligatory constructions. Man feels compelled to congregate and construct skyscraping towers in order to proudly declare their invincibility. To examine this age-old condition of the human heart, we will look to Scripture and particularly, the historical account of the tower at Babel.

What Went Wrong at Babel?

By the eleventh chapter of Genesis, one sees human rebellion once again in full bloom. Rather than obeying the divine mandate to disperse and fill the earth, mankind gathers together in the land of Shinar and decides to build a city together. This is how the inspired text reads:

> Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. And they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly." And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth." And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built. And the LORD said, "Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech." So the LORD dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth. And from there the LORD dispersed them over the face of all the earth. (Gen 11:1-9)

There are a number of things to note about this early city of man. First is collaboration. Cities, by definition and nature, are large gatherings of collaborating people. Babel was no different. Municipalities do not run without collaboration. The Scripture text clearly says in verse 4 that it was the very *intent* of the people to build a city (along with a tower). Yahweh, in His infinite wisdom, had commanded them to disperse and populate the earth, but the people decided to disobey and be sedentary collaborate in building themselves a city. With the entire earth of one language, the

the people were not only able collaborate, but they were also able to see the value of having a unified language for the sake of collaboration. With disobedience now in full bloom, the humans realize that the preservation of human autonomy and pride will only come about through the establishment of a city. Verse 4 shows that their desire for a city stems from a desire to make a name for themselves. It is all about the glory of man—the height of which can be seen in their desire to build a tower "with its top in the heavens." Collaboration often does bring about the advent of new technologies and methods. Verse 3 displays technological advancement unfolding in the midst of collaboration. The builders, however, use technology to attempt to control their own destinies and it is the complete antithesis of what God had in mind for the world. In irony, the LORD had to "come down" to see the new city built by man. Once down in the city, God acknowledges the harmful potential of a unified and proud human establishment and diversifies the languages. This diversification of languages causes confusion among the humans and it has the desired effect of dispersing the people all over the globe. God's intent and will once again rules supreme and the entire episode ends with the very fitting words, ". . . and they left off building the city" (Gen 11:8).

Cities in the Bible

Babel ended notoriously. The name Babel is used later in the Old Testament for the city of Babylon.[2] The city of Babylon represented a city full of human ambition that sought to dethrone God and claim the earth as its own. Babel, however, was not even the first city in the Bible. The first city mentioned in the Bible is found in Genesis 4:17, which says, "Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch. When he built a city, he called the name of the city after the name of his son, Enoch." After breaking fellowship with God, Cain goes out and builds the first mentioned city in the Bible.

Do the cities of Enoch and Babel mean that all cities are inherently wicked and

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[2]Crossway Bibles, *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 69.

against the will of Yahweh? No. What they represent are societies that attempt to have community without God. As one reads the rest of Genesis 4, he will see that Cain's line was technologically and culturally adept (e.g., the ability to play lyres and the ability to forge tools from iron). These advancements unequivocally aided Cain's line in building cities. Yet, these cities were devoid of God as we see Cain's descendant Lamech engaging in polygamy and boasting about killing a man who merely wounded him. With all their cultural and technological advancements, the line of Cain became more wicked rather than good. Moses wrote Genesis 10:6 while leading Israel in the wilderness. He was probably heartened that civilized cities such as those in Egypt were not centers of God's presence to bless (the verse noting Egypt as the son of Noah's cursed son, Ham).

Though Enoch and Babel represent cities that have gone awry, the Bible does not categorically condemn cities. It does, however, present an overall realistic picture of what cities are. Cities are gathering sites for humans. Humans make the city. Humans are gloriously made in the image of God, but humans are also desperately wicked. Humans are fallen creatures, and therefore what ensues from man's heart is corruption and wickedness. Multiply this innate depravity by the vast count of souls living in the cities around the globe and the inevitable expressions of urban sin will unequivocally be heart-wrenching and overwhelming. The gathering of depraved humanity is often the biblical picture of the city and it is the present reality of the modern city. It does not mean that cities just delve into anarchy and chaos (as we saw with the line of Cain, God does pour out his common grace even to the progeny of the wicked), but it does mean that outside of the grace of God they most certainly have the propensity to do so.

As a young student, Ray Bakke was confused and shocked when he read an article entitled, "Why Evangelicals Can't Survive in the City." In Bakke's synopsis of the article he wrote, "In essence, the author suggested that the Bible is a very rural

book about a very rural God who makes gardens and whose favorite people are shepherds and vine growers, and whose least favorite folks are urban dwellers."[3] Now of course, God is not a "rural" God—just as He is not an "urban" God. Yet Bakke's personal understanding of the importance of urban centers throughout the entirety of the Bible (which is the point of his book *A Theology As Big As The City*), is a bit exaggerated and reaching. Andrew Davey writes, "There is no great 'urban narrative' in the Bible that takes us from the city of Cain (Gen 4) to the New Jerusalem (Rev 21), in much the same way that urban histories of the twentieth century take us from Athens to Chicago to Los Angeles."[4]

What then, are the realities presented of cities in the Bible? The reality starts with the first city in the Bible which was built by rejected Cain. Along the way, one sees Babel and Sodom—cities abrogated or overthrown for their sins. Things do not get better after Joshua enters the promise land and allots to Israel her cities. By the time one ends the book of Judges, the men of the city of Gibeah infamously rape a woman all night and kill her by morning. The murder causes a civil war, and Judges 20:48 says, "And the men of Israel turned back against the people of Benjamin and struck them with the edge of the sword, the city, men and beasts and all that they found. And all the towns that they found they set on fire." After civil war, Israel and her cities could never maintain long term spiritual health. This ultimately culminated in the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles with Jeremiah famously crying out specifically for the city of Jerusalem, "O Jerusalem, wash your heart from evil, that you may be saved. How long shall your wicked thoughts lodge within you" (Jer 4:14). According to Jeremiah, the beloved city of

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[3]Ray Bakke, *A Theology as Big as the City* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 22.

[4]Andrew Davey, *Urban Christianity and Global Order: Theological Resources for an Urban Future* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), 60.

Jerusalem was filled with wicked thoughts and had a heart of evil. By the time of Daniel, Israel is living in exile within a foreign city. The prophet Jeremiah foretold of seventy years of exile and instructed the Jews to seek the welfare of Babylon during their exile saying, "But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare" (Jer 29:7). The word for welfare in that verse is the Hebrew word *shalom*.   From a biblical standpoint, shalom was not a call for a heavenly type of peace and welfare within cities of the earth. The intention of Jeremiah 29:7 is clearly not earthly urban welfare because by the fifty-first chapter of Jeremiah, God pronounces complete destruction upon the city of Babylon: "Thus says the LORD: 'Behold, I will stir up the spirit of a destroyer against Babylon, against the inhabitants of Leb-kamai, and I will send to Babylon winnowers, and they shall winnow her, and they shall empty her land, when they come against her from every side on the day of trouble" (Jer 51:1-2). Daniel knows about this prophecy and actually witnesses its fulfillment during his lifetime as the Persians invaded and made an end of the Babylonian empire. With great anticipation for prophetic fulfillment, in the ninth chapter of Daniel, Daniel writes, "In the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years that, according to the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet, must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years" (Dan 9:2). Daniel observed the desolation of two remarkable cities in his lifetime!

Looking Forward to a New City

By the time we get to the books of Daniel and Ezekiel, earthly cities are shown as ephemeral because they all eventually expired. Genesis 15:16 demonstrates that God waits until the measure of a city's sins are full and then He executes judgment for sins (essentially giving every city a very certain divine shelf-life).[5] Cities come and go. God, however, begins to show his prophets (especially the New Testament writers) a new

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[5]Crossway Bibles, *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 77.

city. A city that because its very foundation is divine—will last eternally. Daniel writes of it in Daniel 7:14, "And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed." The eternality of the new city is a stark difference from the corruptive temporality of the earthly city—especially when juxtaposed next to each other. The inspired writer of Hebrews informs us that the Old Testament patriarch Abraham was actually looking forward to this new city: "For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God (Heb 11:10). Lane writes, "The city furnishes the objective ground of God's promise as the focus of faith, both for Abraham and for Christians. The picture of Abraham in v 10, therefore, is not of a person engaged in pilgrimage toward heaven but of a man of eschatological faith continuously waiting for the consummation of redemption"[6] Looking forward to the new city while yet in exile, the prophet Ezekiel records, "The circumference of the city shall be 18,000 cubits. And the name of the city from that time on shall be, The LORD Is There" (Ezek 48:35). God Himself will be in this new city—a glorious prospect and a vast departure from the cities made by man.

By the time one gets to the New Testament, the writers are prolific and hopeful in their views of the coming eternal city. Many are familiar with the apostle John's famous vision at the end of the New Testament when the apostle declares, "And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Rev 21:2). It is quite remarkable that the apostle envisions the kingdom of God as a city—given that the oppressive Roman empire of his day was a collection of cities, with each city set up to emulate the capital pagan city of Rome.

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[6]William L. Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 47B (Dallas: Word Books, 1991), 353.

As Everett Ferguson writes,

> We may classify the cities of the empire according to the privileges they possessed.
> At the top of the scale were the *coloniae civium romanorum* (colonies of Roman
> citizens). These were sometimes granted partial or complete immunity from
> taxation. Each was a little Rome, Rome away from home. Some of the Roman
> colonies mentioned in the New Testament are Philippi, Corinth, Antioch of Pisidia,
> Iconium, Lystra, and Troas. Next in importance were the other towns that possessed
> the Roman franchise, the *municipia* or *oppida civium romanorum* (towns of Roman
> citizens). The "Latin" towns came next, where the Roman franchise could be
> obtained by holding a magistracy in the town government. Other cities possessed
> no official privileges, but among them were a few that still called themselves "free"
> (Ephesus, Smyrna, Tarsus, and Antioch of Syria), meaning their internal affairs
> were governed by their own laws, or "federate" (Athens, Tyre, and Rhodes),
> although this was anachronistic under the empire.[7]

During the time of the apostles, the cities of Rome were admired. Ferguson
writes, "The cities were what counted for something, and most people wanted to have a
home in the city (even though many of the nobility, who could afford to be snobbish,
often expressed strong preference for the peacefulness of their country estates in contrast
to the noise and confusion of the city). The city was where things happened, where the
opportunities were."[8] Unbelievers of the New Testament era (much like unbelievers of
today's era), often craved and envied the cities of Rome. Against this backdrop, the
apostles told their followers that no city on earth was to be considered their home. The
apostle Peter forced the believer to look forward to the eternal city as opposed to the
secular glimmers of Rome when he wrote, "And if you call on him as Father who judges
impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the
time of your exile" (1 Pet 1:17). Notice that Peter labeled believers as sojourners, or those
who are in exile. Michaels writes,

> Although past and present are indeed contrasted in both contexts (vv 14, 18; 4:3),
> Peter's attention is also focused significantly on the future (vv 13, 17; 4:5). He
> urges his readers to maintain an attitude of godly fear as they live out their allotted
> time in the cities and provinces where they are 'aliens and strangers'—i.e., until the
> end, whether understood as the day when 'the grace to be brought to you' is brought

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[7]Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids:
Eerdmans, 1993), 40-41.

[8]Ibid., 39.

(v 13) or the day when 'the One who judges impartially according to each person's work' carries out his judgment (v 17).[9]

No doubt the privileges of being a Roman citizen had considerable sway over those in the empire. The gospel writers knew this and even used it for a metaphor. The apostle Paul himself, though he had Roman citizenship, defers to a higher and heavenly citizenship while writing to the Roman colony of Philippi. In Philippians 3:19-20, Paul contrasts the earthly city from the heavenly by writing, "Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." Lightfoot writes, "Addressing a Roman colony from the Roman metropolis, writing as a citizen to citizens, he recurs to the political franchise as an apt symbol of the higher privileges of their heavenly calling, to the political life as a suggestive metaphor for the duties of the Christian profession."[10] Though the Philippians might see the metaphor, the glories of Rome will dissipate into nothingness in light of the new city—a city where as citizens we will even be given new bodies, "This is the glorious metamorphosis which will take place at Jesus' return for His Church."[11]

Perhaps no other book juxtaposes the earthly city against the heavenly city like the book of Revelation. Once again, the highlight of the book comes when John writes, "And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Rev 21:2). The New Jerusalem is indeed a beautiful scene—even to imagine—but the contrast is clear. Mounce writes,

> The New Jerusalem descends from heaven adorned as a bride for her husband. The adornment is given in detail in verses 11-21. In 19:7 the people of God were

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[9]Ramsey J. Michaels, *1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 49 (Waco: Word Books, 1988), 62.

[10]J. B. Lightfoot, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1953), 52.

[11]M. R. DeHaan, *Studies in 1 Corinthians: Messages on Practical Christian Living* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1956), 184.

presented as a bride; here the same figure is used of the place of their abode, the heavenly Jerusalem. The contrast between the earthly city as harlot and the heavenly city as bride is obvious. Beasley-Murray notes that "Revelation as a whole may be characterized as *A Tale of Two Cities*, with the sub-title, *The Harlot and the Bride*."[12]

What then remains? What remains are the city of God and the city of man. What remains are Christ and Cain. The difference is eternality or temporality. The difference is the Bride or the Harlot. It is simultaneously discouraging as it is encouraging, but this realistic and biblical view must be held if one is to effectively discover his Christian mission in the urban contexts of the world.

The Mission of the Church in the Urban Context

With the stark and grim reality the Bible paints about human nature and cities, it is then of utmost importance to prioritize gospel proclamation as the primary task of the urban church. God definitely has a heart to save cities. In Jonah 4:11, God says to Jonah, "And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?" Paul makes it very clear in 1 Timothy 2:4 that God ". . . desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." "All people" surely includes those in the cities of the world.

Although many Sunday school classrooms dismiss the story of Jonah as a childish tale abounding with morals, the careful exegete will discover a goldmine displaying God's heart for the city. The book of Jonah is very much a Great Commission text and ought to be seen through the lens of an urban missiologist. One does not need to stretch too far to see the centrality of the gospel within the story of Jonah. First of all, Jesus Himself uses the experience of Jonah's time in the belly of the fish as a

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[12]Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 315.

picture of Himself in the tomb. Matthew 12:40 says, "For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." When the unbelieving Pharisees demanded a sign from Christ, Jesus responded in Matthew 12:39 by saying, "But he answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah." In other words, in the eyes of Christ, the book of Jonah is an illustration of the gospel. It is quite amazing that out of all the books of the Bible, Jesus chose the book of Jonah to display a most compelling analogy with His own death and resurrection. In actuality, Jesus was displaying the gospel through the book of Jonah. This of course, immediately establishes the historicity of the book of Jonah. The fact that our Lord compares His resurrection to the time Jonah spent in the great fish, plainly establishes the reality that just as Jesus' resurrection was a historical and bodily resurrection—so was Jonah's time in the belly of the great fish.

Jonah 1:1 opens with, "Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying." If the book of Jonah is an accurate demonstration of God's heart for the city, then it is of particular interest to note what the Christian's main task in the city ought to be. Just what is God calling us to go do? As with the prophet Jonah, the word of the LORD has come to us. The Lord has entrusted us with the Great Commission. God loves the city and His primary objective is to save the city—eternally. This eternal salvation is only possible through the proclamation of the gospel. Examine God's command to Jonah in Jonah 1:2, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me." Notice the immediacy and the urgency behind God's command to Jonah. God's first word to Jonah is the word "arise." God loves the city and we are to spring forth immediately into action. The moral conditions of Nineveh are representative of the conditions within our cities today. The depravity is only different by a matter of degrees. The apostle Paul informs us of this spiritual reality when he says in Romans 1:18, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against

all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress

the truth." The urgency could not be greater within global cities today. The main task

within every city on the face of this globe is gospel proclamation. In fact, one can say

that the size of the city actually matters to God, and that the task of evangelism becomes

all the more critical in the eyes of God as the city grows larger. One is able to see the

reality that every soul counts to God in Jonah 4:11 which reads, "And should not I pity

Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know

their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?" The larger the city, the greater the

heart God has to see the gospel proclaimed to it. DeHaan writes,

> The word of the Lord to Jonah "arise and go" is the word of the Lord to every
> believer in this dispensation. For Nineveh certainly represents a lost world, tottering
> on the brink of doom and destruction, and heading for everlasting punishment. And
> yet with millions and millions dying today without Christ, the Church of the Lord
> Jesus has been lolling in ease and luxury. In these days of boom and prosperity we
> have somehow like Jonah settled down to enjoy our salvation, and have closed our
> eyes and ears to the plight of the millions about us without the Lord Jesus Christ.
> How long since you, my Christian brother, have talked to some soul for the Lord
> Jesus Christ? What proportion of your time and talent do you give to let others
> know the story of redeeming grace? [13]

In a broken and lost city, the gospel of Jesus Christ is the only hope for

mankind. The gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ as humanity's God and Savior.

Though the gospel is profound and definitely can be elaborated upon, it has four essential

minimum elements to it. I call it the "gospel minimum." First, it notifies hearers that

God is a holy, loving, righteous and just Creator of the universe. Second, it notifies men

that all humans are sinners—both by birth (nature) and volition—and that all sinners

justly deserve to be thrown into the eternal lake of fire under and by the wrath of God.

Humanity's sins have separated them from God. Third, it tells men the great news that

Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, fully God and fully man; died on

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[13] M. R. DeHaan, *Jonah: Fact or Fiction?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1957), 22.

the cross and paid for our sins. Jesus fully absorbed God's wrath on our behalves. Three days later, he resurrected from the grave. 1 Corinthians 15:3 says, "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures." Gordon Fee comments on the verse, and says,

> This is the language of atonement. In saying 'Christ died for our sins,' the creed presupposes alienation between God and humans because of human rebellion and sinfulness, for which the just penalty is death. Death 'for our sins' means that one died on behalf of others to satisfy the penalty and to overcome the alienation. Thus, even though there is no 'theory' of atonement here, just the affirmation, the concept of substitution is woven into the very earliest of the Christian creeds. In Pauline theology this includes not only forgiveness from past sins, but in a very real sense deliverance from the bondage of one's sinfulness as well.[14]

The final point of the gospel is a call to repentance and personal faith in Christ. Salvation is not granted outside of personal repentance and faith in the gospel. In the Lucan version of the Great Commission, Luke records Jesus saying, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem" (Luke 24:46-47). The turning to Christ in faith results in a remarkable new life. Galatians 2:20 says, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Commenting on that verse, F.F. Bruce says that, "The figure is deliberately bold, designed to emphasize the finality of the death which has put an end to the old order and interposed a barrier between it and the new life in Christ."[15]

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[14]Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 724-25.

[15]F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on Galatians*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Paternoster Press, 1982), 144.

The Place of Good Deeds

Having established the church's primary task to be evangelism and the work of saving souls from God's wrath, a secondary task of the church is the performance of good deeds. Good deeds can be done as a means to evangelism or it can be done as a stand-alone—just purely out of Christian identity. Post-regeneration, the performance of good deeds is one of the purposes of the Christian's life, as seen in Ephesians: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Eph 2:10). However, the primacy of evangelism over good works is established by Jesus when He says, "In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matt 5:16). Clearly, the purpose of good works is to bring God the Father glory. Unbelievers can only give God the Father glory through the gospel. Second, the only reason why people would give God (instead of you) glory for your good works is if you had already evangelized to them.

Deuteronomy 15 gives an interesting insight into the issue of the poor. It reads,

> But there will be no poor among you; for the LORD will bless you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance to possess—if only you will strictly obey the voice of the LORD your God, being careful to do all this commandment that I command you today. For the LORD your God will bless you, as he promised you, and you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow, and you shall rule over many nations, but they shall not rule over you. (Deut 15:4-6)

God promises to bless the people so that "there will be no poor" among them. Interestingly, however, by verse 11 of the same chapter, God says, "For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore I command you, 'You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land'" (Deut 15:11). Jesus echoes the same promise in Matthew 26:11 when he says, "For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me." The teaching seems to be that though it is God's intent to abolish all poverty (Deut 15:4), but because of humanity's inability to keep the

32

just laws of God, God decrees that poverty will always continue in our earthly cities. This is a very different promise than what some contemporary evangelical writers have promised.

Some believe that if Christians and the Church fulfill their obligations, then God's shalom (or peace) is attainable on earth within cities today. In his definition of shalom, Robert Linthicum writes, "Shalom is a state of wholeness and completeness possessed by a person or a group that includes good health, prosperity, security, justice, and deep spiritual contentment."[16] Linthicum continues, "Jesus described this kingdom, with its Old Testament roots in liberation, peace, and justice, as a new order of right relationships with God and humanity, acted out in commitment to the materially poor and the poor in heart. This kingdom was the center of Jesus' preaching, healing, and ministering."[17]

Was the kingdom of heaven that Jesus had in mind truly—at its core—a kingdom of "Old Testament roots in liberation, peace, and justice" with a commitment to the materially poor? Is shalom promised to all men in every city as Christians shine their light? John Stott certainly does not think so. Stott writes, "Moreover, he does not bestow it on all men but on *those who belong to him*, to his redeemed community (emphasis added). So *shalom* is the blessing the Messiah brings to his people. The new creation and the new humanity are to be seen in those who are in Christ (2 Cor 5:17); and the kingdom has to be received like a little child (Mark 10:15)."[18] Poverty on earth will never end. Utopia on earth will never be achieved, but the good news is that true shalom comes through the everlasting gospel of Christ. One must bear this in mind as one works to

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[16]Robert Linthicum, *City of God, City of Satan* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 86.

[17]Ibid., 104.

[18]John Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 31.

shine the light through good works, and as he primarily shares the gospel with the lost. As Christians, we ought to give to the poor, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and help the orphan; but above all, we ought to preach the gospel to all. Shalom awaits all who will put their trust in Christ.

Are Cities More Biblically Strategic Than Villages?

Many in contemporary evangelical circles call for a missional focus on "strategic" cities akin to the missiological methods of the Apostle Paul. But did Paul have "strategic" cities in mind when he did his missionary work? Unfortunately, neither Luke nor Paul explicitly comments on how Paul selected the cities, regions or provinces where he preached the gospel. Eckhard Schnabel, after probing the issue extensively, concludes,

> When we survey the evidence presented in this section it becomes obvious that it is a significant overstatement to say that Paul's passion was the planting of churches in metropolitan centers or in the "strategic cities" of the Roman Empire. Paul's missionary work in Cilicia may have focused in Tarsus, but this is not certain. His ministry in Antioch was certainly a "metropolis mission." When he moved to Cyprus, he did not go straight to Paphos, the capital of the province, but to cities on the eastern and southern coast of the island. When he reached Asia Minor, he bypassed the large cities in the province of Pamphylia to evangelize in relatively small towns in southern Galatia, without attempting to reach Ancyra, the capital of the province of Galatia in the north. When he reached the province of Macedonia, he did not go straight to Thessalonica, the provincial capital, which could be reached by ship, but to Philippi. When he had to leave Thessalonica, he did not go east on the Via Egnatia to reach larger cities further west, nor did he travel straight to Corinth, the capital of the province of Achaia, but to Athens, a city with a great history and reputation but with a more humble present role.[19]

Paul did focus his ministry on cities rather than villages, and though one might never know for sure, Paul may indeed have had a strategic reason for selecting cities for the bulk of his missionary excursions. One cannot, however, be dogmatic on this issue.

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[19]Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary: Realities, Strategies and Methods* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 281-82.

As prestigious as cities are in the eyes of the world, they are not any more "prestigious" than the small villages in the eyes of God. In the eyes of holy God, all are rebels: the simple villager and the suave city dweller. Christians tend to "strategize" rather than pray, and in our haste we choose the mighty cities for their "global impact" potentials. One must remember that Jesus spent most of his time in villages and the countryside because, as 1 Corinthians 1:27 states, "But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong." As for Paul's methods, Schnabel concludes,

> My earlier conclusion concerning the question whether Paul had a geographical strategy has been confirmed. The geographical scope of Paul's missionary work was not controlled by a "grand strategy" that helped him decide in which cities to begin a new missionary initiative. The evidence indicates that Paul moved to geographically adjacent areas that were open for missionary work. This is true for provinces, regions and cities.[20]

The conclusion, therefore, is to preach the gospel to as many people as possible—as God gives opportunity. All need to hear the message of Christ, the cities— as well as the villages.

Conclusions

Cities are places where image bearers of God gather to live, work, and play. As such, cities have inherent value. This is simultaneously juxtaposed against the scriptural reality that all humans are fallen and capable of great evil. (As I write this, the greater New York area still grieves over the December 14th shooting deaths of twenty young children at an elementary school in Connecticut.) As such, true shalom is not promised for any earthly city in history. True shalom is only given as individuals come to a saving faith in Jesus Christ.

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[20]Ibid., 287.

The Christian, therefore, stands in tension. He must love the city and simultaneously hate all that is sinful about it. The Christian is an exile who is looking forward to heaven, but is also commanded to, "First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way" (1 Tim 2:1-2). This tension is not without priorities, however. Christians are first and foremost required to faithfully believe in their God and as a result, be about proclaiming the gospel of Christ. Evangelism is the Christian's chief task. The book of Jonah demonstrates that God loves the city and therefore, His chief priority for the believer is for him to preach the gospel to the city.

As a means for evangelism or as a stand-alone, good works are to be done by all Christians. By doing good works, Christians adorn the gospel of grace and are obeying their Lord who calls all believers unto good works (Eph 2:10). If possible, however, one should always seek to share the gospel in the midst of doing good works. The highest love that any believer can show to another human being is the sharing of the good news of Jesus.

Finally, we were also able to see that we cannot definitively ascertain whether or not Paul had an over-arching "master strategy" to target all the influential and "strategic" cities of the Roman Empire. We can however, conclude that he did most of his missionary work in cities as a result of his desire to win as many people—both Jews and Greeks—to Christ. Cities would be a natural place for Paul to target since most Jews outside of Judea were linked with their city synagogues. The book of Jonah also showed us that God has a heart for large cities. Paul and Jesus both show us the importance of faithfully preaching the gospel—both in the cities and small villages—for God is not a respecter of persons (nor of cities).

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ISSUES

Perceiving that the main three objectives of this project are all calibrated toward the ultimate goal of planting a Great Commission church, there are certain other questions that surface as a result of the pursuit of this goal. The answers to these questions will facilitate the accomplishment of this project's desired end. Although the ownership of a biblical worldview, active evangelism, and a healthy appreciation of local church membership are all ultimately works of the Holy Spirit; these questions will probe and deepen understanding in order to assist me in strategically planning and completing this project. Each topic covered in this section has a direct correlation to each of this project's three goals. This chapter will look into urbanization and postmodernism, the historical rise of postmodernism, the effects of postmodernism on cities, the effects of postmodernism on churches, and the effect of postmodernism on the costs and challenges of urban church planting.

Urbanization and Postmodernism

Modernization, urbanization, secularization and post modernization all amalgamate to cause missiological challenges and implications within cities such as New York. In order to replace a person's current worldview with a biblical worldview, one must first understand the person's current worldview. The world-class cities of North America are highly modernized. Secularization, the process by which religion is made impotent and irrelevant in society, is a staunch reality within North American cities such as New York. To reach these urban dwellers for Christ, one must examine urbanization and the prevalent world and life views of city dwellers. As the nation's elites flood in to

37

occupy cities, their influence is felt politically, economically, and city-wide.

Do the majority of these elitists have a generally uniform political bend? As Charles

Murray well noted in his book *Coming Apart*, the new American upper class tends to be

politically liberal. He writes, "The new upper class tends to be liberal, right? There's no

getting around it: At least for the narrow elite, every way of answering that question

produces a yes."[1] Manhattan is a microcosm of sorts to the secular postmodern mindset

of most industrialized cities. Murray writes, "Even excluding the Upper East Side, the

median family income of Manhattan south of Ninety-Sixth Street had risen from $39,300

of 1960 to $121,400 in 2000. The proportion of adults with college degrees had risen

from 16 percent to 60 percent."[2] This is significant because the secular centers of higher

education in America all help to form the postmodern worldviews of its students.

Perhaps the effects of the postmodern mindset that has gripped the cities of Western

nations are most easily noted in statistics that show realities such as the decline of church

attendance in what were traditionally considered to be "Christian nations." Murray

reports, "The percentages attending church regularly in Scandinavia, Germany, the

Netherlands, France, and Great Britain ranged from 2 percent in Denmark to 14 percent

Great Britain, compared to 32 percent for the United States. America is still exceptional

in this regard; it is just less religious than it used to be."[3] The trends are unanimously

global. Secularization is occurring. That much is certain. As one seeks to reach his city

for Christ, it will be helpful therefore, to examine the postmodern mind as one seeks to

replace it with a Christ-centric outlook on life.

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[1]Charles Murray, *Coming Apart: The State of White America, 1960-2010* (New York: Crown Forum, 2013), 44.

[2]Ibid., 73.

[3]Ibid., 208-09.

Urbanization

Urbanization is rapidly occurring around the globe and in America. The present age is a unique age in human history. In the current age, we have surpassed that symbolic point where over half the global population now lives in the urban centers of our world.[4] The world is now an urban world and the church not only needs to know about this, but has to be strategically prepared for it. In cities such as New York, to be urban is to be global. Anyone interested in the Great Commission will immediately be drawn to this implication.

Cities do not become cities overnight. Often, there is an urbanization process that takes place. Andrew Davey defines urbanization

> . . . the process through which urban settlements grow and develop. Urbanization may affect different regions of a society at different speeds and in different ways. People from rural areas are attracted to towns and cities in search of work and social opportunity, often crossing national boundaries. In some regions cities expand rapidly, with little control being exercised over the planning of new settlement areas and the provision of basic infrastructure needs. In other regions where the economy is booming, urban growth is tightly controlled and planned, and city authorities eager to keep ahead in the information revolution impose new patterns of urban life. Urbanization is not an experience limited to developing countries and emergent economies.[5]

As urbanization takes place, a plethora of interests are competing for control of the city. The rich and poor, opposing political parties, corporations, and global interests are all forces jousting for position in the city. Cities such as New York become global cities precisely because of the global representation and interests present within its city limits. Globalization, then, becomes an inevitable result of the formation of global cities such as New York City. Globalization is ". . . an amalgamation of the most significant forces shaping our urban areas and our world today: a transition far from complete but

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[4]Henry Goldman, "New York Tops London As City with Most Global Clout, Index Shows," *Bloomberg*, http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-04-02/new-york-tops-london-as-city-with-most-global-clout-index-shows.html (accessed May 5, 2012).

[5]Andrew Davey, *Urban Christianity and Global Order: Theological Resources for an Urban Future* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), 21.

impacting in unprecedented ways through numerous social, economic, political projects and practices."[6]

The Internet and other innovations in communications have lead to an explosion of information availability. Due to these innovations and the urbanization of the world, international companies are now making more money than the gross domestic product of entire nations.[7] Through these media, cities are quickly becoming the culture-shapers of the world. Globalization is rapidly taking place alongside urbanization. As a result of globalization, global cities transact with each other. Therefore, the most powerful cities become inextricably linked to one another. The most powerful cities today are the international financial and business centers—including New York, London, Tokyo, Paris, Frankfurt, Zurich, Los Angeles, Sydney, and Hong Kong.[8] However, beneath these cities are up-and-coming cities. This second level includes cities such as Sao Paulo, Buenos Aires, Bombay, Bangkok, Taipei, and Mexico City.[9]

Far from the organized tranquility and utopia one might expect from the massive convocation of humans, Davey astutely observes what is definitely true for New York City and every other global city, in that

> the global urban population changes with social transitions, migrancy, and community tensions. New demands are made on urban settlements to accommodate a vast array of groups and minorities within a common space: a process accompanied by competition and conflict as well as new forms of cooperation and coexistence. In an age of globalization, new forces are shaping settlements as new patterns of commerce and communication make many of the old foundations of settlements redundant. Employment becomes temporary and insecure; economic disparities become more apparent; migration flows make many settlements transitional, as people come and go; the destiny of the urban area will be determined by corporations and market forces controlled by transnational interests. Centrality and marginality is a scenario played out at all levels. High-tech towers and executive residential buildings put core zones off limits to many citizens. Suburban

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[6]Ibid., 23.

[7]Ibid., 24.

[8]Ibid., 29.

[9]Ibid.

gated communities similarly define social divisions in spatial terms. These social constructions are often found in other arenas—zoning and planning policy, immigration control, and welfare contraction. In other parts of the world, those cities struggling for a place in the new global hierarchies are hesitant about the status to be granted to impermanent settlements around which new arrivals flock. The city authorities seem unwilling or, more often in the face of readjustment programs, unable to afford to accommodate or absorb those who seek a new life and home.[10]

These harsh realities face every single global city in our age. It is the often neglected aspect of the often celebrated notion of globalization. New York City joins the list of other global cities in the daily fight that its inhabitants engage in order to amass critical resources. As Davey writes, "Negotiation is vital if cities are to be livable—between the haves and have-nots, between different ethnic groups, between the technologists and the technically illiterate."[11] And as rural dwellers join the mix within the city, the management of the city's infrastructure becomes a challenging yet critical task for public administrators. Again, Davey writes, "Influxes of new inhabitants, particularly from places without any urban tradition, are seen as making the development of any civil infrastructure perplexing."[12]

Despite all of these challenges, cities are still growing. Urbanization is leading to globalization and the world is becoming smaller. Within global cities, nations are interfacing with nations and creating a new whole. Gospel implications are massive, but obstructions abound. Foreign gods and ideologies do present themselves as obstacles to gospel propagation, but perhaps the greatest ideological challenge within the cities of the Western world might very well be postmodernism.

Postmodernism

As urban centers globalize, the urban missiologist must think about what goes

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[10]Ibid., 31.

[11]Ibid., 47.

[12]Ibid.

on inside the minds of those he seeks to reach. The urban missiologist who seeks to reach his city for Christ must follow in the footsteps of another, more ancient, urban missiologist--the apostle Paul. As Paul travelled in his missionary journeys, we see his acumen in engaging minds. In 2 Corinthians 10:5, Paul writes, "We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ." Normative spiritual warfare is the battle for the knowledge of God and consequently, it is the battle against any thought that seeks to impede that knowledge. Knowing your enemy is vital in the fight for discipleship. As a missionary or gospel preacher examines the cities in the Western Hemisphere, he quickly sees the utter reality that postmodernism has a firm grasp on the minds and hearts of many city dwellers. From the intelligentsia to the blue collared worker, postmodernism and her next of kin—pluralism—have embedded themselves as the status quo within many global outlets. The difficulty, however, is defining with accuracy what postmodernism really is. Postmodernism, itself, seeks to evade definition. As Myron Penner writes,

> Following the lead of certain authors, I want to suggest that the postmodern turn is best understood when one resists the temptation to define it categorically, as either a field of beliefs or a set of philosophical theses—except in a most general way. One may, of course, speak in a very general way of the sort of beliefs postmodern philosophers share, or certain philosophical moves or vantage points that are common to them; but ultimately there are too many deep and intractable differences along philosophical lines for this approach to define the postmodern turn comprehensively. For example, at bottom, Jacques Derrida's deconstructive program is quite different from Richard Rorty's neopragmatism or Gadamer's hermeneutics, and Michel Foucault would find little to agree with in Jean-Luc Marion's talk of God beyond metaphysics, or Emmanuel Levinas's emphasis on the face of the other. To complicate matters further, those who are most often thought to embody the term regularly deny they are postmodernists. There is little hope of unifying the various postmodern expressions under a single slogan.[13]

Though finding a concise definition of postmodernism might be evasive, Stanley Grenz, in his primer on postmodernism captures the pervasive scope of the worldview when he writes,

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[13]Myron Penner, ed., *Christianity and the Postmodern Turn* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing, 2005), 16.

Postmodernism assumes various forms. It is embodied in certain attitudes and expressions that touch the day-to day lives of a broad diversity of people in contemporary society. Such expressions range from fashions to television and include such pervasive aspects of popular culture as music and film. Postmodernism is likewise incarnated in a variety of cultural expressions, including architecture, art, and literature. But postmodernism is above all an intellectual outlook.[14]

Grenz then captures the spirit of the term "postmodernism" by stating,

Postmodernism rejects the very idea of the solitary scholar born of the Enlightenment. Postmoderns denounce the pretense of those who claim to view the world from a transcendent vantage point from which they are able to speak imperiously to and on behalf of all humankind. Postmoderns have replaced this Enlightenment ideal with the belief that all claims to truth—and ultimately even truth itself—are socially conditioned.[15]

The postmodern age has not banned religion. Rather, it has done something a little more demonically clever. Postmodernism has marginalized religion. It is not so much that one cannot worship God. The city-dweller is free to worship God. Rather, postmodernism has taken God out of the realm of objective reality and has attempted to make Him an "issue" of opinion. Hence, the city-dweller who worships God is free to worship God, but is not permitted to tell his non-worshipping neighbor that there is a God. As Grenz aptly put it, because postmodernism believes that truth is socially conditioned, the Christian gospel of an exclusive path to salvation is seen as an opinion (at best) and utter nonsense (at worst). Although many urbanites may not be able to verbalize their worldview, they fully believe in postmodernism's creed that "through language we create our world and that there are as many differing worlds as world-creating languages."[16] Jesus, therefore, might be one's way; but He is certainly not the only way.

Postmodernism in Development

In seeking to reach postmoderns with the gospel, it is helpful to understand the

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[14] Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1996), 38.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid., 56.

development of their cherished worldview. Postmodernism was centuries in

the making. With the ascendancy of the mathematical model, men like Rene Descartes

(1596-1650) came out of the Age of Reason and had a profound influence over the

thinking of subsequent men. Descartes may be well known for his adage, "Cogito ergo

sum" ("I think, therefore I am"), but the adage was borrowed by Descartes from

Augustine.[17] Descartes (and the Age of Enlightenment), were essentially sowers of the

seeds of doubt. Although he didn't fall in skepticism himself, he helped lay the

foundation for the highly skeptical postmodernist of today. Descartes proposed to doubt

everything except the subject's own existence (remember he said, "I think, therefore I

am").[18] Obviously, his stance begs the question, "how did we come to know?" but

Descartes was still committed to his position. This stubborn insistence on the "self"

inevitably would lead other thinkers to a deviance from the ultimate reality (God). As

Grenz writes,

> Throughout the modern era, intellectuals in many disciplines have turned to the
> reasoning subject rather than divine revelation as the starting point for knowledge
> and reflection. Even modern theologians felt constrained to build on the foundation
> of rationalistic philosophy. They, too, accepted the primacy of reason advocated by
> Descartes. In fact, in the Enlightenment climate, the only alternative to such
> rationalism entailed a denial that reason by itself is able to yield knowledge of
> eternal realities. But to make such a denial, one had to stand against the new
> intellectual flood engulfing the Western world with its emphasis on the voice of
> reason within rather than the voice of God from above. In the end, modern
> theologians ended up following Descartes's lead rather than trying to swim against
> the surge generated by the Age of Reason. [19]

What Descartes started, it can be said Immanuel Kant completed. We shall

explore Friedrich Nietzsche in a moment, but Nietzsche would not have existed without

Kant. In a short biographical sketch of Kant, Grenz writes,

> By the time Hume and others were burying the Age of Reason, the legacy of
> Western thought had been transferred to Germany. Hume's writings awakened the

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[17]Ibid., 64.

[18]Ibid.

[19]Ibid., 65-66.

creative genius of a man who was to become the greatest philosopher of modernity, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). Kant's life was outwardly uneventful. He was born, studied, taught, and died in the same place—the East Prussian port city of Konisberg (now Kalingrad, Russia). He never married or traveled. His schedule was so regimented that the women of the town are said to have set their watches by his daily afternoon walk. Not until he was 57 years old did Kant produce a major work. Yet the book he published that year, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, rocked the philosophical world. It initiated an intellectual tidal wave the effects of which are still felt. Chronologically and intellectually, Kant stands at the end of the Age of Reason. Yet his keen reformulation of the ideals of the Age of Reason breathed new life into the Enlightenment project and gave it the shape that would mark the modern era.[20]

Kant and his philosophy help shape the thoughts of the current modern era. According to Kant, one simply could never know God and though Kant did not seek to extinguish God's existence, he made certain that God was outside the realm of human knowledge. Again, it is Grenz who explains,

> In either case, Kant was forthright in declaring that we have no sense experience—and hence no direct knowledge—of noumena. All we truly "know are phenomena, objects as they are present in our experience. We gain no knowledge of things-in-themselves, at least not through sense experience and use of the scientific method. Like Humes' epistemology, Kant's theory of knowing placed strict limits on the ability of thinkers to argue from sense experience to transcendent realities (e.g., God, the immortal soul, human freedom). No reality that lies beyond space and time can be known through the scientific enterprise, because science is based on sense experience. It was not Kant's intention to support the religious skepticism of Hume, however. He wanted to approach metaphysical postulates from a more secure direction. To that end, he argued that such postulates belong to another domain of human reason—reason in its "practical" aspect. And he placed this aspect in relationship to the moral dimension of human existence.[21]

By placing God and the human soul in the realm of the unknown, through Kant's philosophy, society began to see them as unimportant (at best) and nonexistent (at worst). Nearly a century later, the thoughts of Friedrich Nietzsche followed Kant. Nietzsche called Kant out on his bluff and took Kant's philosophy to its necessary epistemological end. Nietzsche was similar with Kant in making the autonomous human self the center of knowledge and perception. Yet, Kant's elevation of the human mind resulted in the decimation of truth and knowledge by Nietzsche. Nietzsche writes,

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[20]Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism*, 74.

[21]Ibid., 77.

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> The hermit . . . will doubt whether a philosopher could possibly have "ultimate and real" opinions, whether behind every one of his caves there is not, must not be, another deeper cave—a more comprehensive, stranger, richer world beyond the surface, an abysmally deep ground behind every ground, under every attempt to furnish "grounds." Every philosophy is a foreground philosophy—that is a hermit's judgment: "There is something arbitrary in his stopping here to look back and look around, in his not digging deeper here but laying his spade aside; there is also something suspicious about it." Every philosophy also conceals a philosophy; every opinion is also a hideout, every word is also a mask.[22]

Nietzsche, therefore, tremendously differed from Kant. If anyone could be properly called the "father of postmodernism" it would be Nietzsche.[23]

Nietzsche was born into a strongly religious family. His father and both grandfathers were Lutheran pastors. In a brief biographical account of Nietzsche, Grenz writes that although Nietzsche was intensely pious as a boy, he abandoned his faith during his late teens.[24] After studying classical philology, Nietzsche was called to a professorship at the University of Basel in 1869. Considering his academic aptitude, the Leipzig faculty conferred on him a doctoral degree without his having written a dissertation. Very shortly afterwards (a year later), at the age of twenty-five, Nietzsche was promoted to a full professorship in classical philology.[25]

Though Nietzsche struggled with various disorders throughout his life (he died on August 24, 1900, after an eleven-year struggle with mental illness), his ideas were the firm foundation for postmodernism. Postmodernists' ridicule of the possibility of genuine human knowledge, their profession of the unreliability of human language, their rejection of the exaltation of the human self, and their demolition of the belief that all men everywhere are essentially similar; are all fruits of the work of Friedrich Nietzsche. In cities such as New York, the fruits of this intellectual framework are nearly ubiquitous

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[22]Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1966), 229.

[23]Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism*, 88.

[24]Ibid.

[25]Ibid.

barriers to gospel penetration. Everything from language to religion are seen as mere social constructs that lack objectivity. Any assertion to the transcendent nature of a worldview is promptly derided and denied. The Christian evangelist must bravely face the challenges brought on by years of godless thought formulations. Nietzsche vehemently called into question the entire structure of rationalistic human knowledge. Nietzsche writes, "All credibility, all good conscience, all evidence of truth come only from the senses."[26] In his view, what we view as "knowledge" is purely a human fabrication, on the grounds that the process of creating reality is an arbitrary and subjective process. (The evangelist in New York City is very familiar with this belief.) Nietzsche rejected Kant's grand theoretical comprehension of reality because what humans accept as knowledge is really nothing more than a self-contained set of illusions.

As a student of philology, Nietzsche's focus was upon human language and thought. Nietzsche essentially viewed truth as a function of the language we employ and therefore believed that truth "exists" only within specific language contexts. With the espousal of this sort of worldview, Nietzsche left no room for a God of prepositional truth. In Nietzsche's writings, one could especially sense his disfavor towards the narrow and dogmatic truth claims of Christianity. For example, Zarathustra warns his tired shadow by stating, "Beware lest a narrow faith imprison you in the end—some harsh and severe illusion."[27] One can easily surmise that Nietzsche did not think much of the Christian Scriptures.

In terms of labels, Nietzsche was a nihilist. Nihilism leaves men on the verge of psychosis and without hope. Grenz writes,

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[26]Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1966), 88.

[27]Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Viking Penguin, 1954), 387.

This makes Nietzsche a nihilist. In the end he contends that we have no access to reality whatsoever. In fact, he claims that there is no "true world." Everything is a "perspectival appearance" the origin of which lies within us. We live in a constructed world that comes from our own perspective. Rather than a vehicle for conceptualizing truth, language is an expression of an innate human talent for aesthetic creation. But our grand abstractions turn out to be metaphors in disguise, "fictions" that we author. Although we are constrained to recount it, says Nietzsche, this artistic fiction has nothing to do with a "real world" that supposedly exists outside ourselves. In short, he characterizes truth as a kind of error without which a certain species of life—humankind—could not live.[28]

Following the lead of Nietzsche, the modern era has seen an onslaught of attackers of knowledge and the universality of truth. Men like Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida have brought the development of postmodernism into full bloom in the modern era. The seeds sown during the Enlightenment, developed with Nietzsche, and modernized by Derrida have now fully entrenched the modern urban mind. The postmodernist feigns to accept all things, but in a convoluted mental perspective, he rejects any assertion of dogmatic truths. Specifically, the postmodernist's attack on language is particularly destructive to the human soul for it is written in Romans 10:17, "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ."

Pluaralism as the City's Faith

Church planters within urban centers face the difficult task of attempting to fertilize the sterile soils of postmodernism. The sad result of postmodernistic thinking has been pluralism. In pluralism, no one religion could dogmatically claim to be the only way to God. In a world with a plurality of views and religions, there are many ways to God. Truth is after all, a product of social construct that is manufactured by language and a person's individual perspective and culture. Pluralism calls for a tolerance of all religions and an intolerance of any religion that claims exclusivity. For them, nothing is more heinous and abominable than dogmatism and a claim to truth. There is no wrong idea except the idea that there is just one right idea. In fact, when push comes to shove,

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[28]Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism*, 91.

the pluralist really does not personally believe that there is a God. In their fanciful minds, utopia is achieved when all religions are "accepted." The end result is not a greater importance of spirituality, but rather, the marginalization of it. In many ways, pluralism is the de facto faith of many urbanites.

What exacerbates the urban spiritual malaise is that many evangelical Christians within many of America's metropolises have implicitly bought into the pluralism of their co-workers and friends. This has been the result of poor church discipleship, gospel-less preaching, and a lack of personal zeal for the Lord. As D. A. Carson acutely observed, "Too few preachers have so married content and passion that they have taught their people to think biblically and love and honor God passionately. The books on many church bookstalls are a disgrace—thousands of pages of sentimental twaddle laced with the occasional biblical gem."[29] As postmodern thinkers came to believe that objective truth was inaccessible, they naturally also believed that most (if not all) meaning lies within the interpreter and not within the text or the object being examined. With Scripture being central to the Christian faith, the assault on written interpretation has taken a toll on Christian advance. The deconstruction of sound biblical hermeneutics brought on by the postmodern age has infiltrated the Christian church. One of the reasons for Mustard Seed Church's inception was its founding members' desire to escape a denomination that decided to ordain openly gay clergy. This sort of disobedience to God's Word has been labeled merely an "interpretation issue" within many evangelical circles. The reader has been elevated above the text.

Cities now reek with pluralism. People are pluralistic without even knowing what pluralism is. Churches have been scandalized by pluralism. The priority that should be given to church-planting and evangelism have been lost by the seeping in of pluralistic thoughts. Many seminaries and Christian organizations have been touched by

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[29] D. A. Carson, *The Gagging of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 484.

pluralism. Seminaries no longer teach the inerrancy and supremacy of God's word, but rather place ascendancy on humanistic methods, reconstructive interpretation, and "leadership strategies." D. A. Carson writes,

> The impact of philosophical pluralism on Western culture is incalculable. It touches virtually every discipline—history, art, literature, anthropology, education, philosophy, psychology, the social sciences, even, increasingly, the "hard" sciences—but it has already achieved popularity in the public square, even when its existence is not recognized. It achieves its greatest victory in redefining religious pluralism so as to render heretical the idea that heresy is possible. Tolerance is radically redefined, and masks a sometimes brutal intolerance, at times in the faddish categories of PC ("political correctness"). It has contributed to the destruction of gratitude, and turned not a few women and men into chronic whiners and finger-pointers. For the Christian, it has certainly altered some of the priorities that must be adopted in evangelism.[30]

The impact of postmodernism has indeed altered some of the priorities that must be adopted in evangelism. The pervasive nature of pluralism within cities is a hard truth for any church planter seeking to evangelize and disciple with a transcendent, exclusive gospel. Postmodernism and pluralism have infiltrated the academic centers of global cities and they have been espoused by the average person on the street (often unbeknownst to the average person). Though the goal of every church planter and evangelist still remains the conversion of the human soul, the modern age has seen the onslaught of a new ideological weapon by the enemy. Truth is no longer persecuted as in bygone ages. Rather, truth is now marginalized. Hans Kung correctly says,

> For our grandparents, religion,—Christianity —was still a matter of personal conviction. For our parents it remained at least a matter of tradition and good manners. For their emancipated sons and daughters, however, it is becoming increasingly a matter of the past that is no longer binding—passe et depasse, passed away and obsolete. Moreover, there are parents today who observe with perplexity that morality has vanished together with religion, as Nietzsche predicted. For, as is becoming increasingly clear, it is not so easy to justify ethics purely rationally, by reason alone, as Sigmund Freud and others wanted to do; we cannot explain why freedom under any circumstances is supposed to be better than oppression, justice better than avarice, nonviolence better than violence, love better than hate, peace better than war. Or more brutally: why, if it is to our advantage or contributes to our personal happiness, we may not lie, steal, commit adultery, or murder; or even why

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[30]Ibid., 52.

we should simply be "fair."[31]

The holder of truth is seen as a discriminatory bigot who is not conforming to the "kinder" and more "tolerant" spirit of postmodernism. Within the highly secular cities of the Northeast, the evangelist quickly encounters those who view him and his gospel as an archaic misfit who stubbornly refuses to submit to the intellectual progress of the present age. Society-at-large has also lost much of the "language of Zion" that was so prevalent during earlier eras in American epochs. Instead, with the rise of evolutionary theory within the academia and postmodernism within the masses, the Church and her Word have been categorized as defunct. The biblical worldview is a foreign concept for many city-dwellers and even the creation story of Adam and Eve is not known in its entirety. Yes, the gospel remains the gospel, but the conversations are vastly different in our present age. Church discipleship also must take this into account and must equip believers to battle not only the postmodern thought patterns, but also seek to equip new believers from the ground up with a comprehensive systematic theology, biblical theology, and biblical ethics. Empirically speaking, new believers coming to Christ from these postmodern city-centers are uneducated on all aspects of fundamental Christianity. Discipleship, therefore, becomes a tremendous priority within the local city church.

Postmodernism and the City's Church

Causing greater consternation than the sweep of postmodernism within American society is the impact the movement has had on the redeemed—those within the church. With the advent of the postmodern belief that "choice" is a "right," many Christians have adopted a consumerist approach towards Christianity and the church. With biblical illiteracy already rampant, the result has been a search without knowing

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[31] Hans Kung, "To What Can We Still Cling?" in *Humanizing America's Iconic Book,* ed. G. M. Tucker and D. A. Knight (Chicago: Scholars Press, 1982), 40.

what to search for. Sermons and churches are now determined "good" by whether or not

felt "needs" were met. Instead of preaching the eternal gospel "that was once for all

delivered to the saints" (Jude 3), D. A. Carson notes that many churches have tried to go

the route of market analysis in trying to determine the "needs" of the masses in trying to

market a "product" to potential "consumers." Carson writes,

> Perhaps the most damning evidence comes in the little things. When church music directors never fail to tell their choirs to "go backstage" to get ready, it is not hard to discern the tentacles of the entertainment industry controlling our vocabulary and thoughts. When serious Christian journals publish articles with titles like "Will There Be Baseball in Heaven?" one can be quite certain that the author has not thought very deeply on Revelation 4-5, 21-22. When churches advertise themselves in the newspaper with lines like, "We feature entertaining worship"—an exact quote, I am afraid—one scarcely knows whether to laugh or weep. When a recent graduate of the seminary in which I teach writes and tells me of his struggles in an evangelical church to help people to see that in small-group Bible study the *primary* aim is not to ensure that everyone ventures an opinion that can never be gainsaid, but that the *primary* aim is to discover what Scripture says and to work out how to apply it to life, one smells more than a whiff of postmodernist decay. When ministerial students are asked about their sense of call to ministry, and the best they can muster is, "I think I would feel fulfilled doing that kind of work," selfism has struck again.[32]

Whereas one ought to know the people we are trying to reach, the modern

ecclesiological approach has been far from helpful. Knowing the people and their needs

are helpful to know, but such information does not guarantee God's blessing. God's

blessing is bestowed upon those who faithfully proclaim the gospel. As Carson says,

> The falseness is that such understanding and the adaptive change that springs from it guarantees spiritual growth. It may be something God uses, and in that case God is to be thanked, for he is the Author of all good gifts, not least knowledge, including knowledge of demographic profiles. But he may withhold his blessing: he has certainly done so before. Blessings are not guaranteed by reading Gallup reports.[33]

Church planters who plant churches within cities may be tempted to "test the

markets" and seek a crowd. Although knowledge or the use of knowledge is not a bad

thing in and of itself, as Carson writes,

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[32]Carson, *The Gagging of God*, 466.

[33]Ibid., 474.

Worse: the emphasis on awareness of the social sciences tends to divert people from things that are forever basic: the truth of the gospel, a living walk with the living God, love for men and women, an eternal perspective, hatred and fear of sin, a passion for holiness, a profound desire to see Christ exalted.[34]

The hunger for relevance within the culture-at-large has ironically led many urban churches to further irrelevance. The pathway to temporal relevance is to proclaim eternally relevant truths. Yet, as postmodernism sinks its teeth into the Church, eternal truths feel trivialized—even within the pews of a church. Postmodernism privatizes religion and it marginalizes it. It frowns upon any claim that a religious truth is universal and transcendent. Furthermore, with the heinous atrocities committed by radical Islam, religious dogmatism of any sort is viewed with suspicion. This reality is all the more acute in post-September 11 New York City. The church planter has a great temptation to veer away from sounding like any sort of fundamentalist because of what fundamentalist Islam has done. No one likes to be grouped with fundamentalist Muslims.

In an effort to avoid seeming prudish and fundamentalist, many within the urban church prefer to emphasize the communal, pragmatic, and tender aspects of the Christian faith. Church planters have heavy pressure to plant postmodern churches within postmodern cities. This is all done to gain respect and avoid offending the postmodern generation. Carson aptly captured this mindset when he wrote, "So why make offensive claims about the universality of truth claims? Why draw lines? It is painful to do so; it also seems impolitic. Why alienate people? Why should it be thought necessary to draw lines, when drawing lines is rude?"[35] Certainly, to the unregenerate, the gospel will seem rude. Hence, given such an aversion, the church planter will make his appeal and gather (in an attempt to keep) a crowd through other means. All this, has led to a shift in understanding of what the primary mission of the church ought to be.

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[34]Ibid.

[35]Ibid., 348.

Postmodernism and the Church's Mission

What, then, is the main mission of the urban church? With city centers bursting from its seams with endless needs, the church could most certainly be kept busy. Yet, the church must stay focused one primary mission. In the last chapter of Matthew's Gospel, Jesus gives the church her marching orders. Commonly known as the Great Commission, these were Jesus' explicit words for His church to go into the entire world, preach the gospel to all nations, and disciple all believers. This is the main mission of the church.

Postmodernism, once it seeped into the church, quickly derogated the church's commitment to the Great Commission. In the Enlightenment, people began doubting parts of the gospel. During modernity, people were too sophisticated for the gospel. Now, during postmodernity, the gospel has become marginalized. The mantra has been one of tolerance for all. Accept anyone and everyone—except for the intolerant exclusivists. The message behind the spirit of the age is simply, "Accept all religions." While it might seem caring and inclusive at first, the message is nothing more than an implicit proclamation that, "There is no such thing as truth." In an age where the secular masses are becoming overwhelmingly more cynical and suspicious toward all forms of exclusive, absolute, and transcendent claims; the gospel itself is simply not "good enough" for many church planters and churches.

In spiritually hard-parched lands like New York City, the immutable gospel of Jesus Christ barely lifts an eye-brow. Postmodernism has rendered all religious claims to be matters of opinion. Conversations on religion are often treated as taboo and when engaged, the urban evangelist quickly discovers a default position of skepticism. Pluralistic thinking has reduced much religious talk to an arena akin to national sports. There is no one "right" team to cheer for. You and I may support different teams, but ultimately, we accept each other because we really do not care about who wins a baseball game. We recognize that it is merely a game and that it has no real implications or

ramifications. Religion, in most North American cities, is treated with almost a similar sense of unimportance. Dogmatism such as the exclusivity of Christ for eternal life is not received well. The grip of postmodernism upon America has rendered the average city-dweller to be highly skeptical, uninterested, and sometimes even hostile to the Christian evangelist. (The low percentage of evangelicals in New York City supports this position.) The evangelist and his gospel are seen as narrow-minded, discriminatory, anti-gay, and irrelevant. Into this postmodern stew steps the church planter.

Western cities are steeped in postmodernism. Postmodernity tempts church planters to plant a different kind of church. Church planters are therefore, often caught in a quandary. They know that postmodernism hates exclusivity, dogmatic creeds, absolute morality, and transcendent truth. However, simultaneously, the church planter knows that the Christian faith is exclusive, dogmatic in its creeds, legislates absolute morality, and claims a transcendent truth. Hence, the gospel will surely offend many urban-dwellers. The tension is real and due to postmodernism, urban church planters could be tempted to plant churches centered on the wrong mission.

Granted, the word "mission" never really appears anywhere the Bible, but neither does the word "trinity." What is the main purpose—the very specific purpose—of the local church? What is her mission? It is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus unequivocally gave the command, and the weightiness of the command, clearly to us in Mark 16:15-16 when he said, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." Condemnation and salvation hinges on the church's fulfillment of her mission. It does not get any more crucial than this one mission.

Yet, what does one do in a city that hates exclusive messages? How can one possibly draw a crowd that is sunk in the depths of pluralistic thinking? One option is to preach the gospel with clarity, and to provide high quality, biblical discipleship. Another option is to change the mission all together.

Due to a fear of being labeled as irrelevant, the accommodating postmodern pastor will change the mission of the local church. With postmodernism breathing down the church's neck, the mission is often the pursuit of God's *shalom.* In his definition of shalom, Robert Linthicum writes, "Shalom is a state of wholeness and completeness possessed by a person or a group that includes good health, prosperity, security, justice, and deep spiritual contentment."[36] Hence, it is no longer the Great Commission, but rather, the Great Commandments ("love God and love your neighbor") that is often stressed. The trend hits an entirely wrong high pitch when leading evangelicals like John Stott say things like, "we give the Great Commission too prominent a place in our Christian thinking."[37]

With the mission now changed, the city church planter encourages everyone to be "missional." Good housing, sound health care, and quality education are no longer just platforms for politicians—they are now the rallying cries of the local church. Hence, the feeding of the homeless, A. I. D. S. testing, immigrant job training, and at-risk youth mentoring have all become the focal points of many city churches. Many church planters (often due to the pressures of postmodernism) begin centering their churches on these felt needs and slowly, they begin talking about these blessings as if they were the gospel! Once again, these are all good things, but they ought to never overtake the primary mission of the local church, which is to preach the gospel. This is especially true in a truth-starved postmodern city! Additionally, these good works ought to never be confused with the gospel. The gospel is the church's mission. Without this mission as its centrifugal point, the church ironically will lose any sort of eternal significance. This gospel, after all, is what Christians understand to be "of first importance." Greg Gilbert

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[36]Robert Linthicum, *City of God, City of Satan* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 86.

[37]John Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World: What the Church Should Be Doing Now* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1975), 29.

correctly writes,

> You cannot proclaim the "full gospel" if you leave out the message of the cross, even if you talk for an hour about all the other blessings God has in store for the redeemed. To do that would be like picking up an armful of leaves and insisting that you're holding a tree. Unless those leaves are connected to the trunk, you don't have a tree; you just have an armful of dead leaves. In the same way, unless the blessings of the gospel of the kingdom are connected to the cross, you don't have a gospel at all. Take a look again at those passages from Matthew and Mark where Jesus preaches the arrival of the kingdom. If you look closely, you'll notice that Jesus never preaches simply, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." He always preaches, "*Repent*, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," or, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand; *therefore repent and believe the gospel.*" That is a crucial thing to keep in mind; indeed it is the difference between preaching the gospel and preaching something that is not the gospel at all. To proclaim the inauguration of the kingdom and all the other blessings of God without telling people how they may become partakers of those blessings is to preach a nongospel. Indeed it is to preach an *anti*gospel—*bad news*—because you're simply explaining wonderful things that your sinful hearers will never have the opportunity to be a part of. The gospel of the kingdom—the broad sense of "gospel"—therefore, is not merely the proclamation of the kingdom. It is the proclamation of the kingdom *together with* the proclamation that people may enter it by repentance and faith in Christ. Perhaps, in fact, it would be more accurate (though clunky) to speak of the gospel of the cross and the gospel of the kingdom *through the cross*. [38]

The Cost of Church Planting in the Postmodern City

The material discussed in this chapter could leave the prospective urban church planter in a state of fearful nausea. The enemies seem strong, cleverly intellectual, and resilient. Yet, as long as one is preaching the gospel and making disciples, Almighty God promises to be with him (Matt 28:20). There are some considerations, however, that one must take in order to be an effective church planter in a global, postmodern city.

One such consideration is cost. Postmodern cities gripped by widespread skepticism often create difficult spiritual soil. In such soil, churches are small and financial giving is meager. Potential urban church planters must prepare for such fields as they would for any other global, unreached people group region. As postmodernism

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[38]Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert, *What is the Mission of the Church? Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 107-8.

takes hold of a city, Christianity is marginalized. Subsequently, financial support for

Christian initiatives becomes minimal. This occurs as a result of small numbers and

small faith. With small numbers of adherents to the Christian faith, giving will be

unequivocally small. Furthermore, the impact of postmodernism within the

minds of some city-dwellers translates into parsimonious giving. Churches in such

financial climates will find it a struggle to keep their doors open.

        In postmodern, secular Europe, many churches are being turned into mosques.

In fact, the rise of Islam in Europe is alarming. As Europeans have fallen prey to

postmodernism and secularism, Muslims have populated Europe. European countries

have taken notice and some are trying to combat the influence of Islam with national

laws. France and Belgium passed laws prohibiting Muslim women from wearing the

burqa in public.[39] Simultaneously, the majority of voters in a Swiss referendum

supported a ban on building minarets outside mosques.[40] In addition, lawmakers are not

the only ones taking notice of postmodern Europe's slide into Islam. We all recall

Norwegian fanatic Anders Behring Breivik, who in July 2011, said that he was motivated

to kill 77 people in two attacks out of a desire to fight what he presumed to be the

Islamization of Europe.[41] Soeren Kern writes,

> Muslims in Europe are increasingly converting empty Christian churches into
> mosques. The proliferation of mosques housed in former churches reflects the rise
> of Islam as the fastest growing religion in post-Christian Europe. There are now
> more practicing Muslims than practicing Christians in many parts of Europe, not
> only in large urban centers, but also in smaller towns and cities across the continent.
> As Islam replaces Christianity as the dominant religion in Europe, more and more

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[39]"Trouble in Trappes," *The Economist*, http://www.economist.com/
news/europe/21582314-violence-erupts-over-controversial-burqa-ban-trouble-trappes
(accessed 19 September 2013).

[40]Nick Cumming-Bruce and Steven Erlanger, "Swiss Ban Building of Minarets
on Mosques," *The New York Times*, http://www.nytimes.com/ 2009/11/30/
world/europe/30swiss.html?_r= (accessed September 19, 2013).

[41]Laura Smith-Spark, "Norway Killer Anders Breivik Ruled Sane, Given 21-
Year Prison Term," *CNN*, http://www.cnn.com/2012/08/24/world/europe/norway-
breivik-trial/index.html (accessed September 19, 2013).

churches are set to become mosques, which increasingly serve not only as religious institutions but also function as the foundational political building blocks for the establishment of separate, parallel Muslim communities in Europe that are based on Islamic Sharia law. The latest churches destined to become mosques are located in Germany, where the Roman Catholic Church has announced plans to close up to six churches in Duisburg, an industrial city in northwestern part of the country, due to falling church attendance.[42]

Though deviant in their gospel, the Roman Catholic Church is often looked to as the symbol for global Christianity by the secular media. Roman Catholicism's losses in secular Europe and America have been well documented by the secular media. Media outlets have labeled Rome's losses as the "decline of Christianity" and have reported,

> As Pope Benedict XVI prepares to relinquish his office, church leaders planning for a new pontiff are sure to deliberate over one of his longtime goals: replenishing Europe's deserted pews. From the start of his pontificate in 2005, the pope focused on the decline in Christianity across the Continent, saying religious faith had been pushed to the margins of public life in the church's historic home. The pope aimed to reverse this trend by taking his message on the road in countries such as Germany, France, Spain and Italy, where many people are nominally Catholic but fewer actually practice.[43]

Germany, France, and the Roman Catholic Church are not alone in seeing decline. Nominal, but non-practicing Christianity is quickly becoming a common sight within major American cities. As the roots of postmodernity become more pervasive and entrenched, church membership has declined in the largest Protestant denomination in America. In 2011, Bob Smietana reported,

> The new numbers are a sign that the denomination is in trouble, Baptist leaders say. "This is not a blip," said Ed Stetzer, president of LifeWay. "This is a trend. And the trend is one of decline." In 2010, Southern Baptists baptized 332,321 people, or 17,416 fewer than in 2009, according to a report released by Nashville-based LifeWay Research. This marks the eighth time in 10 years that baptisms have declined and the lowest number of baptisms since the 1950s. The report was released in advance of the convention's annual meeting, which opens Tuesday in

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[42]Soeren Kern, "Muslims Converting Empty European Churches in Mosques," *Gatestone Institute*, http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/2761/converting-churches-into-mosques (accessed 11 July 2013).

[43]Stacy Meichtry and John Stoll, "Europe Remains Challenge for Church," *The Wall Street Journal*, http://online.wsj.com/article/ SB10001424127887323511804578300284047862800.html (accessed 11 July 2013).

Phoenix. Membership also dropped for the fourth year in a row, leaving the denomination with 16,136,044 members.[44]

As a result of these dropping numbers, Smietana went on to report that, "Giving to mission work also has declined. The convention's International Mission Board, known as the IMB, announced that the annual Lottie Moon missionary offering took in $145.6 million."[45] The drop in numbers led to a drop in financial giving, and sadly, the drop in financial giving resulted in a cutback in doing God's work. Smietana went on to report that, "Previous giving shortfalls have forced the IMB to shrink its missionary force. The number of missionaries dropped by about 12% from a high of 5,656 in 2009 to about 5,000 missionaries by the end of 2010."[46] As the numbers indicate, church giving often has a direct impact on Kingdom productivity. The trend, as the report stated, does not seem to be on a road to reversal. The upcoming generation has been more fully immersed in postmodernistic thought. In fact, in the upcoming generation labeled as the "Millennial Generation," faith is increasingly becoming irrelevant and is altogether non-existent in many circles. The Pew Research Center recently released this substantial finding:

> One important factor behind the growth of the religiously unaffiliated is generational replacement, the gradual supplanting of older generations by newer ones. Among the youngest Millennials (those ages 18-22, who were minors in 2007 and thus not eligible to be interviewed in Pew Research Center surveys conducted that year), fully one-third (34%) are religiously unaffiliated, compared with about one-in-ten members of the Silent Generation (9%) and one-in-twenty members of the World War II-era Greatest Generation (5%). Older Millennials (ages 23-30) also are substantially less likely than prior generations to be religiously affiliated….But generational replacement is not the only factor at play. Generation Xers and Baby Boomers also have become more religiously unaffiliated in recent years. In 2012, 21% of Gen Xers and 15% of Baby Boomers describe themselves as religiously

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[44]Bob Smietana, "Nation's Largest Protestant Group Faces 'Decline'," *USA Today*, http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/religion/2011-06-12-baptisms_11_ST_N.htm (accessed July 22, 2013).

[45]Ibid.

[46]Ibid.

unaffiliated, up slightly (but by statistically significant margins) from 18% and 12%, respectively, since 2007. The trend lines for earlier generations are essentially flat. Not only are young adults less likely to be affiliated than their elders, but the GSS shows that the percentage of Americans who were raised without an affiliation has been rising gradually, from about 3% in the early 1970s to about 8% in the past decade.[47]

The implications here are many. For certain, spirituality in America is on the decline and a spiritual revival is desperately needed. Furthermore, gospel work and church planting must look for more creative and cost-effective ways to propagate the gospel.   The church cannot afford to retreat during times of spiritual darkness. If the work of church planting always depends upon the financial support of the local church, then the prospects of reaching global cities for Christ seem grim. Given the effects of postmodernism, we must look to separate the work of God's kingdom from a dependency on church funds. Nominal Christianity has always resulted in marginal Christianity. Pushed by the powers of postmodernism, marginally Christian cities have become full-blown secular cities. Financial giving by nominal Christians within secular cities is anemic. Such spiritual soil forces the church planter to become resourceful. The financial states of many churches within postmodern cities are a pitiful sight to behold. Churches mirror their climates and as the Bible has shown, financial giving to God's work has always been correlated to genuine faith and spirituality:

> I also found out that the portions of the Levites had not been given to them, so that the Levites and the singers, who did the work, had fled each to his field. So I confronted the officials and said, "Why is the house of God forsaken?" And I gathered them together and set them in their stations. Then all Judah brought the tithe of the grain, wine, and oil into the storehouses. (Neh 13:10-12)

Similar to the Levites who received no financial support from God's people,

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[47] The Pew Research Center, "'Nones' on the Rise: One-in-Five Adults Have No Religious Affliliation," http://www.pewforum.org/Unaffiliation/nones-on-the-rise.aspx (accessed July 22, 2013).

the church planter in the postmodern city will also need to work a job. European and North American cities are now very much mission fields. Analogous to the mission field, many church planters will now have to learn a trade in order to reach the postmodern city. A platform is needed for these mission fields. Though the church planting pastor has every right to take financial support from his young city church, he often must forego that right in order to advance the Kingdom in the city. He too, must declare as the apostle Paul once declared in 1 Corinthians 9:12, "If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we even more? Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ." The soil is hard, the laborers few, and resources are scarce. Unfortunately, a pastor's salary in many city churches will be "an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ."

The pastor's salary becomes an obstacle to the gospel primarily because of the high cost of living in New York City. When a young church has to pay a pastor's salary, it is very limited in what it can do with regard to gospel reach. The high cost of living in New York City is well known all over the world. New York is a global city, and it is a very expensive global city. Cost-of-living indexes tend to back up the assertion that New York is indeed, the most expensive city in the nation. In 2013, one source reported that the cost for office space in New York City was $47.20 per square foot![48] This sort of cost analysis comes into play when trying to find a meeting place for a church plant. Space in New York City is a scarce commodity. Space, however, is not the only thing that costs more in global cities. Observe this piece written by Catherine Rampell:

> One of the first things you learn when living in New York is that what qualifies as wealthy somewhere else seems barely middle-class here. On the Upper West Side,

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[48]GoodApril, "Top Startup Cities—by Cost & Taxes," http:// www.entrepreneur.com/dbimages/article/7-hottest-startup-scenes.jpg (accessed July 22, 2013).

where I live, it's hard not to feel as if Manhattan is impossibly expensive for young professionals. The average nondoorman, one-bedroom apartment in the neighborhood rents for about $2,500 a month. Oatmeal-raisin cookies at Levain Bakery cost $4 *each*. A pair of sensible, unstylish walking flats from Harry's Shoes can set you back $480. I suppose, by comparison, that the $198 chef's menu at Jean-Georges doesn't sound so ridiculous.[49]

When astronomical living costs meet a postmodern city, the result is often a church planter who must pick up another job for the sake of gospel advance within the global city. With funds being limited within a recent church plant, the allocation of money for pastoral staff salaries invariably hinders the efficacious spread of the gospel within a church's region. The urban church planter may choose to receive a salary from the church at a later time (when the church is stronger and more mature), but he must be prepared to initially break into the new field by doing whatever is necessary for gospel advance—even if it means getting a second job. Such actions will more readily spread the gospel in the church's region, provide for the minister's family, and set a great example of hard work for church members who live in a city that is highly skeptical of preachers and evangelists. It also serves as a step of faith for the church planter as it forces himself to ask the question, "Am I prepared to do all things for the sake of the gospel?" In doing so, the church planter walks in the footsteps of another church planter—the apostle Paul.

In Acts 20:34, Paul reminds the Ephesian elders that, "You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me." Acts 18:3 says, "And because he was of the same trade he stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade." Paul was a worker. Paul, facing spiritual soil similar to the one found in present-day New York City, did not allow the important task of

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[49] Catherine Rampell, "Who Says New York is not Affordable?" *The New York Times*, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/28/magazine/who-says-new-york-is-not-affordable.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0 (accessed July 22, 2013).

gospel proclamation to depend on financial donations. Paul took the initiative to work with his own hands. Elsewhere, in 2 Thessalonians 3:7-8, Paul gives us his reasons for working by stating, "For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you." Two reasons are explicit in the text: example and burden-bearing. Postmodern global cities, if they are to be reached with the gospel, will need more church planters who by working a second job, will lead by example and bear the financial burden for their churches.

Conclusions

The world is moving into cities. The rapid urbanization and globalization of our city centers have also brought with them unique challenges. One such challenge is the spread of postmodernism within most Western cities. Though it has not precluded religion, postmodernism most certainly has marginalized it. At the crux of postmodern thought is the belief that a transcendent truth is impossible to know. Hence, the only "sin" for the postmodernist is saying that there is such a thing as sin. Pluralism and relativism have become the voices and religions of many city-dwellers, and the impact of postmodernism is even felt within the dwindling churches of Western cities. Churches that focus on solid teaching and biblical discipleship are in great need. This harsh new spiritual soil is seen as the "post-Christian" Western world, and it predicates that the Christian church planter must find alternate means to support his evangelistic mission within the cities of the West.

Churches are small, spiritual maturity is hard to come by, and funds are scarce. Financial giving within these churches is often not a viable means of support for many pastors. The urban spiritual climate is not too different from the ancient city of Corinth wherein the apostle in 1 Corinthians 9:6-7 declared, "Or is it only Barnabas and I who

have no right to refrain from working for a living? Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit? Or who tends a flock without getting some of the milk?" The blunt reality of Western urbanization is the Christian soldier who must serve at his own expense. Yet, for the man who is boldly called to do so, he will find it immensely gratifying to be in the thick of a battle for the souls of the nations that have gathered within major cities. Consequentially, though the church planter is deprived of money, he will discover the sufficiency of the promised presence of the Lord for any who dare to obey the Great Commission of Christ.

CHAPTER 4

BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW

In September 2013, for my Doctor of Ministry project, I gathered twelve men and women to participate in a class known as "Biblical Worldview." Within the context of my class, I strived to achieve four strategic goals to advance the cause of the gospel in New York City: (1) to foster a biblical worldview within the body of the newly planted Mustard Seed Church, (2) to guide the attendees of Mustard Seed Church into doing actual evangelism, (3) to create within the attendees of Mustard Seed Church a biblical understanding of church membership, and (4) to see my own worldview become more biblical, my zeal for personal evangelism increase, and my understanding of church membership to crystallize biblically.

The class itself consisted of fourteen phases (or weeks) of progress. Fourteen weeks took us from September to the week before Christmas. Hence, it approximated and highly resembled a semester of college with regard to duration. Prior to the start of the class, all participants were given a survey to complete. The survey gave me a good sense of the participant's current spiritual state and their doctrinal positions. Their worldviews were fully probed with the survey. Once the surveys were completed, I began teaching the class. The class met once a week for approximately three hours. During the sessions, participants took notes and at eleven weeks, a summative assessment was given. Throughout the entire project, church members were encouraged to come out for weekly Thursday night street evangelism. Each phase of the class was carefully crafted to help participants form a comprehensive and working biblical worldview.

The first phase covered the topic of God's existence, and featured an

examination of the major philosophical arguments for the existence of God. Phase 2 covered the issue of the divine inspiration of the Bible, and featured a defense for the trustworthiness of the Christian Scriptures. Phase 3 addressed the question of origin, and featured a case for the accuracy of the biblical account of creation over and against the modern theory of evolution. Phase 4 discussed the nature and attributes of God. Phase 5 examined the ubiquitous question of suffering, and also delved into Satan and the doctrine of sin. Phase 6 presented the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and dealt with the biblical grounds for the doctrine along with its historical reliability. Phase 7 was a clear presentation of the gospel message, and featured a development of understanding regarding evangelism and conversion. Phase 8 tackled the Five Points of Calvinism. Phase 9 was a biblical case for the local church, and featured a plea for faithful church membership. Phase 10 probed the issue of determining God's will for the glory of God. Phase 11 examined the Scriptures as pertaining to dating, marriage, and divorce. Phase 12 covered biblical manhood and womanhood, and featured a John Piper video along with my teaching. Phase 13 detailed the personal spiritual disciplines and how to practice them. Phase 14 was a teaching segment from Luke 14:25-35, and was entitled, "The Life and Cost of Discipleship."

Class Participants

The participants for this class consisted of a wide variety. All 12 of the participants were either members or attendees of Mustard Seed Church. Participants were permitted to partake in the fourteen-phase discipleship class if they were confessing believers. Mustard Seed Church firmly believes that Christian discipleship is always predicated upon genuine conversion. In addition to the 12 participants, guests often audited the class. The guests, however, were not utilized for purposes of this research paper. Only the twelve participants were considered and utilized. The class participants were evenly split into 6 males and 6 females. Of the 6 males who participated, 5 were

between the ages of 20-30, and one was 19 years old. Only one male was a believer for over 10 years, 2 participants were believers for about 6-10 years, and 3 males were believers for 5 years or less. Hence, the bulk of the males were relatively new believers in Christ.

The females were very diverse with regard to the differences in duration of their professions of faith. One female stated that she was saved for at least 16 or more years. Two females stated that they were saved for at least 11 or more years. Another one stated that she was saved for 6-10 years. Only 2 stated that they were saved for 5 or less years. I allowed for this spectrum to illustrate the point that mere confession of faith means very little in a pluralistic city like New York. All the females who stated that they were saved for more than 10 years were never substantially discipled and had a desire to learn more in order to gain a biblical worldview. In fact, the one woman who stated that she was saved for more 16 years gave church leadership sufficient reason to doubt her salvation that her request for church membership was denied subsequent to an interview. Though she currently attends Mustard Seed Church faithfully each week, she is still not a member of our church. Five out of the 6 females were between the ages of 20-30. Only one was older than 30.

The youthfulness of our pool could be attributed to the relatively young ages of the people who attend Mustard Seed Church. By God's grace, we are drawing a young attendance base. Simultaneously, there are some difficulties to drawing a young demographic. One difficulty is the perennial need for discipleship. Many of our college students and young adults were never taught many of the fundamentals of the Christian faith. Biblical literacy runs high and spiritual maturity runs low. In this city, many may profess faith in the gospel while simultaneously believing that evolution is a fact, humanity is inherently good, and homosexuality is a natural disposition that should not be categorized as sin. Furthermore, at the outset of the class, very few students were able to give any reasonable reasons for belief in God, any substantial defense of why they

believed in the Bible, and any notion as to what constitutes biblical manhood and womanhood. All 12 participants, however, were eagerly looking forward to the class.

Of the 12 participants, none were involved in any form of vocational ministry. 6 of the participants were college students. The other participants consisted of an electrical engineer, a loss analyst at a credit agency, a secretary at an exporting firm, a nurse, paralegal, and a public school teacher. The diversity of participants helped both the relational aspects of our class and the subsequent analysis for the effectiveness of this project.

Phase 1: Arguments for the Existence of God

Sin mars the human mind and causes one to think irrationally about the evidences for God's existence. Phase one was an attempt to cause the human mind to think rationally via arguments or proofs. The first phase of this project was to present the class with the major philosophical arguments for the existence of God. Many of my students came in as Christians believing in God's existence, but many of them believed in God as a fundamental belief and could not give any definitive arguments for His existence. Though one could not logically reason another person into salvation, there are however, certain proofs that have withstood the test of time and have forcibly demonstrated that reason is a true ally to faith. Faith does not have to be a blind leap into the dark. Wayne Grudem aptly writes,

> Because all of these arguments are based on facts about the creation that are indeed true facts, we may say that all of these proofs (when carefully constructed) are, in an objective sense, valid proofs. They are valid in that they correctly evaluate the evidence and correctly reason to a true conclusion—in fact, the universe *does* have God as its cause, and it *does* show evidence of purposeful design, and God *does* exist as a being greater than which nothing can be imagined, and God *has* given us a sense of right and wrong and a sense that his judgment is coming someday. The *actual facts* referred to in these proofs, therefore, are *true*, in that sense the proofs are valid, even though not all people are persuaded by them. But in another sense, if "valid" means "able to compel agreement even from those who begin with false assumptions," then of course none of the proofs is valid because not one of them is able to *compel agreement* from *everyone who considers them*. Yet this is because

many unbelievers either begin with invalid assumptions or do not reason correctly from the evidence. It is not because the proofs are invalid in themselves. [1]

The traditional arguments for the existence of God do not serve, therefore, to bring people to saving faith—for only the gospel and the Holy Spirit can do that. The traditional arguments serve to assist in clearing objections raised by unbelievers and they bolster the knowledge base of believers who already believe based on the testimony of Scripture.

Four major arguments were presented to the class in this phase. First was the teleological argument. The teleological argument reasons that since the universe exhibits evidence of order and design, there must be an intelligent and purposeful God who created it to function in this way. [2] The argument is built on Paul's reasoning found in Romans 1:20, "For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse."

In preparing for this segment, I utilized much material from various sources detailing the complexities of our bodies, the earth, and the universe. The segment opened with a simple premise that started with the question, "If you found a watch in an empty field, what would you think?" I informed them that one would rationally conclude that it was designed and not the product of random formation. Likewise, when we look at life and the universe, it is natural to conclude there is a Designer since we see how perfectly the universe, its laws, and life forms operate. I also informed them that the eye is often a great example of design. The individual parts have no function alone. The retina is useless alone. The lens, cornea, or iris is useless alone. When the parts come and work

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[1] Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 143-44.

[2] Ibid., 1255.

together, then you have the marvel that is the human eye. The complexity of the human

eye powerfully testifies to a Creator. Some of my students love photography and invest

in very expensive cameras. The analogy worked well for them since they knew that the

most advanced camera lens manufactured by humans still fall very short of the wonder

that is the human eye. Among the many different resources I used to delineate the

immense intricacies of our created world, I also used a piece written by the National

Eye Institute, which stated,

> When light strikes the cornea, it bends--or refracts--the incoming light onto the lens. The lens further refocuses that light onto the retina, a layer of light sensing cells lining the back of the eye that starts the translation of light into vision. For you to see clearly, light rays must be focused by the cornea and lens to fall precisely on the retina. The retina converts the light rays into impulses that are sent through the optic nerve to the brain, which interprets them as images. The refractive process is similar to the way a camera takes a picture. The cornea and lens in the eye act as the camera lens. The retina is similar to the film. If the image is not focused properly, the film (or retina) receives a blurry image. The cornea also serves as a filter, screening out some of the most damaging ultraviolet (UV) wavelengths in sunlight. Without this protection, the lens and the retina would be highly susceptible to injury from UV rays.[3]

Next, I presented the cosmological argument for the existence of God. The

cosmological argument is based on the observation that, since every known thing in the

universe has a cause, the universe itself must also have a cause, which can only be God.[4]

The cosmological argument was rather straight forward and the class understood the

argument well. The only question that was raised was the issue of the possibility that the

universe itself might be eternal. This was easily rebutted by the fact that even most

secular scientists now concede that the universe most definitively had a starting point.

We universally recognize that the Second Law of Thermodynamics effectively

eliminates any notion that the universe is eternal.

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[3]The National Eye Institute, "Facts About the Cornea and Corneal Disease," http://www.nei.nih.gov/health/cornealdisease/#0; (accessed January 20, 2014).

[4]Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1238.

While the cosmological argument was quite easily grasped, the ontological argument was a bit difficult for some. The ontological argument for the existence of God begins with the idea of God as the greatest of beings that can be imagined. As such, the characteristic of existence must belong to such a being, since it is greater to exist than not to exist.[5] The ontological argument was difficult for some because the conclusion that God exists is derived from premises which are supposed to derive from some source other than observation of the world (in other words, it is derived from reason alone). The ontological argument is analytic, a priori, and uses reason to reach the conclusion that God exists.

The first, and best-known, ontological argument was proposed by Anselm of Canterbury in the eleventh century. In his *Proslogion*, Anselm claimed God to be "a being than which no greater can be conceived."[6] Though we may not be professional philosophers, this is the ubiquitous definition for God irrespective of one's place of nascence. Anselm reasoned that, if such a being fails to exist, then a greater being— namely, a "being than which no greater can be conceived, and which exists"—can be conceived. However, this would be absurd and false since nothing can be greater than a being than which no greater can be conceived. So the necessary conclusion that follows is that must God exist.[7] The ontological argument proves difficult for some to comprehend. Part of the reason for the difficulty is because it starts arguing from God's existence rather than for it. The argument starts with God's existence. Anselm begins with premises that do not depend on experience for their justification and then proceeds

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by purely logical means to the conclusion that God exists. His aim is to refute the fool who says in his heart that there is no God (Psalms 14:1). The fool has two important features. First, he understands the claim that God exists. Second; sadly however, the fool does not believe that God exists. The ontological argument, in a sense, catches the atheist in his own confession. The atheist's statement that "There is no God" is itself the proof that God exists. By making the fallacious claim, the person actually unsuspectedly proved the existence of God. The claim that the most Supreme Being in the universe does not exist is an illogical fallacy. The crux of the ontological argument lies in the belief that existence is greater than non-existence. Anselm writes in the final paragraph of his work,

> Therefore, if that than which nothing greater can be conceived exists in the understanding alone, the very being than which nothing greater can be conceived is one than which a greater *can* be conceived. But obviously this is impossible. Hence there is no doubt that there exists a being than which nothing greater can be conceived, and it exists both in the understanding and in reality.[8]

Anselm's goal is to show that this combination is unstable. Anyone who understands what it means to say, "God does not exist" can also be led to see that God does indeed exist. Via the ontological argument, the atheist is shown to be not just mistaken, but that his position is internally inconsistent. I set up Anselm's argument for the class by stating,

1. God is that "*Being than which no greater can be conceived.*"

2. God can be conceived in your mind.

3. God can be conceived to exist in reality.

4. It is greater to exist in reality than just in someone's mind.

5. Therefore, God must exist in reality.

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[8]Ibid.

An atheist who says, "There is no God," obviously knows the meaning of the word "God." The knowledge of the definition of the word proves the existence of God because "God" would be defined as the Being who has all the attributes of perfection, such as: omnipotence, omniscience, all-loving, and necessary existence. Necessary self-existence is an attribute of perfection because if God was caused, He immediately would not be God. If the Supreme Being in question is not his own reason for existence, then he is not "God." God is the First Cause and the Sustainer of all current life. My class was informed that necessary self-existence was known as "aseity." Since such a Being does not depend on anyone else for His existence, He must not have a beginning or an end. The Being must be eternal and self-existent. Therefore, God must unequivocally exist.

The final argument introduced to the class during this first phase of the project was the moral argument. Under this deductive line of reasoning, the syllogism begins with the broad premise that if God does not exist, then objective morals laws do not exist. Laws never exist without a legislator. However, we all recognize that objective moral laws do exist. Therefore, God must exist.

We universally recognize the fact that moral laws govern this universe. Irrespective of where we go on this planet, deceit and murder are never seen as virtues. Clearly, even the atheist legislates his own morality and has expectations that everyone will adhere to his rules. However, the atheist is not the ultimate law giver—God is. Universal moral legislation is the basis for our human government and justice system. Hence, if morals exist (and they undeniably do), then God undeniably exists.

Phase 2: The Bible as the Word of God

The cornerstone and epistemological base for the Christian faith is the Bible. The path to salvation, growth in sanctification, and the entire spectrum of the Christian life would be absolutely devoid if it were not for the Bible. Essential and foundational to a biblical worldview is the establishment of the Bible as the Word of God. Unless

readers come to the understanding that what they are reading in the Bible is indeed the very words of God Himself, there will be very little change in people's lives or thought patterns. The renewal of the mind begins with an unshakeable belief that the Bible is the Word of God.

During this phase of the project, I wanted to clearly demonstrate the reliability of the Christian Scriptures. I started off by informing my students that there were no original manuscripts in existence for any of the sixty-six books of the Bible. From there, we worked on establishing the reliability of the Old Testament; and then moved towards establishing the reliability of the New Testament. Much of what I presented that night on the Old Testament was taken from notes that I took during a doctoral class with Professor Travis Kerns at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Participants were informed that the New Testament is a very reliable collection of documents. One medical student, during the class, verbally acknowledged that he was surprised to see just how reliable the New Testament was. Although we do not have the original New Testament letters, we do have many copies of the original New Testament documents. I informed the class that this actually helps us to accurately reconstruct the original because having a large number of manuscripts that are not written long after the original enable us to compare and come up with an extremely reliable New Testament. In this regard, the New Testament fares better anything else from the ancient world:

> In fact, the New Testament documents have more manuscripts, earlier manuscripts, and more abundantly supported manuscripts than the best ten pieces of classical literature *combined*. At last count, there are nearly 5,700 handwritten Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. In addition, there are more than 9,000 manuscripts in other languages (e.g., Syriac, Coptic, Latin, Arabic). Some of these nearly 15,000 manuscripts are complete Bibles, others are books or pages, and a few are just fragments. As shown in fig. 9.1 on the next page, there is nothing from the ancient world that even comes close in terms of manuscript support. The next closest work is the *Iliad* by Homer, with 643 manuscripts. Most other ancient works survive on fewer than a dozen manuscripts, yet few historians question the historicity of the events those works describe. Not only does the New Testament enjoy abundant manuscript support, but it also has manuscripts that were written soon after the originals. The earliest undisputed manuscript is a segment of John 18:31-33, 37-38 known as the John Rylands fragment (because it's housed in the John Rylands Library in Manchester, England). Scholars date it between A.D. 117-

138, but some say it is even earlier. It was found in Egypt—across the Mediterranean from its probable place of composition in Asia Minor—demonstrating that John's Gospel was copied and had spread quite some distance by the early second century.[9]

Noteworthy is the fact that the early church fathers quoted out of the New Testament so extensively that the entire New Testament could be virtually reconstructed from their writings alone:

> Hundreds if not thousands of manuscripts were destroyed across the Roman Empire during this persecution, which lasted until A.D. 311. But even if Diocletian had succeeded in wiping every biblical manuscript off the face of the earth, he could not have destroyed our ability to reconstruct the New Testament. Why? Because the early church fathers—men of the second and third centuries such as Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Tertullian, and others—quoted the New Testament so much (36,289 times, to be exact) that all but eleven verses of the New Testament can be reconstructed just from their quotations. In other words, you could go down to your local public library, check out the works of the early church fathers, and read nearly the entire New Testament just from their quotations of it! So we not only have thousands of manuscripts but thousands of quotations from those manuscripts. This makes reconstruction of the original text virtually certain.[10]

Once we established the reliable reconstruction of the original text, the subsequent question that surfaces is whether or not the eyewitnesses who wrote the New Testament were reliable. Were the eyewitnesses telling the truth? Sure, many of the apostles died for their faith, but New Yorkers are all too familiar with the horrors of September 11, 2001; when Islamic fundamentalists hijacked two aircrafts and flew them into the Twin Towers in lower Manhattan. They are all too aware of the fact that many do indeed die in the name of religion. Here again, however, I reminded my class that even those hijackers died believing that their religious claims were true. No one dies for a claim while knowing the claim to be false. The early Christians died for one central claim: the resurrection of Jesus Christ. If indeed, the resurrection was false, none of the New Testament writers would be willing to die for a claim that they knew was false. Frank Turek gives us a live account for this truth when he writes,

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[9]Norman Geisler and Frank Turek, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 225.

[10]Ibid., 228

I (Frank) posed that question to a couple of Black Muslims during a radio debate not long ago. Like traditional Muslims, Black Muslims do not believe that Jesus went to the cross, so there's no way he could have resurrected. With this in mind, I asked them, "Why did the New Testament writers suddenly convert from Judaism to believing that Jesus rose from the dead?"…One of them said, "Because they wanted power over the people!"…I said, "What power did the New Testament writers gain by asserting that Jesus rose from the dead? The answer is 'none.' In fact, instead of gaining power, they got exactly the opposite—submission, servitude, persecution, torture, and death." They had no answer.[11]

The second phase showed, with great clarity, that the Bible was reliable in its totality. Participants of the class were surprised that there were so many pieces of internal, external, historical, scientific, and archaeological evidences supporting the reliability of the Christian Scriptures. Many left that night with a new-found courage in the reliability of the Bible and were more comfortable in attempting to defend and stand on the authority of God's Word.

Phase 3: Creation and Evolution

Many people think that spiritual warfare is all about exorcisms and demonic convulsions. The reality is, however, that much of spiritual warfare is the battle for correct thinking. 2 Corinthians 10:5-6 states, "We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete." The theory of evolution is currently the most pervasive argument that has been raised against the knowledge of God. If the Genesis account of origins cannot be trusted, then the rest of the Bible is also unreliable.

One of the primary reasons as to why the Christian worldview has had trouble being accepted in Western society has been due to the advance of naturalism and Darwinian evolution. At the core of evolutionary theory is the belief that human existence is the mere result of one grand Godless, random, elongated happenstance.

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[11]Ibid., 233-34.

Although there are so many apparent flaws with evolutionary theory, because so many within the secular academic circles espouse and teach it, it is virtually universally accepted. In fact, in our age today, the pervading notion is that if one does not believe in evolution, then that individual is severely misguided and horribly uneducated.

Perhaps no other ideology undercuts the gospel more than Darwinian evolution. Though some religious scientists claim that theistic evolution is a valid option, a faithful hermeneutic of the Bible will quickly demonstrate that view to be untenable. (The biblical accounts of man's direct creation found in Genesis 2:7, and the direct creation of Eve from Adam are sufficient grounds for the falsity of theistic evolution.) Modern evolutionary theory is starkly at odds with the Genesis account of creation. The reader is left with a choice. To believe one is to disbelieve the other. Furthermore, the implications of belief in either doctrine are incalculable.

Many within the upper rungs of academia disparage Creationism, and hence, for so many within my class, evolution was standard fare. Compounding the problem of secular academic indoctrination is the concurrent pervasive problem of biblical illiteracy. Without giving it much thought, some erringly believed that one could believe in both Genesis and Darwinian evolution. The participants of my class were clearly told that this was an impossible position.

At the outset, all class participants were informed that the biblical doctrine of creation was immensely important. All of our decisions that we make in life stem out of our one belief about the Creator. Upon closer examination, one will discover that all the hot-button issues in today's society (such as abortion and homosexuality) are really—at their roots—issues about the Creator. The question of origin, therefore, is one of the most fundamental questions in life and true happiness is impossible without the right answers regarding this question. The doctrine of creation gives us a proper understanding of

ourselves, the power and nature of our God, dictates gender roles in church and society, and ultimately enables us to understand the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The class was told that the doctrine of Creation was a gospel issue. Only when Adam and Eve are truly historical beings, does the historical death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus have significance (Luke 3:23-38). If Genesis and its creation account is false, then all is in futile. I intentionally structured the discipleship class in a sequential manner for the optimal development of a biblical worldview. Hence, I decided to teach on this topic only after I first established the Bible as the authoritative Word of God (done in phase two).

Among the many points dispensed during phase three, I made it lucid that God made the universe out of nothing (*ex nihilo*, in Latin). There was no pre-existent matter and God made matter out of nothing. Scripture references included: Genesis 1:1, Psalm 33:6-9, Acts 14:15, Hebrews 11:3, and Romans 4:17. The class was told that God made the universe in six literal 24-hour days, with one day designated for rest. Although I informed them that other theories for the length of creation existed, they just did not match well with a plain reading of the Genesis account. God also created the spiritual universe which includes the angels and the heavenly hosts (Col 1:16).

In looking at Creation, we had to also look at the Trinity. All three persons of the Trinity were active in creation. The Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit were all active in creation. Verses given to support that claim included: John 1:3, 1 Corinthians 8:6, Colossians 1:16, Job 33:4, and Genesis 1:2. At the apex of Creation Week was the creation of humans. Humans were made directly by God, and in His own image. The image of God is most clearly and completely seen in both the complementary male and female (Gen 1:27). Hence, understanding the biblical doctrine of creation gives us an understanding into the value and sanctity of human life—which is why all forms of murder (including abortion) is wrong. It also gives us a clear understanding of God's design in heterosexuality and is the final reason why homosexuality is a shameful

79

perversion that degrades and dishonors the very bodies of homosexuals themselves (Rom 1:24). Humans are the only creatures in all creation who were created in the image of God and this gives humanity its unique value. Murder is therefore wrong for precisely this reason (Gen 9:6). On the contrary, atheists have no reason—no ontological ground—for declaring murder to be wrong.

Using Psalm 90:2, the class was informed that God also created time, but existed outside of time and that the ultimate reason for God creating the universe was to show forth His glory (Isa 43:7, Rev 4:11). God did not create humans because he was lonely nor does He need our worship. God was completely self-sufficient prior to creation (Acts 17:24-25). In striving to help make the class see the creation in its proper light, I reminded them that Genesis informs us that the universe was created very good (Gen 1:31). Hence, unlike dualism which sees the material universe as evil, Christians can thankfully use and enjoy all things (1 Tim 4:1-3).

As New Yorkers, the class was warned that we must always hold creation as distinct from God but always dependent on God. God is both immanent and transcendent to His creation. In New York City, the pervasive worldview is materialism. In materialism, the universe is all there is. There is no God. I warned the class participants that Christians who focus on money and possession acquisition live like functional materialists. To be a believer in the biblical account of creation is to find full sufficiency in the God of creation—not in creation itself. Participants were also warned of pantheism, dualism, and deism.

During the second half of phase 3, I presented the case for why the theory of evolution was untenable. The class was informed that evolution is often the primary intellectual obstacle to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and that it is highly atheistic. It was the atheist Oxford professor Richard Dawkins, who said, "Although atheism might have been *logically* tenable before Darwin, Darwin made it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled

80

atheist."[12] My presentation for this portion of phase 3 came primarily from Wayne

Grudem, who gives some very convincing and cogent reasons for rebutting the theory of

evolution:

> The vast and complex mutations required to produce complex organs such as an eye or a bird's wing (or hundreds of other organs) could not have occurred in tiny mutations accumulating over thousands of generations, because individual parts of the organ are useless (and give no "advantage") unless the entire organ is functioning. But the mathematical probability of such random mutations happening together in one generation is effectively zero. The fossil record was Darwin's greatest problem in 1859, and it has simply become a greater problem since then. In Darwin's time, hundreds of fossils were available showing the existence of many distinct kinds of animals and plants in the distant past. But Darwin was unable to find any fossils from the "intermediate types" to fill in the gaps between distinct kinds of animals—fossils showing some characteristics of one animal and a few characteristics of the next developmental type, for example. However, the subsequent 130 years of intensive archaeological activity has still failed to produce one convincing example of a needed transitional type. Probably the greatest difficulty of all for evolutionary theory is explaining how any life could have begun in the first place. The spontaneous generation of even the simplest living organism capable of independent life (the prokaryote bacterial cell) from inorganic materials on the earth could not happen by random mixing of chemicals: it requires intelligent design and craftsmanship so complex that no advanced scientific laboratory in the world has been able to do it.[13]

Phase 3 was an intricate and foundational part of this project. Due to the

pervasive nature of evolutionary thought, phase 3 served as a re-programming phase of

sorts for many of my class participants. Initial feedback was quite positive after the class.

The medical student in our group responded by saying, "It makes sense. Why re-invent

the steering wheel if it works. That's why there's similarity between structures! There's

one common Creator!" One of the most important parts of this phase was when we

discussed the societal implications of evolutionary thought. That part of our discussion

began when I read—verbatim, Wayne Grudem's analysis as he wrote,

> It is important to understand the incredibly destructive influences that evolutionary theory has had on modern thinking. If in fact life was not created by God, and if human beings in particular are not created by God or responsible to him, but are simply the result of random occurrences in the universe, then of what significance is

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[12]Richard Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker: Why the Evidence of Evolution Reveals a Universe without Design* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1986), 6.

[13]Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 281-84.

human life? We are merely the product of matter plus time plus chance, and so to think that we have any eternal importance, or really any importance at all in the face of an immense universe, is simply to delude ourselves. Honest reflection on this notion should lead people to a profound sense of despair. Moreover, if all of life can be explained by evolutionary theory apart from God, and if there is no God who created us (or at least if we cannot know anything about him with certainty), then there is no supreme Judge to hold us morally accountable. Therefore there are no moral absolutes in human life, and people's moral ideas are only subjective preferences, good for them perhaps but not to be imposed on others. In fact, in such a case the only thing forbidden is to say that one knows that certain things are right and certain things are wrong. There is another ominous consequence of evolutionary theory: If the inevitable processes of natural selection continue to bring about improvement in life forms on earth through the survival of the fittest, then why should we hinder this process by caring for those who are weak or less able to defend themselves? Should we not rather allow them to die without reproducing so that we might move toward a new, higher form of humanity, even a "master race"? In fact, Marx, Nietzsche, and Hitler all justified war on these grounds.[14]

Grudem's analysis of evolution was visceral and hard hitting. The personal and societal ramifications and implications of espousing evolutionary theory are often not addressed by churches. Believers often prematurely believe that belief in evolutionary theory and faith in the biblical account of creation can go in tandem. This phase of the project was very productive in countermanding that belief. The participants (many for the first time) were able to see not only the main tenets of evolutionary thought, but also the societal implications of holding to the theory.

Phase 4: The Nature of God

Essential to a biblical worldview is the right knowledge of God's nature. Who God is and how He interacts with sinful humanity is critical if we are to appropriately appreciate the gospel of Jesus Christ. For this phase, I plainly presented to the class participants all the various attributes of the nature of God. For each attribute, sufficient time was given to an analysis of the Scripture verses demonstrating the specific attribute of God. Students were also exhorted to think about the practical daily applications each attribute would produce in a believer's life.

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[14] Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 286-87.

The following are the attributes of God that were presented during this fourth phase. The existence of God and His aseity (verses given for examination: Gen 1:1, Rom 1:20, and Rom 1:25). The knowability of God (verses for examination: Ps 145:3, Jer 9:24, and Isa 43:7). The independence of God (verses for examination: Acts 17:24-25, Ps 90:2, Rom11:36, and Zeph 3:17). The immutability of God (verses for examination: Ps 102:27, Mal 3:6, Ps 33:11, and Num 23:19). The eternal nature of God (verses for examination: Ps 90:2, Eph 1:4, and 2 Pet 3:8). The omnipresence of God (verses for examination: Gen 1:1, Jer 23:23-24, Ps 139:7-10, Amos 9:1-4, and Heb 1:3). The spirit-nature of God (verses for examination: John 4:24, John 4:24, and 1 Cor 6:17). The invisibility of God (verses for examination: John 1:18, Gen 18:1, and Gen 32:30). The omniscience of God (verses for examination: 1 John 3:20, Matt 11:21, and 1 Cor 2:10-11). The wisdom of God (verses for examination: Rom 16:27 and Job 12:13). The truthfulness of God (verses for examination: Jer 10:10 and Num 23:19). The goodness of God (verses for examination: Luke 18:19, Gen 1:31, Jas 1:17, Ps 84:11, and Matt 7:11). The love of God (verses for examination: 1 John 4:8, John 17:24, John 17:24, and John 14:31). The holiness of God (verses for examination: Ps 99:9 and Isa 6:3). The righteousness and justice of God (verses for examination: Deut 32:4 and Rom 3:25-26). The jealousy of God (verses for examination: Exod 20:5 and Isa 48:11). The wrath of God against sin (verses for examination: John 3:36 and Rom 1:18). The omnipotence of God (verses for examination: Gen 18:14, Eph 3:20, and Jer 32:17). The perfection of God (verse for examination: Matt 5:48). The beauty of God (verse for examination: Ps 27:4).

After a study of those twenty attributes, class participants were reminded that God is the full unity of all those attributes. They were warned not to over-emphasize one attribute of God over another. The caution needed in approaching the attributes of God is critical to have a balanced and proper relationship with God. An overemphasis on the love of God, for example, tends to minimize the justice of God and the holiness of God.

83

This sad in-balance is what often causes a cheaper understanding and appreciation for the cross of Christ. Attributes such as the omniscience of God, the omnipotence of God, and the love of God enable us to fully rest in our God in an unparalleled way.

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Phase 5: Sin, Satan, and Suffering

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Suffering and evil are such major undeniable realities in our world today that certain worldviews (such as Buddhism) are virtually centered on dealing with them. In building a Great Commission church, I realized that church members needed a deeper and more foundational theology of suffering. Phase 5 of this project sought to integrate the issue of suffering with the agent of Satan and the problematic universal condition of sin. The discussion during this phase perhaps had the most profound impact on our participants. This was perhaps due to the fact that as Louis Markos wrote,

> The ubiquitous presence of pain and evil in our world is, to my mind, the only argument against the existence of God that carries any real weight. It is also the number-one reason people give for denying—or, better, giving up on—God. Confronted with terrible illnesses and tragic accidents, the death of the young and innocent, the horrors of war and oppression, and the ravages of natural disasters, many moderns find it intellectually and emotionally impossible to believe in the existence of God—at least not the all-powerful, all-loving God who is revealed in the Bible.[15]

For this phase, I started with a biblical presentation on the person of Satan. Using biblical texts, I gave the identity of Satan as a fallen angel (2 Pet 2:4 and Jude 1:6). Additionally, we saw from 1 Chronicles 21:1 and Luke 10:18 that Satan was the personal name for the head of demons (he therefore, has an entourage). Scripture also addresses him by a variety of other names. In Matthew 4:1, he is called the devil. In Matthew 10:25, he is called Beelzebul. In John 12:31, he is called the ruler of this world. In Ephesians 2:2, he is called "the prince of the power of the air." Matthew 13:19 clearly calls him "the evil one." John 8:44 presents Satan as a murderer from the beginning and the father of lies. Satan not only deceived Eve, but he also tried to tempt Christ.

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[15]Louis Markos, *Apologetics for the 21ˢᵗ Century* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 137.

Although many of my class participants had a virtually secular perspective of Satan—as portrayed in many movies, I made it plain that the Bible demonstrates that Christ is the ultimate authority and that He came to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8). The reality, however, is that Satan uses all his might and a variety of tactics to try to blind people from seeing the light of the gospel of Christ (2 Cor 4:4). Class participants were made aware of Satan's destructive tactics. Tactics used by demons to hinder a Christan's witness and life include: temptation, doubt, lies, murder, guilt, fear, confusion, sickness, envy, pride, and slander. Though these tactics seem formidable, Satan is limited in power (Jude 1:6) and James 4:7 instructs Christians to resist the devil and that he will flee from us.

Around the corner from our church is a psychic who claims to be able to predict the future. Class participants were told not to fear her. Isaiah 46:10 plainly tells us that Satan and his minions are unable to know the future. Daniel 2:27-28 informs us that the devil cannot read our thoughts. Not only should Christians not fear demons, but Christians are not to attribute sins that they commit to the devil. The devil can tempt believers, but he can never force them to sin. Christians sin when they are driven by their own sinful desires. Christ conquered death and He conquered Satan. In doing so, Christ has also given Christians the victory over Satan.

After my presentation on Satan, I segued into a presentation on sin. Sin, its existence, and its definition are all vital to a sound understanding of suffering. Sin was defined for the class as, "Any failure to conform to the moral law of God in act, attitude, or nature."[16] Scripture makes it plain that the penalty of sin is death (Gen 2:17). This death is first physical, and secondly, it is spiritual. Scripture informs us that sin not only came into the entire world through Adam (Rom 5:12), but that there has not been one person (outside of Christ) in the human race who has not sinned (1 Kgs 8:46).

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[16]Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1254.

Furthermore, because of Adamic sin, our entire cosmos has fallen from its original "very good" status into a state that is now full of corruption and futility (Rom 8:20-12). The understanding that death did not exist in the cosmos prior to the Fall of Adam is critical to having a biblical worldview. Adam's sin not only brought destruction to the human race, but it also brought catastrophe and death into the entire universe. This understanding enables Christians to make sense of so much of the senseless evil committed by fellow humans, natural disasters that decimate entire villages and communities, and the heart of God in the midst of all suffering. Clearly and unequivocally, the Bible presents all human suffering as being ultimately rooted in sin— whether Original or personal. Sin causes human psychosis, sin breaks and destroys human relationships, and sin creates a need for reconciliation with God.

Working from texts such as 1 Peter 2:24 and Romans 8:1, class participants were given great hope in the face of the truly pervasive nature of human sin and depravity. As Christians, when we sin, our legal standing before God is never affected. Christ's death and resurrection once and for all paid for all our sins. Though our sins do not affect our status or legal standing with God, it does, however, affect our fellowship with God and God is grieved by our sin. Christian sin does not result in penal retribution, but it does result in discipline by our loving God (Heb 12:6).

God, in His wisdom, has decided that He would not apply to us all the benefits of Christ's redemptive work at once (1 Cor 15:26). Christians, therefore, also bear the heartaches of pain and suffering. Suffering for believers is completely due to living in a fallen world that is marred sin, at times due to God's discipline of our sins; but is always for the purpose of conforming the elect into the glorious image of Jesus (Heb 2:10 and Jas 1:2).

Phase 6: The Person and Resurrection of Jesus Christ

Upon establishing the foundations of the first five phases, phase 6 dealt with the person and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Phase 6, in so many ways, was the cornerstone phase for the entire fourteen week class. Here, we dealt with the very heart of a biblical worldview, namely, the person of Jesus Christ. If the life and resurrection of Jesus Christ is denied or falsified, an individual does not have a biblical worldview—no matter how many other doctrines he might affirm. Therefore, this part of the project was dealt with heightened care because of the subject matter.

First, the deity and humanity of Christ were each examined separately by looking at relevant Scripture texts. This took a great amount of time for three reasons: 1. the abundance of Scripture texts pertaining to each, 2. the importance and depth of the material being discussed, and 3. the implications of Christ's humanity and deity upon our lives.

After thoroughly examining both the deity and humanity of Christ, we segued into the doctrine of Christ's atonement. Participants were then able to see how gloriously both the humanity and deity of Jesus each played an instrumental role in the atonement of humanity's sins. For without His deity, Christ would not have been able to bear the full wrath of God for humanity's sins on the cross. Without Christ's deity, there would have only been infinite suffering by a temporal being because God's holiness (which was violated with human sin) is infinitely glorious. Likewise, without his humanity, Christ would have never been able to die for humanity's sins. Propitiation for sin can only occur at death. Jesus, the perfect God-man, was fully both natures in one person. The mystery of the truth hit with great efficacy throughout this phase.

The final component to this phase was a presentation and a discussion on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Additional to the examination of key Scriptural passages was an honest historical treatment on the merits of a bodily resurrection. Again, some of Travis Kerns' material from a doctoral seminar at The Southern Baptist Theological

Seminary was utilized, along with other resources. Among the proofs examined during this section were: the birth and booming growth of the Christian Church with the resurrection being the central message, the change of the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday, the fact that the Bible records that the first person to witness the resurrection was a female, the radical change in the disciples from being cowards to becoming fearless evangelists, the upstanding moral character of the eyewitnesses, the empty tomb, the conversion of Saul, and the empty tomb. I reminded listeners that Christianity was not a leap of faith into the dark, but rather, that it was an informed faith based on God's Word, intelligent analysis of historical evidences, and the weighing of eyewitness testimonies. The importance of a truly biblical worldview was especially accented when I said that belief in such radical truths such as the resurrection will not leave lives apathetically unchanged. Josh McDowell expresses this idea well:

> The changed lives of those early Christian believers is one of the most telling testimonies to the fact of the resurrection. We must ask ourselves: What motivated them to go everywhere proclaiming the message of the risen Christ?...Had there been visible benefits accruing to them from their efforts—such as prestige, wealth or increased social status—we might logically account for their actions. As a reward, however, for their wholehearted and total allegiance to this "risen Christ," these early Christians were beaten, stoned to death, thrown to the lions, tortured, crucified and subjected to every conceivable method of stopping them from talking. Yet they were the most peaceful of men, who physically forced their beliefs on no one. Rather they laid down their very lives as the ultimate proof of their complete confidence in the truth of their message.[17]

Phase 7: The Gospel, Evangelism, and Discipleship

At the crux of a solid biblical worldview is a proper understanding of the gospel, a proper understanding of evangelism, and a proper understanding of discipleship. For this section, participants were encouraged to join me in New York City street evangelism as we attempted to put into practice what we learned. Planting a Great Commission church is impossible without discipleship, evangelism, and a focus on the

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[17]Josh McDowell, *The Best of Josh McDowell: A Ready Defense* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1993), 238.

centrality of the gospel. A proper grasp of this section of the project therefore, not only enables the church to fulfill the Great Commission of Christ, but it was also critical to the participant's own soteriological epistemology.

To begin this phase, I started off by saying, "This topic is of special importance because of all the truths that cause us to love God, nothing causes us to cherish God as much as the truths that answer the question, 'Just how did God save me?'" The class was informed that the primary purpose of life is to glorify God, and that the gospel is at the very heart of the glory of God (Eph 1:6). We started with the gospel because without the gospel, a person cannot be saved. Without the gospel, there is no such thing as "evangelism." Without the gospel, there is no Christian discipleship. Even Scripture calls the gospel of first importance (1 Cor 15:3). Hence, it is the primary teaching in all of Christianity and its proclamation is the ultimate aim of this project.

The gospel is so central to Christianity that to deny the gospel would be to deny Christianity. While saying that it was of first importance, Paul gave us the gospel in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 as he said,

> Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.

The gospel is pivotal because it is the means by which God saves sinful humanity. Every other world religion incorporates some form of works-based salvation. In Christianity, the gospel is preached and salvation occurs only when people believe the truths preached within the gospel message. Furthermore, it is a message that sounds completely foolish to unbelieving New Yorkers (class participants were therefore reminded to fully rely on the Holy Spirit during evangelism). Scripture says, "For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor 1:18). God has decreed the folly of the gospel to save those

89

who believe, "For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe" (1 Cor 1:21). Although some class participants could not remember when they initially came to Christ, all were reminded that at some point, they were saved through the gospel. No one was ever born a Christian and the power of God for salvation is only given through the gospel to those who believe, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Rom 1:16). As Christians, my class participants were told that they were the most important people on the planet because they had the most important news on the planet.

In an age of mass confusion about the gospel message itself, I had to reiterate to the class that the gospel is not the simplistic news that God has a wonderful material plan for your life on earth. It is not the first four books of the Bible, and neither is it the entire Bible. It is not a music genre and it is not a lifestyle. Furthermore, a person cannot present the gospel without using words.

The word "gospel" came from two old English words put together. It simply means "good news." Since the gospel is news, it cannot be shared without using words. Students were shown that statements such as, "Always preach the gospel, and when necessary, use words" were synonymous to saying, "Always feed the hungry, and when necessary, use food." I also mentioned that it would be like asking a television news anchor to tell the evening news without speaking words. Based on 1 Corinthians 15, I stated that the gospel had essentially four points: (1) there is an infinitely holy and just God who will judge all of humanity, (2) all humans are sinners who upon their deaths deserve and face the wrath of God in eternal hell, (3) the great news is that God sent His Son, Jesus Christ (who was fully God and fully man) to die on the cross and pay for our sins. Jesus absorbed God's wrath in our place and resurrected 3 days later, however, (4) in order to have this great salvation, we must personally repent (turn from our sins) and

90

put our faith in Jesus Christ. Those four points constitute the gospel. We may elaborate on these four points, but we cannot give people anything less than those four points. This is the message that humanity needs to hear in order to be saved.

From there, I moved the class onto the definition of evangelism which I stated to be, "The preaching of the good news." Contrary to popular belief, I told the participants that smiling at your neighbor—by itself—was not evangelism. Telling someone about Jesus without telling the person what Jesus did for him on the cross is also not evangelism. Feeding the homeless, while a good work, is not evangelism. Evangelism only occurs when the gospel is shared. My participants were also told that as a corollary, the same is true for missions. The mission of God is the Great Commission. Therefore, central to any missions work is evangelism. Without evangelism, missions ceases to be missions—regardless of how many good works a person or team accomplishes.

Finally, I instructed the class on what biblical discipleship entailed. Within the Great Commission, Jesus commanded us to be disciples and to go make disciples. The Greek word for disciple simply means "student" or "pupil." Every believer is therefore, a learner or student of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is our Lord, Savior, and ultimate teacher. Discipleship therefore, unequivocally incorporates learning and thinking. Participants were told that Christian discipleship is always primarily centered on the Word of God. This fact then requires teaching, learning and the use of our minds. We need to be associated and mentored by those are spiritually more mature than we are. The apostle Paul saw the importance of discipleship when he said to Timothy, "Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers" (1 Tim 4:16). Sound discipleship, therefore, involves teachers and mentors. Discipleship occurs as we are being taught God's Word while fully engaging our minds. I closed this phase by informing my participants that the

91

primary means by which God disciples the world is via the local church. Participants were urged to find and devote themselves to a Bible believing church.

Phase 8:The Local Church

Aware of the fact that long-term discipleship is contingent upon participants joining a local church, phase eight sought to help people come away with a more committed resolve towards the local church. Given the anti-committal nature of New Yorkers, I started off by asking participants to give me some reasons as to why people do not become members of a church. Next, fundamental questions were addressed. Question such as, "What is a church," "Can para-church organizations on your college campus be considered a church," and "Could your time of family worship be considered a church?"

The definition that I gave for the term "church" was "a committed assembly of believers (consisting of more than just one family), who are an organized group of self-identifying members of a local body of Christ which practices biblical leadership, observation of the ordinances, on-going accountability and church discipline, and gospel-centered Bible preaching and worship." Joining a local church, therefore, is not merely a helpful piece of advice.   Hebrews 10:25 is not just a helpful adage, but a command. Both Jesus and the New Testament writers did not envision a Christianity extricated from the local church. To be certain, to be a Christian was to be part of a Bible believing church. This is especially highlighted by the fact that in Jesus' perspective, excommunication and the loss of church membership were analogous to being an unbeliever. Jesus said, "If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector" (Matt 18:17).

Unlike the fallacious presupposition that the Church was initiated and organized by power-hungry men in the early years of Christianity, I informed my

students that the Church was instituted by Jesus Himself. It was Jesus who said, "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt 16:18). Outside of it being a divine expectation, church membership also has many other benefits. Author and pastor, Mark Dever, gave us five benefits: (1) to assure ourselves, (2) to evangelize the world, (3) to expose false gospels, (4) to edify the church, and (5) to glorify God.[18] Upon examining what a healthy church ought to look like, we also examined John Piper's five strands of biblical evidence calling for church membership. [19] What was initially a very frail commitment towards the institution of the local church became a very edifying time of biblical exploration.

Phase 9: The Five Points of Calvinism

Through personal experience, I am under the conviction that nothing shores up the Christian's worldview more than the doctrines of grace as found in Calvinism. Everything from the creation of man, the Fall of Adam, the crucifixion of Christ, the suffering of humanity and the salvation of mankind is impacted by the doctrine of the God's absolute sovereignty. Rather than being an avoidable and inconsequential issue, the doctrine of God's sovereignty is instead, very critical to my goal of planting a rich and full Great Commission Church in New York City. As John Piper once said in a foundational text on Calvinism, "That is why these points are sometimes called *the doctrines of grace*. To experience God fully, we need to know not just how he acts in general, buts specifically how he saves *us*—how did he save me?"[20] Therefore, for the ninth phase of this project, using a variety of resources and Scripture texts, I carefully

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[18]Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 146.

[19]John Piper, "How Important is Church Membership," *Desiring God*, http://www.desiringgod.org/sermons/how-important-is-church-membership (accessed March 15, 2014).

[20]John Piper, *Five Points: Towards a Deeper Experience of God's Grace* (London: Christian Focus Publications, 2013), 8.

taught on the doctrines of Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, and the Perseverance of the Saints.

Phase 10: Determining God's Will

In conjunction with the previous phase's work on Calvinism, phase ten explored the will of God. The practicality of this phase extends into various spheres of life including marital life, particular career fields, and specific ministries. Many were interested in how to determine God's will. During this phase, I presented the different perspectives within Christendom regarding the will of God. In line with classic Reformed thought, I also presented what John Piper called "God will of decree" versus "God's will of command."[21] Finally, though there are some who believe that there is considerable liberty as long as a person is within biblical bounds, I made the case to the class that God often does have a specific will that we must prayerfully determine for special situations. The apostles certainly believed this and demonstrated their belief by casting of lots for the revelation of God's specific will between two seemingly equally qualified godly men. The apostles' search for God's particular will regarding the right man to replace Judas is demonstrated in Acts 1:24, which says, "And they prayed and said, 'You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen.'" Likewise, we ought to seek God's gracious revelation of His will concerning major decisions in our lives. This is done in conjunction with prayer, the reading of God's Word, and the consultation of godly counselors.

Phase 11: Dating, Marriage, and Divorce

A biblical worldview informs our most intimate decisions, especially that of marriage. With most of the participants still unwed at the time of the project, this phase

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[21]John Piper, "What is the Will of God and how do We Know It," *Desiring God*, http://www.desiringgod.org/sermons/what-is-the-will-of-god-and-how-do-we-know-it (accessed March 16, 2014).

was of particular interest to many within the class. Although I did spend some time teaching on the topic of dating, much of the class time was committed to the theological importance of marriage, the practical experiences within marriage, and the insolvency of divorce. Both Genesis 2:24 and Matthew 19:5 were studied for a biblical understanding on both the union created in marriage and the divine injunction on divorce. The only two permissible grounds for divorce given in Scripture are sexual immorality (Matt 19:9), and an unbelieving spouse-initiated divorce (1 Cor 7:15). Participants were told to date with serious purity and rigorous accountability (with the intent and goal of marriage) because marriage is an insoluble act. Furthermore, ample time was given to studying Ephesians 5:32 where Paul looks at marriage and says, "This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church."

Perhaps the most surprising portion of the phase was when I taught the class that any person married to a divorcee (where the divorce was biblically unauthorized) is currently living in adultery (Matt 19:9) and must promptly forsake the relationship (John 8:11). God calls the second marriage an adulterous affair and thereby does not recognize it as a marriage. Hence, the only two biblical options for divorcees are perpetual celibacy, or reconciliation with the first spouse (1 Cor 7:11). The situation, I said, was analogous to gay marriage (which is currently legal in New York State). If one (or both) parties in such a relationship ever came to Christ, they would be called to immediately forsake the sin and to pursue a legal divorce to annul the gay marriage. In the eyes of God, a gay marriage is not a marriage. Analogously, neither is a divorcee's second marriage.

Phase 12: Biblical Manhood and Womanhood

Building upon phase 11, phase 12 sought to deepen and create richer marriages by discovering biblical manhood and womanhood. Recognizing the rising tide of sexual confusion in New York City, this phase was an imperative for Christians living in the

95

Empire State. With homosexuality quickly becoming the accepted norm, and with the rise of ecclesiological egalitarianism, young Christians maturing in the faith must be informed on the biblical expectations and definitions for men versus women. To accomplish this goal, I used the Danvers Statement as my guide.[22] Additionally, I leaned heavily upon John Piper's online resource entitled, "Sexual Complimentarity: The Pursuit of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood."[23]

Phase 13: Personal Spiritual Disciplines

As the project proceeded into its second-to-last week, I tried to culminate in a thoroughly biblical worldview by attempting to inculcate the importance of a Christian's personal spiritual disciplines. Recognizing that much of what was taught in fourteen weeks could easily be lost or become a mere intellectual activity, I realized that a healthy personal spiritual life must not only be recommended—it must also be taught. Using Donald Whitney's classic work for this phase, I taught on the ten spiritual disciplines for the Christian life: Scripture reading, prayer, worship, evangelism, serving, stewardship, fasting, silence and solitude, journaling, and learning.[24]

Phase 14: The Life and Cost of Discipleship

"What does it mean to be a disciple of Christ?" In this final phase, we sought to answer that question through Scripture. In an age of postmodern spirituality, it was of high importance to create disciples that had not only gained a biblical worldview, but were also now willing to live it out. True believers are compelled by the words of Christ

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[22]The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, "Core Beliefs," http://cbmw.org/core-beliefs (accessed March 23, 2014).

[23]John Piper, " Sexual Complimentarity: The Pursuit of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood," *Desiring God*, http://cdn.desiringgod.org/pdf/booklets/BTSC.pdf (accessed March 23, 2014).

[24]Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1991).

in John 20:21, "As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." However, due to the spread of variant heterodoxies and ideologies; many Christians are unable to envision what the high cost of biblical discipleship. Hence, in the fourteenth phase, I simply led the class in an exegetical examination of Luke 14:25-35, which reads,

> Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple. "Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is of no use either for the soil or for the manure pile. It is thrown away. He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

Upon analysis of the text, participants were given a sheet of paper and were asked to list the costs of following Jesus. Subsequently, all participants were asked to prayerfully decide whether or not they truly wanted to follow Jesus after reading the Scripture text. They were reminded that true salvation does not see Jesus as a means to an end, but rather, as the end itself. Jesus is either our ultimate treasure worth sacrificing everything for, or He is not our Savior. There is no middle ground with Christ. All potential followers of Christ are notified of this on the front end. Hence, given Christ's high cost for discipleship, participants were challenged to ask themselves whether or not they truly wanted to follow Jesus. Upon reflecting on the cost of discipleship, the class then closed with participants writing a piece on their aspirations for the Kingdom of Christ. Using all that they learned during the fourteen weeks, I encouraged each person to envision what they will accomplish for Christ during the next ten years. During the share out afterwards, the fruits of my fourteen week endeavor were palpable. Many had now gained a more biblical worldview and were eager to fulfill the second part of the Great Commission by teaching others everything they had acquired.

97

Conclusion

Words cannot express how much I enjoyed conducting the fourteen phases of this project. Unequivocally, there was much preparation and work involved, but the benefits were eternally significant. In so many ways, this D.Min. project enabled me to execute the Great Commission with greater efficiency and focus. Indeed, I would have done many aspects of this project during the natural course of a church plant, but the D.Min. helped me to focus and compelled me to get everything out in an organized and systematic manner. It was very fulfilling to finish the fourteen weeks with the knowledge that God was glorified, and that His church was edified. In chapter 5, I will demonstrate how the project was successful in accomplishing its project goals and how it benefitted all of its participants.

CHAPTER 5

PROJECT EVALUATION

This chapter concludes the presentation of this project by offering a six-step evaluation. First, I will evaluate and assess the research data. Second, I will restate and evaluate the four project goals. The third section will seek to evaluate the project process and will attempt to identify strengths and weaknesses. The fourth section will be a theological reflection on the project. The fifth section will be a personal reflection. The sixth and final section will be the conclusion.

Evaluation of Research Data

The ability to authentically assess the full attainment of a biblical worldview by a participant is virtually impossible. The question, "Has the participant attained a biblical worldview?" can only be answered by assessing an individual's life choices over the span of many years. For example, there is a big difference between the statements, "I believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ" and "I evangelize each week because I believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ." Without the matrix of real-time life decisions, it is virtually impossible to determine whether or not a person has genuinely attained a biblical worldview. Gauging an individual's attainment of a biblical worldview is far more complex and multifaceted than mere intellectual assent. Prominently, attainment of such a worldview is perhaps manifested most clearly by observing actual life decisions. In other words, belief is often seen through an individual's actions. Admittedly, however, even then, it is still difficult to gauge whether or not a person is truly rooted in a biblical worldview. The apostle Paul, himself, once said in Romans 7:22-24, "For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against

the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" Paul unquestionably had a biblical worldview, but even he admitted that it did not always translate into properly aligned life choices.

With that being said, for the purposes of this project, I used a summative assessment to collect research data. At about 11 weeks, I used one night to administer an assessment. Given the various forms of assessments (e.g., diagnostic, formative, summative, performance, etc.), it was critical for me to choose the right assessment for the purpose of gathering research data. To that end, I used the summative assessment. (A formative assessment could have benefited the group at about week seven, but such an assessment was not given.) According to Anne Reeves, formative assessments differ from summative assessments in that

> formative assessment is used during the learning process. Its purpose is to inform the teacher and the students how well the learning is going. Any format may be used—something as informal as oral questions in class during the lesson or as formal as a written quiz or essay….Formative assessment can be tightly structured to focus on a particular concept or skill, as when the teacher says, "Everyone take four minutes to solve this next problem independently," or it can be wide open, as in "Take out your journals and tell me everything you know about the story we are reading." What makes formative assessment formative is that the teacher and the students use the data it generates to shape further instruction and learning. Some teachers do use formative assessments for grading, but with this assessment application, the real objective is to uncover and make sure the students are informed of their own progress—through teachers' comments or another way of showing them what they are understanding or doing well, and what they are struggling with or misunderstanding.[1]

Meanwhile, Reeves points out that the summative assessment serves an entirely different purpose than the formative assessment:

> Summative assessment is designed and administered to "sum up" learning that has taken place during a lesson, a unit, or a course. The data it generates typically serve as the basis for a grade, a certificate, a degree, or any other marker of achieved learning.[2]

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[1]Anne R. Reeves, *Where Great Teaching Begins: Planning for Student Thinking and Learning* (Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 2011), 106.

[2]Ibid., 107.

Since the project essentially tried to determine the achievement and attainment of a biblical worldview by each participant, the summative assessment was chosen as the best mode of assessment. It was given to each participant in-lieu of a class teaching segment. Furthermore, the assessment was given late into the project so that a sufficient number of lessons were taught. The lessons taught served as the basis for the summative assessment. Questions on the assessment were written response questions. There were no multiple choice questions. Included were questions such as, "Of the major philosophical arguments for the existence of God, which two do you deem as strongest?" and "Do you believe that the Bible and the theory of evolution are compatible? Explain." The assessments were then graded and given a grade on an "A to F" letter scale. There were a total of sixteen questions.

Out of my class of 12 participants, no one received a score of "A." An "A" would have been a flawless paper. I was quite fastidious with the grading scale. Quite pleasantly, however, 7 participants scored an "A-." An "A-" paper contained one or two minor errors or points that needed clarification. "A-" papers were well written and very thorough overall. Of the whole class, 58.3 percent of the class received a grade of "A-." The "A-" subcategory consisted of 4 males and 3 females.

Two participants received a grade of "B+." The "B+" subcategory had a couple of errors or omissions, but nothing major. This subcategory had one male and one female. The subcategory represented 16.6 percent of the entire group.

One person received a score of "B." The "B" subcategory required several corrections, but persons within the category were still deemed as proficient in a biblical worldview. The one person in the "B" category was a female. The subcategory represented 8.3 percent of the entire group.

Finally, 2 participants received a grade of "B-." Both participants in this subcategory were female. The "B-" subcategory was considered to have deficiencies and

gaps in learning. The participants' responses were often brief and lacking—if not all together incorrect. The subcategory represented 16.6 percent of the entire group.

Evaluation of Project Goals

The first goal of this project was to teach a biblical worldview to the body of the newly planted Mustard Seed Church. This goal was propelled by the Great Commission of Christ, and motivated by the theological famine prevalent in the northeast corridor of the United States. Syncretism has seeped into the lives of many believers and this has led to lukewarm churches, entertainment-driven worship services, feeble and disinterested attempts at godliness, apostasy, and an overall lack of discipleship in a sin soaked culture. With the completion of this fourteen week project, this first goal was achieved.

The second goal of this project was to guide the attendees of Mustard Seed Church into doing actual evangelism. In Matthew 28:19, Jesus said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." The strategic location and cosmopolitan nature of New York City means that Mustard Seed Church has an ideal opportunity to reach the nations for Christ. However, due to an abysmal understanding of terms such as "evangelism" and "gospel," many Christians in New York City are still not partaking in actual evangelism. This dearth of understanding is epitomized in the difficulty of finding a concise, yet theologically accurate, gospel tract. Through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, I was able to create a 4-inch by 6-inch glossy gospel tract. (I have put the contents of my gospel tract in the appendix.) At $99 for 5,000 pieces, it was a real bargain, and we have been able to mass produce them.

Through the teaching that took place during phase 7 of this project, the terms, methodology, rationale, approaches, and definitions for evangelism were clearly expounded. However, knowing all the right definitions and approaches for evangelism,

and doing actual evangelism are two completely different things. By God's grace, as I write this portion of the paper (approximately four months after the last phase of this project), we are still going out on a weekly basis and evangelizing on the streets of New York City. Tonight, six church attendees went out to evangelize (all but one were participants of all fourteen phases of this project). Though some evangelize on their own time—apart from the collective weekly outings as a church, I know, however, that not all twelve of the participants still evangelize on a weekly basis. Therefore, the realization of this second objective is mixed. Though all have done actual evangelism, not all evangelize on a regular, weekly basis.

The third goal of this project was to create within the attendees of Mustard Seed Church a biblical understanding of church membership. Simply put, biblical discipleship cannot occur without a proper understanding of church membership. In vastly biblically illiterate New York City, many churches have succumbed to a capitalistic and consumer-driven ecclesiology. Biblical notions of church membership and church discipline have fallen by the way side.

Phase 8 of this project was completely devoted to this third goal. The definition that I gave for the term "church" was "a committed assembly of believers (consisting of more than just one family), who are an organized group of self-identifying members of a local body of Christ which practices biblical leadership, observation of the ordinances, on-going accountability and church discipline, and gospel-centered Bible preaching and worship." Participants were taught that joining a local church is not merely an option, but an expectation. Both Jesus and the New Testament writers did not envision a Christianity extricated from the local church. This was especially highlighted by the fact that in Jesus' perspective, excommunication and the loss of church membership were both analogous to being an unbeliever. Jesus said, "If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector" (Matt 18:17).

Furthermore, in this phase of the project, participants were informed that the church was instituted by Jesus Himself, who said, "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt 16:18). Using Mark Dever as a resource, I gave five benefits to church membership: (1) to assure ourselves, (2) to evangelize the world, (3) to expose false gospels, (4) to edify the church, and (5) to glorify God.[3] After the training, the result is that the third goal of this project has been met. All participants have signed up for membership at Mustard Seed Church.

The fourth and final goal of this project was a personal one. As a result of doing this project, it was my hope to see my own worldview become more biblical, my zeal for personal evangelism increase, and my understanding of church membership to crystallize biblically. As Mustard Seed Church moved forward from inception, I hoped and prayed that God would use me to guide it to becoming a Great Commission church. God has indeed done all that, and so much more. Serving and teaching the church has sharpened me as a leader and pastor. It has forced me to research and pray. The fourth goal has been achieved.

Evaluation of Project Process

Though this project was an enriching process for all involved, an evaluation of the project process would show strengths, as well as weaknesses requiring modification.

Project Strengths

Certainly, the length of the project was one of its primary strengths. A dedicated fourteen-week course set up to establish a biblical worldview is quite formidable in duration. Yet, the length of the project enabled me to cover a wide array of

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[3]Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 146.

necessary elements crucial for establishing a biblical worldview. Each participant was committed for the entire fourteen phases.

Additionally, the content covered within each phase was a strength of this project. The subject matter for every phase was carefully selected. As stated earlier, many New Yorkers question even the fundamental premise of God's very existence. With the first phase covering the topic of God's existence, the second phase exploring the veracity and authority of the Bible, and the third phase examining the implications of evolutionary thought; one can easily see how each phase throughout the fourteen weeks was circumspectly selected in order to build a comprehensive biblical worldview. The fruit of this process was evident when many of the participants verbally communicated how blessed they were after the completion of phase 5. They acknowledged that they were never exposed to a sound theology on the issue of human suffering.

Finally, the ages of my project's participants were a strength. With just one female barely over the age of 30, and the other eleven participants being younger than the age of 30, this project had a very young age group. Presupposing that most of their lives are ahead of them, a biblical worldview (if attained) at their current life-stage is a tremendous strength for years to come. Furthermore, younger participants generally tend to be more accepting, teachable, and open-minded toward new ideas and perspectives.

Project Weaknesses

As with all projects, the weaknesses of this project's process were only realized after the completion of the project. The first weakness was the fourteen week time limit of the project. Whereas the duration of the project was a strength in that it provided me sufficient time to teach a comprehensive curriculum to cover the basics of a biblical worldview, it nonetheless is not long enough to firmly ascertain whether or not an individual has truly attained a biblical worldview. Such discernment can only come about after the process of years, within the context of real life situations, and through

105

constant dialogue. The attainment of a biblical worldview is most clearly seen

as an individual makes godly decisions in the face of having evil alternatives.

Furthermore, it is imperative to have an ongoing dialogue to see what was the underlying

heart rationale behind each of those life choices in order to definitively ascertain the

existence of a biblical worldview. The summative assessment that was utilized by this

project, while effective in determining the intellectual comprehension of a biblical

worldview, is not an accurate barometer for determining whether or not a biblical

worldview is truly in place. With a medical student, engineer, and a teacher being among

the participants of my project, it is not hard to envision participants simply memorizing

the correct answers for an exam but not truly believing in those answers. An example of

this was demonstrated by the fact that all of my participants believed in the importance of

evangelism, but very few came out to do actual evangelism during our weekly

evangelism outings. (Some of this could be due scheduling conflicts, but for others, it is

simply due to a lack of discipline.) Though getting Mustard Seed Church to do actual

evangelism was the second goal of this project and the seventh phase of the fourteen

week process, there still remains in some a chasm between "knowing" and "doing."

Another weakness for this project's process was the ages of the participants.

Although I stated earlier that the youthfulness of our participant pool was a strength, it

was simultaneously a weakness. Could it be that older males are easier to disciple than

younger males? Are older females generally more receptive to a biblical worldview than

younger females? Would an older male be more faithful (long-term) to living out a

biblical worldview than a younger male? Could an older demographic contribute

additional wisdom to a course on biblical worldview? These, and many other questions,

remain unanswered due to the overall youthfulness of my participants.

Finally, another weakness was the summative assessment itself. In retrospect,

it would have been more fruitful if the participants received a questionnaire in addition to

the summative assessment asking them to demonstrate their decisions to hypothetical

life situations and to give the rationale for each decision. This approach would help alleviate some of the questions associated with the first weakness mentioned earlier and would allow for some application. It would also give the participant a matrix (howbeit hypothetical) to apply his knowledge, and grant a sense of the sheer weightiness and relevance of one's worldview.

Theological Reflection

This project is intrinsically theological at its core. Church planting work is deeply theological. At the heart of this project was a genuine desire to grapple with the implications of the atonement. The divinity of Christ, which was powerfully declared through His historical resurrection; and the resurrection, which followed His redemptive death, compelled me to seek out the best way to fulfill Jesus' Great Commission. All authority now belongs to Christ, and His command was to, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matt 28:19-20). I would be a fool not to carefully consider how to best fulfill the King's last command with full ardor, creativity, and dedication.

Theological reflection upon the Great Commission caused me to begin this journey of a D.Min. project entitled, "Planting a Great Commission Church." Upon theological reflection, it dawned on me that God's primary means for fulfilling the Great Commission is through church planting. Evangelism, baptism, and discipleship are to occur fundamentally and primarily within the context of the local church.

God, in His sovereignty, caused the perfect confluence of real-time church planting and academic doctoral work to create the most richest of experiences for me. My doctoral work fed my church planting efforts, and vice versa. I am a firm believer in the notion that our theology should inform and guide our missions work. Without a solid theology, missions work very quickly loses its structure and focus. This is particularly

107

true of church planting work. The church of Jesus Christ must be theologically strong since it is the pillar and foundation of truth (1 Tim 3:15).

The project largely centered around sound theology. Theology motivated each part of the project. All three components of the project required a fundamental theological basis. For example, without a solid theology, evangelism will not occur. Without a firm theology, there is no real impetus for church membership. Every element of this project required theological reflection.

Upon completion of the project, I am strengthened in my belief that there's nothing more imperative than addressing the theological famine that exists in the metro-New York region. The amount of syncretism exists even amongst Christians in this region is deplorable. The first goal of this project was to teach a biblical worldview to the body of Mustard Seed Church. Theological reflection causes me to ever more adamant about this objective. Scripture plainly commands us in Romans 12:2, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." The gaining of a biblical worldview is a result of having a transformed, renewed mind. Unless we have Scripture-informed thinking, we really do not have mind renewal.

The second goal was to guide the attendees of Mustard Seed Church into doing actual evangelism. The strategic location and cosmopolitan nature of New York City provided us with an ideal opportunity to reach the nations for Christ. Theological reflection upon this goal makes me glad. With the production of a comprehensive, yet concise gospel tract; our people evangelized on the streets of New York City. The classroom lesson translated into real-time evangelism. It was a joy to obey our Savior who commanded in Mark 16:15, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation."

The third goal was to create within the attendees of Mustard Seed Church a

biblical understanding of church membership. If more churches conducted a theological reflection on church membership, it would lead to a lessening of the consumerist mentality that's so prevalent within many North American churches.   Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 12:12-13 that, "Just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body." Careful theological reflection causes one to concede that it is near impossible to extricate Christianity from church membership. After all, it was Jesus Himself who instructed us to consider those outside the church as an unregenerate "tax collector" (Matt 18:17). Theological reflection upon this third goal reinforces my belief that it was an imperative and worthy goal.

Every aspect of a good church plant is theological at its core. To know God, after all, is what the church is primarily called to do (John 17:3). Throughout the process of church planting, I have come back to the Bible incessantly. The Bible was not only my source for theological information, but it was also my guide to building a true house of God.   Upon theological reflection, I am glad that God has enabled me to partake in the greatest privilege in the world, namely, church planting.

Personal Reflection

Church planting has not been an easy experience, but it has been a rich experience.   There have been nights when Satan's lure to throw in the towel due to the pressures of pastoral leadership have been painfully near and real. The glories of theological reflection and the resolve that comes with triumphant readings of the Great Commission quickly wear off as interpersonal conflicts, sinful confessions, and theological differences rear their ugly heads in the church. As six hour meetings take away from family time, and thanklessness seems to come with the vocation, it is no surprise that so many pastors burn-out and leave the pastorate all together. What has kept me to the steering wheel has been 1 Peter 5:4 which promises: "And when the chief

Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory." Greater than my resolve, however, has been the loving and steady hand of our sovereign God who deeply cares about a Great Commission church being planted in the city of New York.

I am deeply thankful towards The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary for allowing me to earn this D.Min. at their institution. The academic rigor of the seminary was both challenging and edifying. Upon careful reflection, I realize that God lovingly allowed me to complete a doctorate in the Urban Ministry track--a track which coincided and overlapped with so much of what I was actually doing as a church planter in New York City.

If I could do it over again, I would have taken greater care to ensure more time with my family throughout my initial church planting endeavors. With membership interviews, creation of the church constitution and by-laws, and everything else involved in a church plant, family time definitely takes a hit. I am thankful to my beloved wife and children. They not only had to miss me while I was out on those seemingly endless church meetings, but they also missed me while I sought seclusion in order to finish writing this project. I have come to realize that without an understanding wife who believes in fulfilling the Great Commission as much as you do, it is virtually impossible to do the hard work of church planting. Satan, I believe, has a special bulls-eye on the families of church planters. He recognizes that the church planter is his greatest threat--the enemy that is establishing a beachhead on his turf. It is no surprise then, that Satan fights back and sadly, his target is often the pastor's family. Church planters need the fervent prayers of the saints. I am deeply thankful to my family and for all who continue to keep us in their prayers.

I am also immensely thankful to Jeff Walters, my project supervisor, who not only put up with me in his doctoral seminars, but also always took time to take care of me--helping to ensure a safe completion of this doctorate. Our conversations, along with those I had with Charles Lawless, were enriching and sharpening. To my knowledge, I

110

will be the first D.Min. graduate from Southern Seminary's Urban Ministry track, and that is a high honor that I will carry with me for the rest of my life. Godly mentors and a godly institution were absolute necessities for a project of this nature.

Lastly, the fight continues. Although this project now comes to an end, the greater task (i.e., the Great Commission) remains. The best part of this project has been the fact that it has served (and not impeded) the greater goal of fulfilling the Great Commission of Christ. Time and time again, I marveled at how much I used what I did for this program in my church planting work. God, in His sovereignty, has been good to me. Though this project comes to an end, the reading, studying, preaching and teaching does not end for me. Completely by God's grace, a Great Commission church has been planted in Queens, New York City. Now, it is time to strive to make it thrive! I have one short life. Coram Deo! Soli Deo Gloria. Thank you, Jesus.

APPENDIX 1

GOSPEL TRACT CREATED FOR EVANGELISM

The Good News

1. **God Exists**
   Look at the universe–this planet, our sense of justice (knowledge of right/wrong), the human body, or your DNA. God exists and it's undeniable. **Psalm 19:1** - The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

2. **God is Holy, Perfect and Just.**
   God is holy. He is completely sinless and because God is good (Himself being the source of moral perfection), he must judge sin and render justice upon sinners after they die. **Isaiah 6:3** - And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!"

3. **You are a Sinner**
   You have sinned. You have broken one or all of the 10 commandments – God's Laws. Lying, dishonoring parents, hate, lust, theft, and the list goes on. You are guilty in the eyes of a perfect God. **Romans 3:23** - for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

4. **The Penalty for Sin is Hell (Everlasting Punishment)**
   Your sins have separated you from God. Upon death, because you are guilty, God will render justice upon you. God's punishment for sin is Hell. It does not matter how many good things you have done in life — if you are guilty, the punishment is Hell. **Romans 6:23 -** For the wages of sin is death. **Revelations 20:15** - And if anyone's name was not found in the book of life, he was thrown into the Lake of Fire.

5. **The Good News: Jesus Died and Paid for your sins!**
   God loved you so much that He sent His Son to die on the cross for you. Jesus (who was fully God and fully human), lived a perfectly sinless life and died on the cross to pay for your sins. God's wrath (anger) and judgment fell on Jesus. Jesus paid the penalty for your sins so that you can have eternal life! History shows that 3 days later, Jesus resurrected from the dead in victory. Jesus Christ is alive today, reigning in Heaven! **Romans 5:8** - but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

6. **How can you be sure that you are going to Heaven? If you believe in this Message and accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior**
   In order to go to Heaven, the Bible says that you must repent (turn from) your sins and personally believe in Jesus as your Lord and Savior. Jesus died for all your sins, past, present and future, but unless you personally accept His death as payment for YOUR sins, you will have to pay your own sins when you stand

before God. You can pray to accept Jesus today! If you genuinely believe in Jesus as Lord, you will become a Christian and can be assured that Heaven is your final home! Jesus' righteousness will be imputed (credited) to you. **John 3:36** - He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe in the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.

APPENDIX 2

PRE-PROJECT QUESTIONNAIRE

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to determine if you have a biblical worldview. This research is being conducted by Stephen Kim for purposes of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will simply answer the questions before we begin training and you will answer the same questions after we complete the training. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

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

1. Please write your name: _____

2. Circle the number of years since you came to faith in Christ:

Less than 1 year   1-5 years   6-10 years   11-15 years   16-20 years   21+ years

3. Age
   __ Younger than 20
   __ 20-30
   __ 31-40
   __ 41-50
   __ 51-60
   __ 61+

The second section of this questionnaire deals with your worldview (please be aware that your actual decisions in life are far more indicative of your worldview than your answers to these questions, therefore please try to be honest):

1. Do you know what a "biblical worldview" is? _____

2. On a scale of 1-10 (1 being lowest, 10 being highest) how confident are you that the Bible is inerrant and contains the very words of God? _____

3. Please circle the following that best indicates how often you share your faith.

2-5 times a week   1 time a week   once a month   once a year   almost never

4. Put an X by the primary reason why you do not read your Bible more.
   (Please skip this question if you read the Bible daily.)
   __   Laziness
   __   Busy lifestyle
   __   Uncertainty of the Bible's truthfulness
   __   Worry of having insufficient knowledge to comprehend what you will read

5. Have you ever read the entire Bible? Yes/No (circle one)

Using the following scale, please write the number that best corresponds to your feelings in response to the following statements:

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Strongly Disagree	Disagree

___1. All humans are born sinners.

___2. God has a purpose for any and all suffering that a Christian experiences.

___3. Heaven and hell are real, literal places.

___4. Salvation is a free gift from God that comes through personal faith.

___5. God used evolution to create man and woman.

___6. God created men and women to be equal in value but different in roles.

___7. Without God, life is ultimately meaningless.

___8. Jesus was an actual person who was fully God and fully human.

___9. A lack of money causes hopelessness.

___10. Pre-marital sex, homosexuality, and pornography are all sins.

___11. Inter-racial marriages are forbidden by God.

___12. Through God's mercy, all humans will one day have eternal life.

___13. I feel confident that I can clearly write out the gospel message.

___14. A person who has no desire for evangelism is not genuinely saved.

___15. It is fine for Christians to date unbelievers—as long as the gospel is shared.

APPENDIX 3

POST-PROJECT ASSESSMENT

Name:_____

Mustard Seed Church Friday Night Discipleship Classes
Assessment
November, 2013

Please thoughtfully answer the following questions. Type and hand in a paper copy next week (along with this cover page). Be as thorough as possible while being as concise as possible. Please do not get too wordy.

1. Of the major philosophical arguments for the existence of God, which two do you deem strongest? Why?
2. What is the ultimate reason for you believing that the Bible is God's Word? How reliable are the New Testament documents?
3. Do you believe that the Bible and the theory of evolution are compatible? Explain.
4. What are some of the social implications for believing in the theory of evolution?
5. How does a fuller knowledge of the attributes of God lead to a fuller appreciation for the gospel?
6. Why is there suffering in this world? Why do Christians suffer?
7. List your top 3 proofs for the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ.
8. Why is it crucial that Jesus was BOTH God and man?
9. Why was Jesus' 30 years of sinless life (and not just His death) important for our salvation?
10. What is the gospel?
11. What is evangelism? What is missions?
12. How is anyone saved? Could this salvation be lost? If not, what then, motivates a Christian to stop sinning?
13. What would you say to a self-professing Christian who states that church membership is not important?
14. A Christian asks you, "What should I look for when choosing a church?" How do you respond?
15. Are people in "English Ministries" members of a real church? Why or why not. Explain.
16. What is discipleship and why is it important?

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ABSTRACT

PLANTING A GREAT COMMISSION CHURCH
QUEENS, NEW YORK

Stephen Kim, D.Min.
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Jeffrey K. Walters

This project sought to plant a Great Commission church in Queens, New York City. The project sought to create a process for developing and sustaining a biblical worldview. Chapter 1 presents the purpose, goals, context, rationale, definitions, and limitations of the project.

Chapter 2 discusses biblical and theological issues surrounding church planting within urban contexts. Specifically, this chapter looks at the different biblical perspectives of cities and seeks to develop a healthy ecclesiology for urban contexts.

Chapter 3 surveys theoretical and practical issues in urban church planting. The effects of urbanization and postmodernism on urban centers are examined for the purpose of an enhanced missiological approach.

Chapter 4 examines the creation and the implementation of Mustard Seed Church Biblical Worldview Program. Attention is given to the fourteen developmental phases of the program and the approach used in each phase.

Chapter 5 provides an evaluation of the project goals, along with its strengths and weaknesses. This project asserts that faithful church planting is God's primary means for fulfilling the Great Commission.

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