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TRAINING MEMBERS AT UPLIFT CHURCH IN LAUREL,
MARYLAND FOR PERSONAL EVANGELISM

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

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

by
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May 2019

APPROVAL SHEET

TRAINING MEMBERS AT UPLIFT CHURCH IN LAUREL,
MARYLAND FOR PERSONAL EVANGELISM

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I dedicate this dissertation the members of Uplift Church, who serve God faithfully.
And to my supportive wife, Sabrena, who has been with me through thick and thin as
well as our children, Micah, Nathan, and Christian.

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PREFACE

I am thankful for the salvation given to me through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. Without the work of salvation, I would still be dead in my sin and separated from God. I live to share this wonderful good news with others.

This project was made possible because of the supportive village in which God has placed me. I am thankful for my wife, Sabrena, and our children, Micah, Nathan and Ryan. I would not have been able to endure the long nights of studying and writing were it not for their continued support and encouragement. I am also thankful for the prayers, and words of comfort from my mother, Tanda Armstrong, and my mentor, Dr. Joseph Evans.

This project could not have been completed without the participation and support of the members of Uplift Church. I pray this project results in continued growth at Uplift. I am also thankful for the support of the faculty and staff of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. My faculty supervisor, Dr. Kevin Jones, and the Black Church Leadership Chair, Dr. T. Vaughn Walker, were amazing to work with and pushed me to be the best scholar I could be, to the glory of God.

Marquez Ball

Clinton, Maryland

May 2019

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The twenty-first century is an era in time when many church members view personal evangelism as an option, not a biblical mandate. Personal evangelism means purposefully sharing the gospel message in one's everyday interaction. Society has provided several attractive alternatives to the gospel message and church attendance, such as Sunday football, brunch, or simply shopping. The church must respond to these alternatives to win back the minds and hearts of God's people. The millennial generation, the largest living generation in America's history,¹ has demonstrated a lack of interest in Christianity and church attendance, which is noticeable by their absence. Not only are millennials less interested in Christianity and church, they are less interested in religion. Thom and Jess Rainer's study of millennials revealed that "only 13 percent of the Millennials considered any type of spirituality to be important in their lives."² As a millennial, I find this figure alarming because millennials represent the largest generation in America's history. Millennials' lack of interest in religion in general and in Christianity specifically highlights a desperate need for personal evangelism. There is a great need to call this generation to repentance and trust in Christ for eternal life. The focus of this project was to train members of Uplift Church to engage the millennial generation through personal evangelism.

¹ Richard Fry, "Millennials Projected to Overtake Baby Boomers as America's Largest Generation," *Pew Research Center*, March 1, 2018, accessed May 3, 2018, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/03/01/millennials-overtake-baby-boomers/>.

² Thom Rainer and Jess Rainer, *The Millennials: Connecting to America's Largest Generation* (Nashville: B & H, 2011), 22.

Context

This ministry project took place at Uplift in Laurel, Maryland. Uplift launched in September 2014 with 177 in attendance for our first service. Uplift held its first worship service in the multi-purpose room of Deerfield Run Elementary School. The average Sunday attendance ranges between 40 and 60 persons, approximately 8 to 10 children under the age of 15 and 30 to 40 adults. Of the adults in attendance, 75 percent are single professionals, many of whom are government employees. We are purposeful in our effort to reach millennials and draw them to Christ. The church does a great job marketing and creating awareness about service times and events, which has resulted in many people from the community visiting Uplift. Through outreach efforts for Easter 2016, over 400 persons attended. Uplift partners with Deerfield Run Elementary School to help provide resources for needy students as well as support to teachers and staff. There is a tremendous sense of community felt amongst those who serve in ministry. Each Sunday they arrive early for set up and remain after for fellowship.

Because Uplift continues marketing and outreach in the city of Laurel, many residents are aware of the Uplift's presence. Each week, Uplift places yard signs around the city, and each month, a group of lay leaders go throughout the community and leave door hangers at homes. The church runs ads on Facebook and YouTube three to four times per month. Uplift places two large 18-foot flag banners in front of Deerfield on Sunday mornings as well as a volunteer in front of the school to wave at cars as they pass by, all in an effort to increase visibility. Based on the marketing and outreach, Uplift's website traffic has increased as well as social media followers, but this growth in online visibility does not result in any significant increase in regular Sunday attendance nor Christian conversions at Uplift's worship services. Each week the attendance still averages 40 to 60 persons.

At least one first-time visitor has attending each week since the launch. Uplift is intentional in sharing the gospel in each service and inviting every person to make a confession of faith in Jesus. To remove possible psychological barriers, all in attendance

are invited to stand and pray a confessional prayer collectively. After the confessional prayer, the congregation is instructed to complete a connection card in their worship guide if they confessed Christ for the first time. During our first year we asked congregants to complete the connection card and leave it in the offering basket. We noticed very few first-time visitors and some repeat visitors did not complete a connection card. Therefore, we created gift bags for first-time guests, which included some free items, and we developed a guest services team to interact with guests. We invited guests to complete a connection card and to bring it to the guest services table for a free gift. This new approach resulted in a drastic increase in the number of connection cards received and it gives guests services team an opportunity to interact with guests, yet few guests are checking “accepted Christ” on their card.

Persons who make a confession of faith and are interested in joining Uplift are offered a membership class, “Growth Track,” following the worship service. This class is the initial step in becoming a member, but it is available for visitors interested in learning about the church. The goal was to get church attenders to stay after service and to take part in this class. This class would serve as an introduction to the life of the church and the catalyst for connecting people with a small group or volunteer team. We noticed very few were willing to take part in Growth Track, and many Sundays the class was empty. After our first year of service, lay leaders voiced concern that we did not emphasize the class enough nor were volunteers encouraging attendees to visit the class. We decided to focus our attention following service on inviting everyone to stay for Growth Track, and we began to offer refreshments in the class. With these improvements, more people have taken part in Growth Track, but this program has yet to gain momentum throughout the congregation.

Uplift launched with the vision to train small group leaders and connect members with a small group where they would develop a deeper connection with church members and learn more about the Christian faith. We based our idea for small groups on

Acts 2:46 and believed it to be the best way to disciple new believers. For our first year small groups did not get off to a good start. The initial failure of small groups was due in part to lack of enthusiastic small group leaders and a desire to start too many small groups as a new church with few consistent members. We evaluated our efforts and decided to simply focus on two small groups, one for men and one for women, with each group meeting weekly on a semester basis. This refocusing has caused more excitement and engagement in small groups. Our hope is to increase our number of small groups by recruiting new leaders and thereby give people options to attend the group, which best fits the stage of their journey with Christ.

Because Uplift is a portable church, setting up for church weekly at a local school, Bible study is not in person but live streamed via YouTube and Facebook Live. Given that Uplift is in a metropolitan area with high traffic congestion, it is difficult for members to arrive in time for a mid-week Bible study. Not having corporate Bible study allows us to save financially as we do not have to rent a space for a midweek service. To create a sense of community online, a person serving as online host welcomes people into a chat room style conversation. While many people are watching, there is little actual engagement on the behalf of the viewer. Throughout the Bible study, viewers are asked if there are any questions, and there is hardly ever a question asked. More needs to be done to develop a sense of engagement online. This will be accomplished by training lay leaders to engage the online viewers through chat.

While marketing and outreach efforts have created a sense of awareness about Uplift in the community and our church intake systems have been improved, the improvement has still not resulted in an increase in Christian conversions. With the abolishment of the Blue Law in America, it appears Sunday is no longer sacred, there seems to be little desire in some to physically attend church. Many in the millennial generation would prefer to be casually involved in church but not have a serious commitment. Because people are over committed throughout the week, they tend to find

an escape on the weekend and would simply prefer to keep church as an option, not a necessity. As a result, church attendance is stagnant. There is a tremendous need to reshape thinking toward church attendance in keeping with Hebrews 10:25.

Rationale

Uplift adjusted the assimilation process; however, these changes have not resulted in an increase in Christian conversions. More needs to be done to develop or rekindle a sense of passion for personal evangelism among members. Mass marketing efforts have served the church well, but meaningful relationships are still lacking. Larry Osborne notes, “There is a fundamental difference between someone whose first visit to a church is a result of a powerful marketing campaign or a special outreach program and someone whose first time is the result of a friend’s invitation to a regular service.”³ Uplift has done a great job marketing large events, yet these efforts resulted in large crowds but few disciple-making opportunities.

To win millennials for Christ, there must be a value for personal evangelism supported by solid biblical preaching and transformative worship as well as an understanding of the contemporary culture. First, because personal evangelism is so important to healthy church growth, there is a need to inspire and equip the current membership to do personal evangelism. Large-scale marketing will still be used, but more importance will be given to training members to evangelize in their personal lives. Because Jesus commissioned his disciples to go and make disciples (Matt 28:19-20) and to be his witnesses (Acts 1:8), personal evangelism must be done to fulfil Scripture. There is a need to inspire believers to look for opportunities to evangelize within their spheres of influence. There is also a need to equip believers to evangelize in a culture shaped by postmodern thought as worldviews regarding Christian truth claims have changed. Second, biblical preaching that is relevant and life changing will help increase value for personal

³ Larry Osborne, *Sticky Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 30.

evangelism. In keeping with the apostle Paul's description of preaching and salvation, "How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?" (Rom 10:14).⁴

Third, the worship experience at Uplift plays a part in a person's overall encounter with God. Attention will be given to the music selection and tempo for each Sunday morning experience. George Barna's research has revealed startling information regarding worship: "The biweekly attendance at worship services is, by believers' own admission, generally the only time they worship God."⁵ Fourth, a better understanding of the cultural changes as they relate to the Christian faith in American is also helpful developing one's personal evangelism. Aubrey Malphurs notes,

For the Builder generation, church attendance offered respectability. Going to church was what proper; middle-class suburban people did on Sunday mornings, especially in the South. . . . However, all that has changed in most of America. Sunday mornings are sacred no longer, and a number of rivals have surfaced to compete with the church for the hearts and souls of the American citizenry on Sunday.⁶

There is a need to develop a methodology to re-instill value for Sunday mornings in the hearts and minds of millennials.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to train members at Uplift Church in Laurel, Maryland, for personal evangelism in an effort to win millennials for Christ.

Goals

Five goals were established to accomplish the purpose of this project. These goals reflect the steps taken to increase the understanding and practice of personal

⁴ All Scripture references are from the New American Standard Bible, unless otherwise noted.

⁵ George Barna, *Revolution* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2012), 31.

⁶ Aubrey Malphurs, *A New Kind of Church: Understanding Models of Ministry for the 21st Century* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 33.

evangelism for members at Uplift Church in Laurel, Maryland. While marketing strategies are helpful in increasing community awareness about a church, they do not address the biblical mandate for believers to be witnesses of Christ and to make disciples. The goals of this project were set forth to aid believers in their Christian duty to witness and make disciples.

1. The first goal was to assess the current personal evangelism practices among the members of Uplift.
2. The second goal was to develop a six-week curriculum on evangelism to increase knowledge of personal evangelism.
3. The third goal was to equip members to personally evangelize using the developed curriculum.
4. The fourth goal was to increase the number of members engaged in personal evangelism.

Research Methodology

Five goals determined the success of this project. The first goal measured the understanding of personal evangelism amongst the members of Uplift Church using a personal evangelism survey. Included in the survey were questions regarding the understanding of personal evangelism, spirituality of millennials, responsibility of a Christian, and the Great Commission. This goal was considered successfully met when at least 5 out of the 20 members in regular attendance completed and returned their surveys for analysis. The analyzed surveys provided an understanding of the current value for personal evangelism held by the members and their understanding of millennials⁷.

The second goal was to develop a six-week curriculum, in keeping with the church's small group semesters, on personal evangelism. The curriculum was designed to increase the understanding of the salvation, personal evangelism, and the spirituality of millennials. An examination of John 4:1-45 served as the basis for the curriculum. The

⁷ All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

curriculum was taught in a weekly small group format with one hour of interactive teaching and group discussion per class. Participants were required to complete homework assignments and group activities. This goal was measured by a panel consisting of two millennials (ages 18-35) and two local church pastors. This panel utilized a rubric to evaluate the course material to ensure it was biblically faithful, sufficiently thorough, and consistent with applicable teaching methodology and ministry practice. This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criteria meet or exceed the sufficient level.

The third goal was to equip members to personally evangelize using the developed curriculum. The goal was measured by administering a pre- and post-survey that measured participants' level of knowledge, confidence, and motivation to share the gospel. This goal was considered successfully met when a t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-survey scores.

The fourth goal was to increase the number of members engaged in personal evangelism by 25 percent. This goal was measured by administering a pre- and post-analysis of participants current trends of personal evangelism. The number of persons initially actively evangelizing was used as the base number to which the increase was compared.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

Certain terms used throughout this ministry project are defined to aid the reader's understanding of the subject.

Conversion. *The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* offers a comprehensive explanation of Christian conversion: "In Reformation theology conversion was understood as the human response to regeneration, the infusion of new life into the soul. Conversion

was held to be dependent on grace; it was seen as an act empowered and directed by divine grace.”⁸

Millennials. Millennials are persons born between the years 1980 to 2000.

Personal evangelism. Personal evangelism may be simply defined as purposefully sharing the gospel message in one’s everyday interaction with others. This project relied on Will McRaney, Jr.’s description: “Personal evangelism involves the effective communication of the essential gospel message with the view toward seeing people supernaturally become followers and imitators of Christ.”⁹

Two limitations applied to this project. First, the accuracy of the pre- and post-series surveys was dependent upon the willingness of the respondents to be honest about their knowledge and understanding of personal evangelism and millennials. To mitigate this limitation, the respondents were promised that their answers would remain anonymous. Second, the effectiveness of the training was limited by the constancy of small group attendance. If the participants did not attend all of the group sessions, it became difficult to measure how beneficial the training had been. To mitigate this limitation, each week of the teaching sessions was scheduled on the same day and time.

One delimitation was placed on the project. The project was confined to a twenty-week timeframe, which gave adequate time to prepare and teach the six-week training sessions and conduct the post-series survey after sessions were completed. While marketing campaigns are helpful in building community awareness about a church’s programs, there is a biblical mandate that believers share the gospel. The New Testament provides both a theological base and practical examples for personal evangelism as a way of life.

⁸ Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 296.

⁹ Will McRaney, Jr., *The Art of Personal Evangelism* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 44.

Given that Uplift Church had leveraged marketing strategies that build community awareness of the its existence, but not equipped members to fulfill their great commission responsibility, this project was needed. This project sought to equip members with a theological understanding of personal evangelism and skillsets to practice personal evangelism in their daily lives.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR PERSONAL EVANGELISM

For any civilization to ensure the survival of its values and norms, it must communicate its message to successive generations, the same is true of Christianity. In Deuteronomy 6:7, 20-25, there is a commandment to pass values and norms to children. While Jesus' active preaching and teaching ministry only lasted three years, He wanted to ensure successive generations would benefit from his teachings. Jesus' instructions prove to His disciples in Matthew 28:19-20, Luke 24:48-49, and Acts 1:8 the foundation for the necessity of believers to practice personal evangelism. The story of the Samaritan woman found in John 4:27-20; 39-42, provides a practical example of personal evangelism. The following texts can inform personal evangelism amongst all believers.

Deuteronomy 6:7, 20-25

The book of Deuteronomy is filled with practical instructions for the Israelites as it relates to their relationship with God. As part of the Pentateuch, Deuteronomy is traditionally believed to be written by Moses. This belief is based on the claims within verse 31:9: "So Moses wrote this law and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and to all the elders of Israel." Support for Moses as author is also found throughout the Old Testament with various references to "the book of Moses" (Neh. 13:1; 2 Chron 25:4). References to Moses as author are also found in the New Testament (see Mark 12:26). In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, some scholars began to challenge this traditional view. Commenting on the differing views, Paul Gilchrist states,

Another view of the authorship of Deuteronomy suggests that it was not a program for reform but part of an exilic or postexilic document (written possibly in Babylon)

aimed at giving encouragement and a sense of direction to a people who had lost everything—their king, their temple, and even their land. In this view, Deuteronomy is the first book of the so-called Deuteronomic history which extends through 2 Kings.¹

While some scholars may debate the book’s authorship, most Jewish and Christian faiths continue to support the traditional view that Moses is the author.

Deuteronomy helped preserve the history and values of Israel in a way that succeeding generations could understand. This preservation was important as many from the previous generation had passed away and Moses was aging. Eugene Merrill writes,

Moses was about to die, so it was essential that he commit to writing the whole collection of tradition and truth that he understood to be the very revelation of God. This was especially urgent in the case of Deuteronomy, for that composition would serve as the corpus of law and practice for the covenant community from that day forward.²

This book was also important in the New Testament, concerning its importance. Gary Hall writes, “Deuteronomy had a profound influence on the New Testament. It is one of the four most quoted and alluded to Old Testament books. Furthermore, it was Jesus’ favorite book in the Pentateuch. He often quoted from it in his teaching and preaching.”³

Deuteronomy 6:7 says, “You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.” The reader finds detailed examples of how the law was to be lived out in daily life.

It was vital for the Israelites who witnessed the events that led to their freedom from Egyptian slavery to pass on the information to their descendants. God’s saving act was foundational to their history as a people. In Deuteronomy 6:20-25, Moses tells the

¹ Paul R. Gilchrist, *Deuteronomy*, Evangelical Commentary on the Bible, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 109.

² Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, The New American Commentary, vol. 4 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 27.

³ Gary Harlan Hall, *Deuteronomy*, The College Press NIV Commentary (Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing Company, 2000), 13.

Israelites to explain to their children the meaning of their testimonies and statutes by describing God's saving acts. Describing the importance of this generational passing of history, Merrill notes, "Israel must therefore recall its history and pass along its facts and value to generations yet to come. The way this was to be done was through the recitation of God's saving deeds in the past, a 'sacred narrative' underlying the more formal and legal embodiment in the covenant texts."⁴

Because of the consequence of idolatry (Deut 4:13-20) and the promised compassion when Israel was obedient (Deut 4: 31), Moses shared with Israel the importance of training children. As children observe their parents following the commands of God in their daily lives, questions would arise (Exod 12:26). In Deuteronomy 6:7, Moses tells Israel how to train children. The commonly held view is that *shinnantam* (teach) in 6:7 refers to teaching by repetition. Refuting the commonly held view, Charles Isbell argues,

The problem with such a view is that *shinnantam* does not derive from this "שנן" "root, but from—[sh-n-n - to sharpen]. Although this morphological distinction was already explained by Rashi 1,000 years ago, many modern commentators still have argued that sh-n-n in Deuteronomy 6:7 "is probably an alternate form of sh-n-h, 'repeat,' 'teach.'" However, there are problems with such an equation. First, the root sh-n-n is easily distinguished morphologically from sh-n-h. Second, sh-n-n is well attested elsewhere in biblical literature, with a plain sense of the root encompassing a referential field that is important to the context of Deuteronomy 6. Thus, I believe it is overly simplistic to assume that the occurrence of sh-n-n in Verse 7 was accidental or intended merely as an allomorph for sh-n-h. To the contrary, I believe that recognizing the significance of sh-n-n is essential to an appropriate understanding of the text.⁵

Isbell's idea is supported by Eugene Merrill, who describes teach:

The image is that of the engraver of a monument who takes hammer and chisel in hand and with painstaking care etches a text into the face of a solid slab of granite. The sheer labor of such a task is daunting indeed, but once done the message is

⁴ Hall, *Deuteronomy*, 174.

⁵ Charles D. Isbell, "Deuteronomy's Definition of Jewish Learning," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 31, no. 2 (April 2003): 110.

there to stay. Thus it is that the generations of Israelites to come must receive and transmit the words of the Lord's everlasting covenant revelation.⁶

Throughout the books of the law, consideration is given to preserving the history of Israel by giving attention to genealogy and tribe as well as describing the ways in which God had rescued them from bondage. Moses and the Israelites were intentional to train the next generation. This same importance carries into the New Testament in how Jesus calls his disciples to be his witnesses.

Matthew 28:19-20

Matthew 28:19-20 reads, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." While Mark is the first Gospel written, Matthew's Gospel appears first in the New Testament Canon because of its genealogical link to Jesus and David. John Lange notes, "The first Gospel connects the New Testament most intimately with the Old, not by an index of the writings of the Old Testament, but by the Old Testament genealogy of Jesus."⁷ Matthew is credited as the author of this Gospel, a position held by early church fathers. Commenting on Matthew's authorship, Eusebius writes, "Among the four Gospels, which are the only indisputable ones in the Church of God under heaven, I have learned by tradition that the first was written by Matthew, who was once a publican, but afterwards an apostle of Jesus Christ, and it was prepared for the converts from Judaism, and published in the Hebrew language."⁸

⁶ Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 167.

⁷ John Peter Lange and Philip Schaff, *Matthew: A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures* (Bellingham, WA: T & T Clark, 1872), 198.

⁸ Eusebius of Caesaria, "The Church History of Eusebius," in *Eusebius: Church History, Life of Constantine the Great, and Oration in Praise of Constantine*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Arthur Cushman McGiffert (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1890), 1:115.

While readers cannot be certain about the occasion for Matthew's writing, it is believed by New Testament Scholars that Matthew wanted to show unbelieving Jews that Jesus is the promised Messiah and to show the importance of sharing the Gospel story.

David deSilva contends,

Matthew's Gospel offers a defense against the kinds of criticisms and arguments that would be directed mainly at Jewish Christians by non-Christian Jews. This defense, however, is for the benefit of the Christian readers of the Gospel (rather than the non-Christian critics), who need assurance that they stand in continuity with the revelation of God and God's will to and through the people of Israel. Matthew achieves this primarily by portraying Jesus as the fulfillment of scriptural paradigms and by presenting his teaching as the true way of keeping Torah.⁹

The defense offered by Matthew for Jewish Christians can also be helpful for a Christian defense in a secular society.

Not only does Matthew show proof of Jesus as Messiah, but he also seeks to show the importance of His disciples proclaiming the story. Recognizing the importance of the continued telling of Jesus' story, John Nolland suggests,

Matthew reports promises by the Jesus of the past to continue to be present with his disciples, and he expects that his story will serve as a catalyst for a complex religious experience that will confirm to responsive readers the validity of these promises. In this respect the expectation is that the story works with the same dynamic as the sermon. Through Christian proclamation people encountered the risen Christ, and they would also do so through the Gospel text.¹⁰

The importance of sharing the gospel story is communicated in Christ's command to his disciples in Matthew 28:19-20.

After Jesus' resurrection, he met with his disciples on a mountain in Galilee and gave his disciples a commission to make more disciples, to baptize and teach others that which Jesus had taught them. Jesus' command was one that tasked his disciples with sharing the gospel not just with Jews but also with the world. Prior to his resurrection, Matthew lets the readers know that the disciples received an expanded commission—

⁹ David Arthur deSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods and Ministry Formation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 235.

¹⁰ John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans; Carlisle: Paternoster, 2005), 20.

Jesus' first commission in Matthew 10:5-6: "These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them: 'Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.'" Matthew never gives an explanation for the expansion of the commission. Nolland notes,

The fresh contribution of the end of the Gospel is to ground the universal mission in a threefold manner: it is based on the resurrection confirmation of Jesus' full authority; it is based on a distinctive postresurrection directive (though rooted in the teaching of Jesus during his ministry, it was not part of that teaching); and it belongs within a vision of a fresh beginning in Galilee of a new mission that is to reiterate, but on a new level, the earlier ministry of Jesus, and in which the disciples replace Jesus himself as the main protagonists (but with Jesus with them).¹¹

The commission to reach the world was personal in nature because each disciple would have to become personally responsible for taking part in the commission.

The early church took Jesus' statement at face value, believing it to be a requirement of the church. In the "Epistle to the Philadelphians" Ignatius wrote, "For those things which the prophets announced, saying, 'Until He come for whom it is reserved, and He shall be the expectation of the Gentiles,' have been fulfilled in the Gospel, [our Lord saying,] 'Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.'"¹² In the third century, Origen also referenced Matthew 28:19-20:

We would say in reply, that so He did; for righteousness has arisen in His days, and there is abundance of peace, which took its commencement at his birth, God preparing the nations for His teaching, that they might be under one prince, the king of the Romans, and that it might not, owing to the want of union among the nations, caused by the existence of many kingdoms, be more difficult for the apostles to Jesus to accomplish the task enjoined upon them by their Master, when He said, "Go and teach all nations."¹³

¹¹ Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1266.

¹² Ignatius of Antioch, *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, ed. James Donaldson and Alexander Roberts (Buffalo, NY: The Christian Literature Company, 1885), 1, 84-85.

¹³ Origen, *Fathers of the Third Century: Tertullian, Part Fourth; Minucius Felix; Commodian; Origen, Parts First and Second*, ed. James Donaldson and Alexander Roberts (Buffalo, NY: The Christian Literature Company, 1885), 4, 443-44.

While the early church supported Jesus' statement in Matthew 28:19-20, after the Enlightenment and the adoption of the Historical Criticism, some progressive Christian scholars began to question its authenticity and relevance. Alan M'Neile contends that the words were attributed to Jesus after the work of Paul amongst gentiles:

The evangelizing of all nations was spoken of in xxxiv. 14. But the difficulty there caused by the words is greater, if possible, in the present passage. If the risen Lord commanded it in one of His latest utterances, the action of the apostles with reference to the Gentiles (see e.g. Gal. ii. 9, Ac. x. xi. 1-18) is inexplicable. The admission of Gentiles to the Jewish religion is an expectation found, of course, in the O.T. But that their admission into the Jewish-Christian Church was something quite different is shewn by the glad surprise expressed that God had "given to the Gentiles also repentance unto life" (Ac. xi. 18). Nor is there a hint in Acts or Epistles that when the first apostles confined themselves to Jews, while recognizing S. Paul as the apostle of the Gentiles, it was because of their "reluctance to undertake spiritual responsibilities." . . . The universality of the Christian message was soon learnt, largely by the spiritual experiences of S. Paul, which were authoritative for the Church. And once learnt, they were early assigned to a direct command of Christ. It is impossible to maintain that everything which goes to constitute even the essence of Christianity must necessarily be traceable to explicit words of Jesus.¹⁴

Following along with M'Neile, some evangelical scholars have also begun to question the value the apostles placed upon Jesus's statement. Francis Beare suggests,

Obviously enough, if any such command had been known to the apostles, and to the early church, they would not have debated about the legitimacy of such a mission, and the "pillars" of the mother church in Jerusalem could hardly have agreed to restrict themselves to "the circumcision" while it was left to Paul and Barnabas—two men who had not been among the eleven who received the command—to go to the Gentiles. This alone would be enough to demonstrate that this charge of the risen Jesus is a relatively late formulation. The controversy over the admission of Gentiles is long over, and indeed forgotten.¹⁵

One of the challenges with understanding of the Great Commission is that too often Christians view the "going" as a command to leave their current location in favor of foreign missions. Noticing this challenge, Craig Blomberg suggests, "To 'make disciples of all nations' does require many people to leave their homelands, but Jesus' main focus

¹⁴ Alan Hugh McNeile, *The Gospel according to St. Matthew* (London: Macmillan, 1961), 435.

¹⁵ Francis W. Beare, *The Gospel according to Matthew* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1981), 544-45.

remains on the task of all believers to duplicate themselves wherever they may be.”¹⁶

While the work of foreign missions is important, duplication of self within one’s sphere of influence is also important in accomplishing the Great Commission. This view helps to clarify why the disciples did not at first go to Gentiles but rather shared the gospel within their sphere of influence.

Also of importance is the tense of the term “go” in 28:19a. Roger Hahn notes,

Though almost all English translations render the word go as an imperative, it is a circumstantial participle in the Greek text. A most literal translation would be “When you go, make disciples.” The commission of the Church is not simply to go; going is assumed. The mission of the Church is to make disciples of all nations. The process of making disciples, modeled by Jesus for three years, was to be replicated with others from all the nations of the world.¹⁷

Hahn’s description of “go” as a circumstantial participle serves as a reminder that there is a need for Christians in the twenty-first century to make disciples wherever they may go in the world. The instructions of Moses to the Israelites to tell the story to their children of how God saved Israel from bondage could be a reminder of the importance of making disciples first with those in the home and then the world. The early church did not limit this command to just the disciples to whom Jesus spoke, but understood it to be a command to all disciples.

Luke 24:44-49

Luke 24:44-49 says,

Now He said to them, “These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending forth

¹⁶ Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 431.

¹⁷ Roger L. Hahn, *Matthew: A Commentary for Bible Students* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing, 2007), 346.

the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

While Matthew’s presentation of the Great Commission is an expansion on with whom the disciples could share the gospel, In Luke-Acts one sees Jesus commissioning His disciples to personal evangelism. The author of Luke-Acts does not name himself, yet early church fathers and New Testament scholars attribute the two-volume work to Luke, the travel companion of the apostle Paul. Regarding the traditional view that Luke is the author, deSilva notes,

The autobiographical nature of the “we” passages in Acts has often lent support to the traditional view that a fellow traveler of Paul wrote Acts (and thus also the Gospel of Luke). It was common for ancient historians to reveal their own firsthand participation in the history they wrote, since eyewitness involvement in the events was a positive value for ancient historians such as Thucydides and Josephus.¹⁸

While most accept the commonly held view that Luke is that author of Luke-Acts, some contemporary scholars reject the notion. Answering the question of why some reject the Lukan authorship, Mark Black notes,

The answer is based on internal evidence which is said to disallow Lukan authorship. Quite simply, the book of Acts presents a view of Paul the Christian who appears to be quite different from the Paul who wrote the letters, especially Galatians. The book of Acts does not cite or even mention Paul’s letters. More significantly, it is argued that the theological portrait of Paul in Acts could not have been painted by a companion of Paul.¹⁹

While the debate amongst contemporary scholars continues, it is my belief that Luke the companion of Paul is the author. As with the authorship, there is debate over the date because the dating of Luke may impact how one views the dating of Mark’s Gospel. Many scholars content that Mark was the first Gospel written, which would mean that Luke might have relied on Mark as a source for his Gospel. Concerning the challenge of dating Luke’s Gospel, Thomas Schreiner explains,

Two basic theories rule the field of scholarship today: Luke was written in either the 80s or the 60s. Those who favor a date in the 80s maintain that Luke was written after Mark, and the latter was not written until ca. A.D. 65–70. In addition, some

¹⁸ deSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 299.

¹⁹ Mark C. Black, *Luke*, College Press NIV Commentary (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1995), 17.

scholars claim that Luke was probably written after the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70. Others think Luke was written in the early 60s because Acts ends (28:30–31) with Paul under house arrest, and no information is given on the outcome of his trial. According to this theory, such an abrupt ending in Acts shows that Luke finished Acts before Paul’s case was resolved.²⁰

It is my belief that Luke-Acts is dated after Mark and Luke relied on Mark as a source for his Gospel. It is evident from Luke 1:1-4 that Luke had a knowledge of other gospel narratives that had been handed down to the church. While Mark’s Gospel may have served as a source, it was not the only source—it is believed that both Luke and Matthew relied on a “Q” source. Schreiner comments on Luke reliance on a “Q” source:

Also, both Luke and Matthew probably used a common source that was either a written document or consisted of oral tradition. This material is designated “Q” (from Ger. *Quelle*, source). Unfortunately, Q has not survived and possibly never even existed in written form. Approximately 230 verses appear in both Matthew and Luke but not in Mark’s Gospel. A common source is probable since the wording of this common tradition that Luke and Matthew share is remarkably similar, and sometimes is exactly the same.²¹

Luke’s goal in writing was to reinforce the teachings of the church, which Theophilus had already received. Some difficulty arises when attempting to identify Theophilus because the term actually means “friend of God.” The meaning of the term Theophilus has caused some to argue for a general audience rather than a specific person. I agree with Robert Stein’s defense of Theophilus as a specific person, he argues, “It is far more likely, however, that Theophilus was a real person. The adjective ‘most excellent’ (Luke 1:3) used to describe him is found three other times in the NT and is used in addressing the Roman governors Felix (Acts 23:26; 24:2) and Festus (26:25).”²²

While there is considerable debate over the authorship and audience, there is considerable agreement regarding the style of writing. It is considered by most scholars to

²⁰ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Luke*, Evangelical Commentary on the Bible, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 801.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 802.

²² Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, The New American Commentary, vol. 24 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 26.

be narrative as opposed to epic poetry. Regarding Luke's statement of his purpose in Luke 1:1-4, Joel Green notes,

Since the seminal work on the preface of Luke by Henry J. Cadbury, and largely based on it, a broad consensus has emerged the Luke 1:1-4 belongs squarely within the literary tradition of ancient historiography. In addition to the preface, Luke's work shares many other features of Greco-Roman historiography—for example, a genealogical record (3:23-28); the use of meal scenes as occasions for instructions; travel narratives; speeches; letters; and dramatic episodes, such as Jesus' rejection at Nazareth (4:16-30) and Paul's stormy voyage and shipwreck (Acts 27:1-28:14).²³

Adding more clarity to Luke's style of writing, David Petterson informs,

Witherington argues from the preface found in Luke 1:1-4 that Luke intended both his volumes "to be compared to other ancient works of Greco-Roman historiography." However, reviewing various Greek and Roman models, Witherington argues that "Luke's work stands much closer to Greek historiography than to the Roman sort." A particular hallmark of true history for the Greeks was "personal observation (*autopsia*) and participation in events, travel inquiry, the consultation of eyewitnesses."²⁴

A Christian's understanding of Luke's approach and purpose is important because it helps one better understand his presentation of Jesus' statements in both Luke 24:44-49 and Acts 1:8. In Luke 24:44, Jesus reminds the disciples that He was the fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures. Jesus makes references to the three divisions of the Hebrew Bible the Torah, Prophets, and Writings. While Jesus had previously shared with the disciples that He must suffer, they did not understand (9:45; 18:34); now, Jesus explains his earlier statements. Jesus opened their minds to understand that He is the suffering servant found in Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53. In Luke 24:47, Jesus shares with them that they have a part to play in fulfilling Scripture in that they must act as heralds and proclaim repentance and forgiveness fulfilling Isaiah 2:2-1; 49:6. Explaining the significance of proclamation, R. C. H. Lenski rightly states,

The verb κηρύσσειν, to act as a κήρυξ, to proclaim in public as a herald, is the standard verb for preaching. The herald gets his message from the man who sends him, and all he does is to announce that message. He dare not change it in any way.

²³ Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1997), 2.

²⁴ David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2009), 9.

Men may say and think of it what they please, his business is only the loud, public heralding.²⁵

In Luke 24:48, a central element of Jesus' commission to the disciples was their responsibility to be His witnesses. The New Testament term "witness" has multiple meanings, yet in Luke 24:48 and Acts 1:8 μάρτυρες *martys* means, "The biblical *martys* is not a mere eyewitness, simply present at a happening; he is actively called upon to tell what he has seen and heard—to proclaim what he knows. The mission of the Twelve is to bear witness to the resurrection of Christ: "You are witnesses of these things"—*hymeis martyres toutōn* (Luke 24:48); "You shall be my witnesses"—*esesthe mou martyres*.²⁶ One cannot be a passive witness nor can one avoid the requirement to proclaim the good news. Jesus requires that His disciples take an active role in sharing the gospel.

Robert Plummer reminds that some suggest this commission is limited to the Apostles only:

A number of persons have objected, however, to the use of this passage as a basis for the modern church's evangelistic task. Some have protested that the instructions in Matt 28 were only given to the original apostles. These are instructions not for church, but for the founding members of the church. Yet, the commission to the apostles explicitly indicates that the apostles are to teach their converts to 'obey everything' that Jesus had commanded them—apparently including this Great Commission as well.²⁷

As Plummer rightly argues, this logic is not sufficient because it would mean that every instruction offered by Jesus would be limited to the apostles only.

Once the disciples were assured of Jesus' physical resurrection, he instructed them to proclaim what they had seen and heard once they were filled with the Holy Spirit. Luke 24:46-47 suggests that being a witness of Christ's resurrection by way of personal

²⁵ R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Luke's Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1961), 1206.

²⁶ Ceslas Spicq and James D. Ernest, *Theological lexicon of the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 448.

²⁷ Robert Plummer, "The Great Commission in the New Testament," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 9, no. 4 (Winter 2005): 4.

proclamation is necessary to fulfill Scripture concerning Him. For this to happen with effectiveness, they must first receive power from God. Warren Wiersbe rightly argues,

How could a group of common people ever hope to fulfill that kind of a commission? God promised to provide the power (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8), and He did. On the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came upon the church and empowered them to preach the Word (Acts 2). After Pentecost, the Spirit continued to fill them with great power (see Acts 4:33). Witnessing is not something that we do for the Lord; it is something that He does through us, *if* we are filled with the Holy Spirit.²⁸

The responsibility to be witness of Christ's resurrection is not limited to those who saw him visibly but extends to those who have heard about and received it. Believers today have a responsibility to tell others about Christ's victory over the grave to secure salvation for those who believe. If believers are to be effective witnesses today, then there is a need to be filled with the Holy Spirit as was true with the disciples.

Acts 1:8

Acts 1:8 says, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." This same instruction found in Luke 24:48-49 is reiterated in Acts 1:8 from Jesus to His disciples: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." From these two scriptural references one sees the importance Jesus places on His disciples personally proclaiming His death, burial, and resurrection aided by the power of the Holy Spirit. Both scriptural references also show the importance Jesus places on the disciples first being His witnesses in their local area of Jerusalem.

During the formation of the New Testament Canon, the Gospel of Luke and Acts of the Apostles were separated, prior to that it is believed that they circulated as a companion set. Evidence for Luke as the author of both can be found in the opening passages of each book Luke 1:1-4 and Acts 1:1-4. Both books are written to Theophilus,

²⁸ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1996), 1:280.

and Acts refers to a previous book written, which addressed all that Jesus did and taught. The difference between the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles may be the main characters; the Gospel focus on the works of Jesus while Acts focuses on the works of His disciples.²⁹

In Acts 1:8, Jesus again tells His disciples they that they will receive power and commissions them to be His witnesses. Jesus’s discussion about power and witness comes in response to the disciples question about the restoration of Israel’s kingdom (v. 6). The disciples’ question about the restoration of Israel’s kingdom was not without merit. Joel 2: 28-32 prophesied that the outpouring of God’s spirit would usher in the day when Israel would be restored. Explaining the significance of Joel 2: 28-32, John Polhill comments,

Likewise, the outpouring of the Spirit had strong eschatological associations. Such passages as Joel 2:28–32 were interpreted in nationalistic terms that saw a general outpouring of the Spirit on Israel as a mark of the final great messianic Day of the Lord when Israel would be ‘restored’ to the former glory of the days of David and Solomon.³⁰

To focus the disciples on their mission, which was the kingdom of God, Jesus again reminds the disciples that they will receive power to be His witnesses. Luke uses word power (*dynamis*) in several ways throughout Acts—he uses it in reference to the miracles in 2:22; 3:12; 4:17; 8:13; 10:38, 19:11, and the apostle’s power to speak boldly

²⁹ Robert G. Gromacki writes,

The internal evidence of both books has corroborated the testimony of tradition that Luke, the beloved physician and companion of Paul, wrote them. The first verse of Acts refers to an earlier volume written to the same individual, Theophilus; only the Gospel of Luke could qualify as that “former treatise.” Some believe that the prologue to the Gospel (1:1–4) also serves as the prologue to Acts. This would mean that Luke’s original plan was to write two volumes to give Theophilus “certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed” (Luke 1:4). The first dealt with the person and earthly ministry of Jesus Christ, whereas the second treated the history and outreach of the early church. In the first was the record “of all that Jesus *began* both to do and teach” (Acts 1:1) and the second revealed what Christ *continued* to do and teach through the Holy Spirit in the lives of the apostles. The continuity in the two books can also be seen in the overlap of content between the closing verses of the Gospel (24:46–53) and the opening verses of Acts (1:1–12).” (Robert G. Gromacki, *New Testament Survey* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1974], 149)

³⁰ John B. Polhill, *Acts*, The New American Commentary, vol. 26 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 84.

in 4:33 and 6:8-10. These verses demonstrate the role of the Holy Spirit in the life and work of the apostles as they were witnesses of Christ's resurrection. Just as Jesus was anointed to do mighty works Luke 4:18-21 His disciples will be also. It is through the power of the Holy Spirit that the proclamation of the witness is made effective. William Barker rightly states, "Through the Holy Spirit the disciples will receive power to communicate. This power will make the witnesses clear and convincing and the listeners open and receptive, thus producing converts and genuine disciples (Matt. 28:19)."³¹ Converts are not made through the power of the witnesses' persuasive argument but through the power of the Holy Spirit.

After informing the disciples of the power they will receive, Jesus then describes their ministry context as Jerusalem, Judea, and the remotest part of the earth. Much debate has been sparked concerning Jesus' meaning in "the remotest part of the world." In a 1977 article "To the Ends of the Earth: Acts 1:8," T. C. G. Thornton argues that scholars have rightly questioned making Rome the ultimate aim of Jesus' statement.³² Thornton dismisses the idea that Jesus had the entire globe in mind contending that the final part of the command was not accomplished speedily and effectively.³³ Much attention has been given to the final part of the command and not enough to the initial part, Jerusalem.

Jerusalem served as the initial missions field for the disciples, Polhill notes, "It is not by accident that Jerusalem came first. In Luke's Gospel, Jerusalem was central, from the temple scenes of the infancy narrative to the long central journey to Jerusalem

³¹ William H. Baker, *Acts*, Evangelical Commentary on the Bible, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 886.

³² T. C. G. Thornton, "To the Ends of the Earth," *Expository Times* 89 (1977-78): 374-75.

³³ *Ibid.*, 374.

(9:51–19:28), to Jesus’ passion in the city that killed its prophets (13:34). The story of Jesus led *to* Jerusalem; the story of the church led *from* Jerusalem.”³⁴

Jerusalem remained central to the Christian church throughout the New Testament. Shepherd writes,

Jerusalem is the location that fuses Luke and Acts (Acts 10:39; 13:27, 31). Pentecost took place in the city, and from there the ministry of the disciples moved outward (Acts 1:8; 2:1–47). Jerusalem acted as the center for the early Church’s leadership, and as the location for the Church’s first councils (Acts 8:14–16; 11:1–18; Acts 15:1–35; Gal 2:1–14).³⁵

Understanding the centrality of Jerusalem to the expansion of the gospel impacts one’s understanding of the importance of personal evangelism and urban missions. When the first Christian church began, Luke tells that the Holy Spirit was first experienced in Jerusalem (Acts 2:1–13). Before the gospel was preached to the most remote areas, it was first preached in Jerusalem. Before the disciples became witnesses in the remote parts of the world, they first proclaimed the gospel in Jerusalem (Acts 2:14–47). The gospel was spread when Christ’s disciples proclaimed what they had personally witnessed, they practiced personal evangelism. The disciples were not the only ones to practice personal evangelism. Throughout the New Testament are examples of persons sharing their experience with Christ.

When reading the book of Acts, believers are able to see ordinary believers aided by the power of the Holy Spirit spreading the gospel. The description of Stephen in Acts 6:8 shows that persons other than the apostles were active in spreading the gospel.

Commenting on the importance of every believer evangelizing Tim Beougher writes,

Following the stoning of Stephen we read in Acts 8:1, “And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.” And what did those ordinary believers do? Acts 8:4 tells us: “Now those who were scattered went

³⁴ Polhill, *Acts*, 86.

³⁵ C. E. Shepherd, “Jerusalem,” in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John Barry (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press 2016).

about preaching (*euangelizomenoi*) the word.” They went about sharing the gospel with others.³⁶

Believers today must be aided by the power of the Holy Spirit for hearts and minds to be receptive to the gospel. The book of Acts serves as an example of how the Holy Spirit can help spread the gospel to all nations. Just as the Holy Spirit empowered the disciples to take the gospel to all nations, it is able to help believers do the same today.

John 4:28-30; 39-42

John 4:28-28 says, “So the woman left her waterpot, and went into the city and said to the men, ‘Come, see a man who told me all the things that I have done; this is not the Christ, is it?’ They went out of the city, and were coming to Him.” John 4:39-42 reads,

From that city many of the Samaritans believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, “He told me all the things that I *have* done.” So when the Samaritans came to Jesus, they were asking Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. Many more believed because of His word; and they were saying to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world.”

A practical example of personal evangelism is found in John 4:28-30, as the women at the well went and told others about her interaction with Jesus. Like Luke-Acts, John’s Gospel does provide a purpose statement (John 20:30-31). John’s purpose statement makes it clear that his Gospel was meant to be a witness to the ministry of Jesus and that the reader may respond positively to it. Also, like Luke-Acts, the author is not directly named, the only reference offered is that the “disciples whom Jesus loved” (21:20; 24). The apostle John, the son of Zebedee and the brother of James is credited as the author. Offering support of John’s authorship, James White provides the following reasons,

Examples are the author’s knowledge of Palestinian geography, Jewish customs, and the author’s inclusion within the inner circle of disciples (listed by the Synoptic Gospels as Peter, James, and John). Writers in the earliest periods of Christian

³⁶ Tim Beougher, “Must Every Christian Evangelize?” 9 Marks, August 27, 2013, accessed April 4, 2019, <https://www.9marks.org/article/journalmust-every-christian-evangelize>.

history, such as Irenaeus and Tertullian, also attribute the Gospel to the apostle John.³⁷

While writers in Christian history attribute the gospel to John, some modern scholars do not. D. A. Carson notes,

The fact remains that, despite support for Johannine authorship by a few front-rank scholars in this century, and by many popular writers, a large majority of contemporary scholars reject this view. As we shall see, much of their argumentation turns on their reading of the *internal* evidence. It also requires their virtual dismissal of the external evidence.³⁸

I agree with the perspective of the historical Christian writers and believe that there is enough internal evidence in the synoptic Gospels to identify John as the beloved disciple and author of the forth Gospel. Mark 14:17 makes reference to the twelve present with Jesus at the Last Supper, which suggest that the beloved disciple was present. He is also distinguished from the apostle Peter in John 13:23-24. John 13-16 further suggests that the beloved disciple is not one of the other twelve.

The dating of John's Gospel has been debated for the last 150 years due to the discovery of Papyrus Egerton 2.³⁹ I agree with Carson that the date range is between 55 to 95 AD: "Almost any date between about AD 55 and AD 95 is possible. Even so, 21:23 'suggests it was probably nearer the end of that period than the beginning' (Michaels, p. xxix). More by way of default than anything else, I tentatively hold to a date about AD 80."⁴⁰ Supporting the idea that John's Gospel was written around the end of the first century, Carson provides four dominant reasons, one being a "very strong agreement

³⁷ James White, "The Gospel of John," in *Holman Bible Handbook*, ed. David S. Dockery (Nashville: Holman Bible, 1992), 606.

³⁸ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity; Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1991), 68.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 82.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

amongst theologians of almost all stripes as to the strength of the tradition that the Gospel was written under the reign of Emperor Domitian (AD 81–96).⁴¹

John’s Gospel is unique in that it differs greatly from the synoptics, John leaves out many of the stories found in the synoptics and includes stories not found in other Gospels. From a literary perspective, John is a Gospel because it tells the story of the life of Jesus. Regarding John’s literary style, Gerald Borchert notes,

The Fourth Gospel has a rather different content, arrangement, style of writing, and method of presenting the story of Jesus from that of the Synoptic Gospels; but its structural focus on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus may be said to bear a sufficient likeness to that of the Synoptics that it can be viewed as belonging to the same literary genre.⁴²

John 4:1-30 records a story not found in the synoptics but serves as a practical example of personal evangelism. After having a conversation with Jesus and considering that Jesus may be the messiah, the Samaritan woman goes back to her town and invites the men (*anthropois*) to come and meet Jesus. The word *anthropois* is rendered as “people” by the ESV and several other translations. I agree with Borchert that it should be rendered “men.” Borchert notes,

The NIV, RSV, and NRSV rendering of *anthropois* by “people” is certainly possible but probably misses the force of “men” here. Brown’s argument in support of “people” that “any leering suggestion that the men were interested in finding out the woman’s past is out of place.” I submit that he misses the point of the story. I think we have here a woman who probably knew where to find the men of the town, and her story also may well have been their story!⁴³

⁴¹ Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 82. Carson contends that most theologians agree that John’s Gospel was written under the reign of Emperor Domitian (AD 81-96). He also contends “to be put out of the synagogue,” 9:22 suggests a period after the decision of the council of Jamnia to ban Christians from the synagogue, which would put the Gospel writing after AD 85. This argument has been refuted for lack of documented evidence. Third, he refutes the late date argument based on John’s silence regarding the role of Sadducees in Jerusalem and Judea (their roles diminished after AD 70) because John was also silent on scribes who’s influence increased during the same period. Also, the doctrine found in the Gospel related to the notion of a personal, pre-existent Christ who was incarnate, this doctrine is believed to have developed toward the end of the first century.

⁴² Gerald L. Borchert, *John 1–11*, The New American Commentary, vol. 25A (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 30.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 211.

There are differences of opinion regarding the woman's words in verse 29, "this is not the Christ is it?" Borchert contends,

Her question, "Could this be the Christ?" introduced by the word *mēti* implies a negative answer or at least an element of doubt. The evangelist seems to have been suggesting that the woman, despite leaving her water pot, was still debating the issue herself. In periods of questioning, people often seek confirmation. The woman's question thus seems to be one of those stages in the process toward decision making. Writers and preachers who think the woman had reached the stage of commitment to Jesus at this point or that she was here making a firm confession have failed to account for the Greek text. Her testimony concerning Jesus' incredible knowledge about her life seems to be balanced by her unresolved doubt. But together they provide a stimulus for the others to go out and investigate this potential Taheb/Messiah (4:30).⁴⁴

While Borchert contends that the *mēti* suggests doubt on the woman's part, I agree with Lenski that the woman was wise in that she offered an open-ended question to inspire curiosity on the part of the town's men:

She puts this into a question but with μήτι not with οὐ. The English has no such delicate distinctions, hence we must circumscribe, which is always bunglesome, "Can this perhaps be?" "Οὐ would have challenged the opposition of the neighbors by taking sides on the question whether Jesus was the Messiah. The woman does not mean to imply flatly, that Jesus is not the Messiah by using μήτι, but she raises the question and throws a cloud of uncertainty and curiosity over it with a woman's keen instinct. In a word, μή is just the negative to use when one does not wish to be too positive. Μη leaves the question open for further remark or entreaty. Οὐ closes the door abruptly.⁴⁵

While the woman shares her personal testimony, the disciples urge Jesus to eat and He shares with them that the field is white for the harvest (vv. 31-38). The woman's personal testimony inspired the town's men to leave the city and go to Jesus. While Jesus is speaking to the disciples, they are able to see the harvest as the woman's testimony draws the town's men to Jesus. Because of the woman's willingness to share her personal testimony, Jesus was invited into the community and many more believed (4:41).

Concerning the effectiveness of the woman's witness, Carson states,

Though he stayed but *two days*, during that time the "harvest" extended beyond those who had come out to see him owing to the witness of the woman: it now

⁴⁴ Borchert, *John 1-11*, 211.

⁴⁵ Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel*, 329-30.

included *many more* who *became believers*—and this *because of his words* (v. 41). When the Samaritans make the point to the woman who first introduced Jesus to them (v. 42), it is not to disparage her testimony but to confirm it: they have heard for themselves, and have judged her witness to be true.⁴⁶

The power of her testimony is heightened in light of the Samaritans expectation of a Taheb rather than a Jewish Messiah. Carson reminds,

Samaritans preferred “Taheb” (*cf.* notes on 4:4, 11–12, 19–20), “the Restorer,” or possibly “he who returns.” *When he comes, he will explain everything to us*: that is more typically a Samaritan than a Jewish expectation. By and large Jews did not think of the Messiah primarily as a teacher (except perhaps as a teacher of the Gentiles: SB 2. 348; though *cf.* CD 6:11). By contrast, Samaritans pictured the Taheb as one who would reveal the truth, in line with his role as the ultimate prophet (Dt. 18:15–19; *cf.* Schnackenburg, 1. 441).⁴⁷

Because of the woman’s personal testimony, Samaritans were transformed by their interaction with Jesus. The Samaritan woman functioned as a witness in her community. While there remains a need to share the gospel to the ends of the earth, Christians must not lose sight of the importance of first being witnesses in their immediate communities. Considering Christianity’s decline amongst millennials in America, there is a need for American disciples to once again discover the lost art of personal evangelism.⁴⁸

This chapter has shown the importance of passing values and norms from one generation to the next. Deuteronomy 6:7; 20-25 shows the importance placed on training the next generation in the acts of God in the life of Israel. This training was explained with the metaphor of an engraver engraving information into a stone. The importance of passing on values and norms was also seen in Matthew 28:19-20 as Jesus instructed his disciples to make more disciples wherever they go. As with Moses and Israel, Jesus

⁴⁶ Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 231.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 226.

⁴⁸ A 2014 Pew Research study revealed, For example, only 27% of Millennials say they attend religious services on a weekly basis, compared with 51% of adults in the Silent generation. Four-in-ten of the youngest Millennials say they pray every day, compared with six-in-ten Baby Boomers and two-thirds of members of the Silent generation. (Pew Research Center, “U.S. Public Becoming Less Religious,” November 3, 2015, accessed April 13, 2017, http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2015/11/2015.11.03_RLS_II_full_report.pdf)

wanted to ensure that succeeding generations were taught values and norms by hearing the gospel. The importance of this transfer of knowledge was also seen in Luke 24:44-49 where Jesus instructs his followers to be his witnesses by telling what they had seen and heard. The practicality of being a witness of Christ was seen in John 4:28-30; 39-42 as the woman at the well used her personal testimony to witness to those in her community about Christ.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL/PRACTICAL REASONS FOR PERSONAL EVANGELISM

As society continues to secularize and church attendance declines, asking a person about their church membership or relationship with Christ becomes more challenging. This challenge has grown more disturbing for Christians as secular worldviews have replaced long-held Christian worldviews. R. Albert Mohler was correct when he wrote,

With great foresight in his 1965 *The Secular City*, Harvey Cox wrote the future of the Western world, particularly its cities, was predominantly secular. Cox further argued this coming secular city would provide a larger range of worldviews as alternatives to what had been offered before. This multiplicity of worldviews would be one of the hallmarks of the secular city. As a result, Christianity—the once ubiquitous worldview of Western society—would be displaced, giving way to a seemingly infinite number of worldview options.¹

The challenge of a secularized society was not always the norm, there was a time when Christian worldviews were the norm of society. During this time, churches experienced revival as new converts filled church pews. Reflecting on such a time when alternative worldviews were not the norm may provide hope and insight for Christians today.

Great Awakening

Alternative worldviews were not the challenge in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. America saw a great revival as preachers such as John Wesley, George Whitfield, and Johnathan Edwards preached to thousands, inviting them to repent and turn

¹ R. Albert Mohler, Jr., “Preaching in a Secular Age,” *Southern Seminary Magazine* 85, no 1. (Spring 2017), accessed April 22, 2017, <http://equip.sbts.edu/publications/magazine/magazine-issue/spring-2017-vol-85-no-1/preaching-secular-age/>.

to God. This revival is brought about the first Great Awakening² in America—a time when thousands flocked to hear open air preaching to publicly confess Christ. Regarding Whitfield’s impact in Newport, Rhode Island, the *New-Letter*, a local paper, reported,

Last Thursday Evening the Rev’d Mr. Whitefield arrived from Rhode Island, being met on the Road and conducted to Town by several Gentlemen. The next Day in the Forenoon he attended Prayers in the King’s Chappel, and in the Afternoon he preach’d to a vast Congregation in the Rev’d Dr. Colman’s Meeting-House. The next Day he preach’d in the Forenoon at the South Church to a Crowded Audience, and in the Afternoon to about 5000 People on the Common: and Lord’s Day in the afternoon having preach’d to a great Number of People at the Old Brick Church, the House not being large enough to hold those that crowded to hear him, when the Exercise was over, He went and preached in the Field, to at least 8000 Persons.³

Commenting on the influence of the first Great Awakening among free blacks and slaves, Albert Raboteau notes,

The first Great Awakening of the 1740s swept the colonies with the tumultuous preaching and emotional conversions of revivalistic, evangelical Protestantism. Accounts by Whitefield, Tennent, Edwards, and other revivalists made special mention of the fact that blacks were flocking to hear the message of salvation in hitherto unseen numbers. Not only were free blacks and slaves attending revivals in significant numbers, they were taking active part in the services as exhorters and preachers. The same pattern of black activism was repeated in the rural camp meetings of the second Great Awakening of the early nineteenth century.⁴

The first Great Awakening contributed immensely to the spreading of the gospel amongst blacks. Kenneth Minkema notes, “Surprisingly, Edwards was the first minister at Northampton to baptize blacks and admit them into full membership.”⁵ While the first

² Leslie Conrad, Jr., “Importance of Preaching in the Great Awakening,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 12, no. 2 (May 1960): 117. Describing the era, Conrad notes,

The Great Awakening was launched in November, 1739. George Whitefield, “the Great Awakener,” took up visitor’s residence in Philadelphia on November 3, 1739, and on the following afternoon preached his first sermon in the City of Brotherly Love. For the next fifteen months the American colonists flocked to hear the most marvelous preacher of the century. Three weeks’ work is recorded in this brief sentence: “Preached to ten thousand persons every day for twenty days.” (“Spiritual Awakenings in North America,” *Christian History Magazine* 23 [1989]: n.p.)

³ “God’s Wonderful Working,” *Christian History Magazine* 23 (1989): n.p.

⁴ Albert J. Raboteau “Slave Autonomy and Religion,” *The Journal of Religious Thought* 38, no. 2 (September 1981): 56.

⁵ Kenneth P. Minkema, “Jonathan Edwards’s Defense of Slavery,” *Massachusetts Historical Review* 4 (2002): 48.

Great Awakening helped spread the gospel amongst blacks, there were extreme inconsistencies amongst many revivalists between orthodoxy and orthopraxy. Jonathan Edwards saw the importance of sharing the gospel with slaves but at the same time he owned slaves and defended the institution of slavery. In an effort to support Benjamin Doolittle, a local minister and Arminian whose congregation took issues with his slave holding, Edwards, a Calvinist, was tasked by the local ministerial association to prepare an official response to the congregation's antislavery argument. Although Edwards and Doolittle differed theologically, Edwards supported Doolittle's ownership of slaves.

Minkema explains Edwards defense:

Edwards, as he so often did with his opponents, turned their arguments against them and charged them with hypocrisy. While the critics themselves did not own slaves, he pointed out that they directly profited from slavery and slave trading or consumed slave-made products. They were, as he said, "partakers" of slavery: They may have their slaves at next step.⁶

Edwards preached in an era when slavery was defended. Tim Keller notes, "The institutions of society and the shared symbols and practices of common life expressed, confirmed, and reinforced religious beliefs."⁷ While many in society accepted slavery during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, they also held to religious beliefs.

The twenty-first century provides a different landscape, one in which secularization causes the mass populous to be less receptive to religion in general and Christianity specifically. A report by the Barna Research Group reveals,

Over half of Millennials with a Christian background (59%) have, at some point, dropped out of going to church after having gone regularly, and half have been significantly frustrated by their faith. Additionally, more than 50% of 18-29 year olds with a Christian background say they are less active in church compared to when they were 15.⁸

⁶ Minkema, "Jonathan Edwards's Defense of Slavery," 51.

⁷ Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 57.

⁸ Michael Gryboski, "59 Percent of Millennials Say Sunday Is Religiously Insignificant; Only 22 Percent Attend Church, Study Finds," *Christian Post*, May 3, 2016, accessed August 18, 2017, <http://www.christianpost.com/news/59-percent-of-millennials-say-sunday-is-religiously-insignificant-only-22-percent-attend-church-study-finds-163296/>.

While these statistics do not address African Americans directly, the same skepticism toward Christianity and church is found. This was not the case for African Americans in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Enslaved African Americans reverently viewed the Bible as a “talking-book.” The view that the Bible was a talking book first appeared in the memoir of the freed slave James Albert Ukawsaw:

[My master] used to read prayers in public to the ship’s crew every Sabbath day; and when I first saw him read, I was never so surprised in my life, as when I saw the book talk to my master, for I thought it did, as I observed him to look upon it, and move his lips. I wished it would do so with me. As soon as my master was done reading, I followed him to the place where he put the book, being mightily delighted with it, and when nobody saw me, I opened it, and put my ear down close upon it, in great hopes that it would say something to me; but I was very sorry, and greatly disappointed, when I found that it would not speak. This thought immediately presented itself to me, that everybody and everything despised me because I was black.⁹

Slave John Jea describes his view of the Bible: “I took the book, and held it up to my ears, to try whether the book would talk to me or not, but it proved to be all in vain, for I could not hear it speak one word.”¹⁰ While he found that the Book did not speak, he desired to learn what was in it by attending a mass gathering, but southern slavers feared a literate slave. He said,

Such was my desire of being instructed in the way of salvation, that I wept at all times I possibly could, to hear the word of God, and seek instruction for my soul; while my master still continued to flog me, hoping to deter me from going; but all to no purpose, for I was determined, by the grace of God to seek the Lord with all my mind, and with all my strength, in spirit and in truth, as you read in the Holy Bible.¹¹

Noting the influence of Evangelical preachers upon enslaved African Americans, Allen Callahan states,

The open, public preaching of Evangelicals was inclusive in the extreme. The social unit of measurement for the Evangelical preacher was neither the church nor the chapel but the crowd: the bigger the crowd the better, for all needed to hear the

⁹ James Albert Ukawsaw, quoted in Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and William L. Andrews, eds., *Pioneers of the Black Atlantic: Five Slave Narratives from the Enlightenment, 1772-1815* (Washington, DC: Civitas, 1998), 40-41.

¹⁰ John Jea, quoted in *ibid.*, 379.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

message of eternal salvation. In the crowds that came to hear them, Evangelical preachers noted the sizeable presence of African slaves. Slaves in significant numbers came under the influence of Christianity in the British colonies and were thus introduced to the Bible through the mass Evangelicalism of the Great Awakening of the 1740s.¹²

The first Great Awakening resulted in a harvest of souls, which should be celebrated, but the religious and cultural environment of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have changed drastically as modernity has been replaced by postmodernity.

Postmodernity

Approaches to sharing the gospel in the twenty-first century must adjust to the postmodern mindset of the population. Postmodernism finds its roots in the works of Hume, Kant, and Nietzsche. Recognizing Nietzsche's influence, George Knight notes, "According to Nietzsche, there is no foundation on which to rest beliefs. Truth is dead and people have no option but to create their own world."¹³ In an effort to define postmodernism, Michael Adegbola suggests,

Postmodernism is a broad term, used in different ways, but it usually involves a cluster of such convictions and values as: (1) An ideological pluralism in which no one religion or worldview contains absolute truth. (2) The impossibility of objectivity in interpretation and the treasuring of value-laden approaches. (3) The importance of human communities in shaping ourselves and our interpretive perspectives.¹⁴

Complementing Adegbola, James Evans adds,

In its intellectual facet postmodernism is a deep distrust of grand theoretical schemes which promise to explain and order reality for us. It is an acknowledgement that all grand theoretical schemes are, in reality, some person's or group's story or history which has been raised to the position of a supreme fiction and that the institutions

¹² Allen Dwight Callahan, *The Talking Book: African Americans and the Bible* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 3-4.

¹³ George Knight, *Philosophy & Education: An Introduction in Christian Perspective* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2006), 91.

¹⁴ Michael Adeyemi Adegbola, "Evangelical Critique of the Influence of Postmodern Worldview on Biblical Hermeneutics, Christian Theology and the Emerging Church Movement (ECM)," *Ogbomoso Journal of Theology* 20, no. 2 (2015): 71.

which maintain its authority are tied to the legitimacy of that fiction and are not immune from that distrust.¹⁵

Traditional Christian belief requires one to have an epistemology rooted in the idea that truth is revealed in the Bible. Rick Richardson is correct when he notes,

Unfortunately, most of our approaches to proclaiming the gospel are still aimed at the modern scientific, analytical, individualistic mindset. We are ineffective in part because we are building our communication bridge to a mindset and an age that are passing away, or at least being radically transformed.¹⁶

Postmodern thought challenges the truth claim of Christianity because postmodern perspectives suggest that Christian claims are not flexible enough to embrace a modern rational worldview. Describing this challenge near the end of the twentieth century Carl F. H. Henry rightly argues that Christian truth claims are at odds with postmodern epistemology.

Now at the end of the century, the focus of attack has shifted again. The dawning of widespread and diversely formulated postmodern epistemology calls into question the coherence of the claim that objective, ahistorical truth claims are possible. If some earlier Christian thinkers, influenced by the Enlightenment, were too quick to label their syntheses “scientific,” and too slow to recognize the culture-laden nature of all human thought, a new generation has risen that is prepared to analyze all speech acts in terms of culturally defined interpretive communities. Every utterance, including this one, is intrinsically coercive and manipulative. One can no more transcend culture in a human utterance than one can escape the constraints of language itself. From such a perspective, the notion of a Christian truth-claim sounds not only old-fashioned but bigoted.¹⁷

Postmodernity brings a challenge to the essential truth claim found in Christianity because postmodern thinkers reject the idea of absolute truth in favor of relative truth. Postmodernist resistance to absolute truth claims results in resistance to those who claim to present an absolute truth. Describing this resistance, Mohler argues,

According to the postmodernist, those in authority use their power to remain in power, and to serve their own interests. Their laws, traditions, text, and “truth” are nothing more than that which is designed to keep them in power. So the authority of

¹⁵ James H. Evans, “African-American Christianity and the Postmodern Condition,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 58, no. 2 (1990): 214.

¹⁶ Rick Richardson, *Evangelism Outside the Box* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 42-43.

¹⁷ Carl F. H. Henry, “Fortunes of the Christian World View,” *Trinity Journal* 19, no. 2 (Fall 1998): 165.

governmental leaders is eroded, along with the authority of teachers, community leaders, parents and ministers. Ultimately, even the authority of God is rejected as totalitarian and autocratic. Christians—especially Christian ministers—are seen as representatives of this autocratic deity, and are to be resisted as authorities as well.¹⁸

The social environment that produced the Great Awakening no longer exists, yet there is still a need to share the gospel in a manner relevant in a postmodern era. While Mohler and others suggest that apologetics are required to defend the faith against postmodern resistance, there is also a need for personal and experiential approaches to sharing the gospel.

Relevant Gospel

While the number of millennials who opt to drop out of church is alarming, all hope is not lost. Thom Rainer and Sam Rainer’s study of millennials who drop out revealed, “60 percent of formerly churching eighteen to thirty-five-year-olds are willing to return to church if a friend or acquaintance invited them.”¹⁹ Personal evangelism amongst millennials could very well result in a modern Great Awakening; however, Christians cannot practice personal evangelism by compromising the gospel. For some, the assumption is that appearing more hip will make the church more attractive to millennials. In an interview with *The Atlantic*, Rachel Held Evans, author of *Searching for Sunday*, notes that one of the reasons millennials are dropping out of church is the issue of sin:

A lot of liberal, progressive people are afraid of the word sin. . . . That’s why upbeat music and stylish services don’t do it for Evans: Hers is a Christianity that is fully aware of darkness. “So much of what Christianity produces as far as books and literature and even music in our worship—it’s all very rosy, when that’s not really life, and that’s not really church,” she said. “We carry the weight of many, many centuries of injustice, and that matters, and we can’t just ignore that.”²⁰

¹⁸ R. Albert Mohler, Jr., *He Is Not Silent: Preaching in a Postmodern World* (Chicago: Moody, 2008), 122.

¹⁹ Thom Rainer and Sam Rainer III, *Essential Church: Reclaiming a Generation of Dropouts* (Nashville: B & H, 2008), 122.

²⁰ Emma Green, “Is Christianity Dark Enough for Millennials?,” *The Atlantic*, April 14, 2015, accessed September 17, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/04/rachel-held-evans-on-her-new-book-searching-for-sunday/390459/>.

Also challenging the hip church trend, Brett McCracken a 27-year-old evangelical, explains, “If the evangelical Christian leadership thinks that ‘cool Christianity’ is a sustainable path forward, they are severely mistaken. As a twentysomething, I can say with confidence that when it comes to church, we don’t want cool as much as we want real.”²¹ Christians must be willing to live with and embrace the knowledge that the gospel is controversial and exclusive while at the same time being real about life’s challenges.

No amount of relevance can replace the central message that Jesus Christ is the way of salvation (John 14:6). To help Christians keep a balance, Keller suggests that believers

enter the culture sympathetically and respectfully (similar to drilling) and confront the culture where it contradicts biblical truths (similar to blasting). . . . If we simply “blast” away—railing against the evils of culture—we are unlikely to gain a hearing among those we seek to reach. . . . On the other hand, if we simply “drill”—affirming and reflecting the culture and saying things that people find acceptable—we will rarely see anyone converted.²²

Personal evangelism amongst millennials could help bring spiritual revival to a spiritually-curious generation. I agree with John Dickerson’s accretion:

Each ensuing generation of Americans has fewer evangelicals than the previous generation. We now see God’s solution, His method for re-igniting the engine of evangelism, is not a national media campaign. It’s not even a few high-powered evangelists, as great as that would be. God’s solution requires zero dollars in funding and 100 percent in commitment. His solution, we will see, is the church. That is, every individual follower of Christ relearning what it is to share the Good News with their neighbors, coworkers, family members, and friends.²³

Spiritual curiosity is another reason why personal and experiential evangelism is required. The Pew Research Center found,

²¹ Brett McCracken, “The Perils of ‘Wannabe Cool’ Christianity,” *Wall Street Journal*, Eastern ed., 256, no. 37, August 13, 2010, W9.

²² Keller, *Center Church*, 119.

²³ John S. Dickerson, *The Great Evangelical Recession: 6 Factors That Will Crash the American Church . . . and How to Prepare* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 202.

Americans have become less religious in recent years by standard measures such as how important they say religion is to them and their frequency of religious service attendance and prayer. But, at the same time, the share of people across a wide variety of religious identities who say they often feel a deep sense of spiritual peace and well-being as well as a deep sense of wonder about the universe has risen.²⁴

The rise of spiritual curiosity amongst postmodernist provides an entry point for the gospel. While the postmodern society is resistant to authorized figures such as a preacher, modern society is open to hearing from a person with whom they have personal connections.

Deploying Believers

Along with the centrality of the gospel, there is a need to deploy believers to actively engage their spheres of influence with the gospel. When looking at the spread of the gospel in Acts, one sees the power of ordinary disciples spreading the gospel.

Addressing the importance of ordinary people helping to spread the gospel, J. D. Greear notes,

One of William Tyndale’s first converts was a guy name Humphrey Monmouth. . . . Humphrey Monmouth was not a preacher he was a business man. Tyndale leads him to Christ, Monmouth owns this gigantic fleet of ships and is really wealthy. After he [Tyndale] translated the Bible he [Monmouth] is the one who got it into every corner of the English empire. . . . There is a partnership between those of us in the pulpit and those out there that God intends all of us to think like gospel people.²⁵

The responsibility for spreading of the gospel is not limited to those who serve in the pulpit, but includes ordinary believers. As Monmouth did with Tyndale’s Bible translation, believers must do with the gospel.

Jeff Iorg is correct; churches too often focus on events and not on equipping members for personal evangelism. Iorg notes,

North American churches today largely focus on “attraction” and “engagement” strategies to communicate the gospel. An attraction strategy is a Christian event or program designed to accommodate unbelievers and introduce them to Jesus Christ.

²⁴ David Masci and Michael Lipka, “Americans May Be Getting Less Religious, but Feelings of Spirituality Are on the Rise,” *Pew Research Center*, January 21, 2016, accessed September 22, 2017, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/01/21/americans-spirituality/>.

²⁵ J. D. Greear, “Four Convictions of Those Who Turn the World Upside Down” (chapel sermon, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, March 26, 2019).

An engagement strategy is an event or program designed to involve unbelievers and introduce them to Jesus Christ. Both of these types of strategies have their place and should not be abandoned. But they are inadequate for gospel penetration of a post-Christian or never-Christian culture across North America. Churches must develop and celebrate an *infiltration* strategy. An infiltration strategy is the deployment of believers throughout the culture to introduce unbelievers to Jesus Christ in their context.²⁶

What Iorg calls “infiltration strategy,” I refer to as personal evangelism. Personal evangelism is seen when churches empower believers to share their faith at sporting programs, with the next-door neighbors, and with co-workers and in their daily lives. Equipping the millennials active in church to share their faith with other millennials may very well be the strategy to employ to reach America’s largest generation.

Personal evangelism was practiced by believers in the New Testament and throughout church history and should be practiced by believers today. In Acts 11:19-21, believers shared the gospel where they went:

So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone. But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord.

In describing evangelism in the New Testament, Mark Dever notes, “It’s clear, too, from all the talk of persecution in the New Testament that the earliest Christians didn’t try to keep their religion a secret, even though sharing it brought consequences.”²⁷ As time progressed and the gospel spread, God continued to add to the church. In AD 250, after over 200 years of evangelistic effort, Christians still made up only 1.9 percent of the empire. By the middle of the next century, though, about 56 percent of the population

²⁶ Jeff Iorg, “North America as a Mission Field: The Great Commission and Our Continent,” in *The Great Commission Resurgence*, ed. Chuck Lawless and Adam Greenway (Nashville: B & H, 2008), 231.

²⁷ Mark Dever, *The Gospel & Personal Evangelism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 48.

claimed to be Christians.²⁸ The conversion experienced of Emperor Constantine ushered in a new era in Christianity as the idea of “state church” took hold. It is also during this time that churches saw millions of barbarians become members, yet they did not know the gospel nor were they able to evangelize others. D. James Kennedy suggests, “So little by little there was a division between the clergy and the laity and that this task of evangelism was the job of the professionally trained individuals.”²⁹ The specialization of evangelism as the responsibility of those trained has hindered many Christians from ever sharing the gospel. If churches are to be effective evangelistic churches, there is a need to empower all believes to share the gospel.

In his study of effective evangelistic churches Thom Rainer found,

Members of smaller churches perceived that number of baptisms [fifteen to twenty per year] to be a significant evangelistic harvest. Unless the pastor was persistent in his attempts to train and recruit others for witnessing, the responsibility of soul winning remained primarily with him. The congregational attitude of ‘that’s what we pay him for’ often resulted in little churchwide enthusiasm to develop relationships with the lost.³⁰

Pastors must take seriously the job of equipping church members to share the gospel within their spheres of influence. When researching how revitalized churches deployed lay members, Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson found that gifts assessments were essential (see figure).³¹

²⁸ Christian History Institute, “Evangelism in the Early Church: Did You Know?” *Christian History*, no. 57 (1998), accessed September 22, 2017, <https://christianhistoryinstitute.org/magazine/article/evangelism-in-early-church-did-you-know>.

²⁹ D. James Kennedy, *Evangelism Explosion* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1996), 4.

³⁰ Thom Rainer, *Effective Evangelistic Churches* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 18.

³¹ The figure that follows is from Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson, *Comeback Churches: How 300 Churches Turned around and Yours Can Too* (Nashville: B & H, 2007), 136.

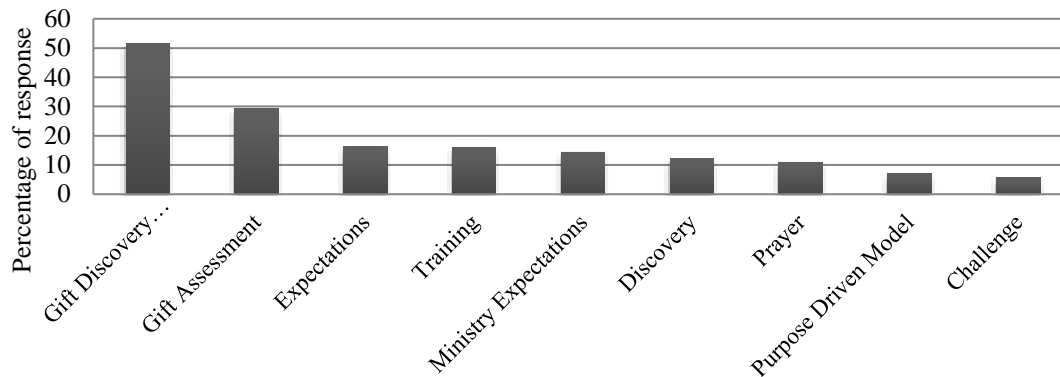


Figure. How comeback leaders mobilized laity

Personal Evangelism

When it comes to practicing personal evangelism, problems arise. For some there is the challenge of not knowing any non-believers, and others simply do not have the time to intentionally identify non-believers in order to share the gospel. Dever acknowledges his own struggle to interact with non-believers:

Isolation from unbelievers may be the most common excuse for the lack of evangelism. This is the excuse of choice for mature Christians. When I'm honestly reflecting on my own life, I see that I have fairly few significant relationships with non-Christians. I'm a pastor. I'm not around non-Christians much as part of my job. I am busy writing sermons, counseling, planning, training other Christians, returning phone calls—even writing a book on evangelism!"³²

The list of reasons for not practicing personal evangelism can seem endless, yet to fulfill Matthew 28:19-29 and Acts 1:8, believers must share the gospel. A healthy place to start personal evangelism is prayer.

Prayer

Effective personal evangelism must be supported with prayer. Jesus as the master teacher modeled a life of prayer (Mark 1: 35; Luke 11:1-4; John 11:41; 17). In Matthew 9:35-38, Jesus instructed his disciples to pray for more labors in the vineyard:

Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every

³² Dever, *The Gospel & Personal Evangelism*, 22.

kind of sickness. Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.”

The book of Acts offers multiple examples of believers praying for boldness (1:14, 2:42-47, 4:23-31). In Romans, the apostle Paul prayed for the salvation of others, “Brethren, my heart’s desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation” (10:1). In Ephesians, one also sees Paul request prayer that his evangelism effort may produce fruit, “and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel” (6:19).

Believers in every generation must ground evangelistic efforts in prayer. In so doing believers are following Jesus’ instructions in Matthew 9:38. Baptist pastor and missionary William Carey agreed to go to India in 1792 only if his friends would “hold the rope” in prayer and support. Rainer writes, “Prayer is the power behind the principles. There simply is no more important principle in church growth than prayer. The prayers of the early church unleashed the power of God to add thousands to the church.”³³ As African American missionaries Collin Teage and Lott Carey prepared to set sail for Ethiopia, the Board of Managers of the General Convention of Baptist Denomination in the United States sent word to them that they were praying for the success of their evangelistic efforts. Corresponding Secretary W. M. Staughton wrote,

They pray that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ may be with you, with your families, and with all who sail or settle with you; and that the American Colonization Society, and all its sister institutions, may be rendered instrumental in diffusing literary, economical, and evangelic light, from the Mediterranean to the Cape of Good Hope, and from the Atlantic to the Red Sea and Indian Ocean.³⁴

³³ Thom Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth: History, Theology and Principles* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1993), 183-84.

³⁴ W. M. Staughton, “Letters, Addresses, and the Like Throwing Light on the Career of Lott Cary,” *The Journal of Negro History* 7, no. 4 (1922): 428.

Some believers struggle to practice personal evangelism because of a belief that they must convert non-believers. Recognizing this struggle, John Onwechekwa suggests that prayer is the antidote:

The antidote for carrying weight we were never meant to carry is to let someone else carry it for us. Many of our evangelistic efforts are driven solely by pragmatism and strategy when lasting, abiding fruit comes from prayer (see John 15:8, 16). Praying together removes the pressure for “success” and puts it back on God’s shoulders. When we pray, “Our Father in heaven,” we acknowledge God is sovereign and does what he pleases. When we pray for God to save someone, we admit that God alone has the power to do so.³⁵

Prayer is also needed to request that God open the hearts of the hearer so that the gospel message may take root. While Christians do the work of the evangelist, only God can bring about salvation. Because the work of salvation lies within God’s sovereignty Christians must pray. Along with prayer, their lives must also serve as a witness to the transformative power of God. Evangelistic efforts must move from private prayer to public witness.

Witnessing as a Lifestyle

Jesus did not limit himself to ministry and teaching only at the synagogue; his lifestyle put him in regular contact with the people of his community. In calling His disciples, the gospels describe Jesus recruiting fishermen and tax collectors. Recalling his own invitation to discipleship, Matthew describes Jesus reclining with sinners and tax collectors (Matt 9:9-10). When challenged by Pharisees, Jesus describes his reason for interacting with sinners: “It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick” (Matt 9:12). In John 4:1-26, Jesus has a conversation about true worship and the Messiah with a Samaritan woman. In Acts 8:26-40, Philip shares the gospel with an Ethiopian Eunuch who was traveling on the road from Jerusalem back to Ethiopia. The apostle Paul shares the gospel in the marketplace to the men of Athens in Acts 17:22-

³⁵ John Onwechekwa, *Prayer: How Praying Together Shapes the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 112.

34. The New Testament provides numerous examples of believers witnessing as part of their lifestyle.

The story of John Harper's last convert is well known as he shared the gospel while the Titanic sunk. Describing the story, Douglas Mize writes,

The ship disappeared beneath the deep frigid waters leaving hundreds floundering in its wake with no realistic chance for rescue. Harper struggled through hyperthermia to swim to as many people as he could, still sharing the Gospel. Harper evidentially would lose his battle with hypothermia but not before giving many people one last glorious Gospel witness. Four years after the tragedy at a Titanic survivor's meeting in Ontario, Canada, one survivor recounted his interaction with Harper in the middle of the icy waters of the Atlantic. He testified he was clinging to ship debris when Harper swam up to him, twice challenging him with a biblical invitation to "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." He rejected the offer once. Yet given the second chance and with miles of water beneath his feet, the man gave his life to Christ. Then as Harper succumbed to his watery grave, this new believer was rescued by a returning lifeboat. As he concluded his remarks at the Ontario meeting of survivors he simply stated, "I am the last convert of John Harper."³⁶

For Jesus, the disciples, and Christians such as John Harper, witnessing was not limited to the church on Sunday morning; it was a part of their daily lives as it should be for Christians today.

Just as God presented an opportunity for Philip to share the gospel in Acts 8, He still does for believers today. There is a need for believers to develop alertness to the opportunities and boldness to share the gospel. Many excuses are used to describe why personal evangelism is not done. In discussing the common excuse, "I don't know any non-Christians," Kennedy writes,

The more you grow spiritually, the more involved you become in the life of the church. As you become increasingly involved in the church, you will find that you have less opportunity to be involved with your unbelieving friends, relatives, associates, and neighbors. In fact if you are not careful, you can be lifted right out of your normal contact with them and lose your witness to them.³⁷

³⁶ Douglas W. Mize, "As Titanic Sank, He Pleaded, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus!'" *Baptist Press*, April 13, 2012, accessed September 23, 2017, <http://www.bpnews.net/37601/as-titanic-sank-he-pleaded-believe-in-the-lord-jesus>.

³⁷ Kennedy, *Evangelism Explosion*, 23.

Because Christians can become isolated from non-Christians, there must be a concerted effort to build relationships with non-Christians.

Building relationships with non-Christians does not mean that one must start with strangers. God has already given spheres of influence with the family, friends, and co-workers. One element missing in many of current relationships may be spending time together. Many tasks require a significant amount of time from work to household chores or choir rehearsal. Believers must make an effort to plan time to develop relationships with the purpose of sharing the gospel. Making more effective use of one's daily routine could do this. Rather than eating lunch alone, invite a co-worker. Sports fans may invite friends to watch a game together or take a trip to a sporting event. Parents may be intentional about discussing the gospel during family time with their kids. Kids could bring up the gospel during a pick-up basketball game or while walking through the mall with friends. Opportunities for lifestyle evangelism lies in inviting others into one's daily activity.

There is still the need to develop new relationships with non-Christians. Kennedy suggests, "Another way to develop relationships with unbelievers is by joining a club or becoming involved in a community activity. Take time to develop relationships with your hairdresser, insurance salesman, grocery clerk, or auto mechanic. Work at getting to know the neighbors around you."³⁸ To Kennedy's list one could add joining a Meetup group or volunteer for a local non-profit. Jesus' prayer for his disciples in John 17:14-21 was not for God to take believers out of the world but to consecrate them as he sends them into the world as his witnesses. Once relationships are cultivated with the lost the gospel must be shared.

It is also important not to overlook one's vocation as an opportunity to be a witness of Jesus Christ and agents of restoration. Benjamin Quinn and Walter Strickland

³⁸ Kennedy, *Evangelism Explosion*, 23.

suggest, “God might call his people into job situations as agents of reconciliation, to align an organization with his purpose. . . . In the end our vocational spheres are ground zero for proclaiming and demonstrating the kingdom and bearing testimony to God’s restorative mission in the world.”³⁹

Sharing the Gospel

There is a difference between exposure to the gospel and hearing it. Americans have been exposed to the gospel with the aid of technological advances, including radio, television, and now social media. These technological advances provide platforms by which the masses can be exposed to the gospel. This type of mass exposure is very different from the open air preaching common during the Great Awakening. While it may appear that Americans are saturated with the gospel message, this saturation is not resulting in the masses understanding and accepting the gospel. Barna’s research reveals that less than 10 percent of Americans could define the term Great Commission. Barna’s research found that “9 out of 10 adults (86 percent) admitted that they did not know—they did not even hazard a guess. Another 5 percent offered an incorrect answer. Just 9 percent of all Americans correctly described the Great Commission.”⁴⁰ Simple exposure is not enough; there is a need for a clear explanation and call for commitment when sharing the gospel.

A survey of false gospels. To clearly explain the gospel, one must first have an understanding of what it is and what it is not. The gospel is not a cultural construct meant to reshape society a view exposed by the social gospel. The gospel is also not a religious philosophy meant to help individuals find secure financial wealth—a view held by the prosperity gospel. Describing the social gospel espoused by Walter Rauschenbush (1861-

³⁹ Benjamin T. Quinn and Walter R. Strickland II, *Every Waking Hour: An Introduction to Work and Vocation for Christians* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), 76.

⁴⁰ George Barna, *Evangelism That Works: How to Reach Changing Generations with the Unchanging Gospel* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1995), 36.

1918) and others, Ronald White and Howard Hopkins clearly explain something other than the gospel described in the New Testament:

The individual is what he is by virtue of the place in society which he occupies; or if this is too extreme a statement, the interaction between society and individual is such that an interpretation which always makes the individual that first term is manifestly wrong. The Social Gospel has seen sin and righteousness as characteristics of group life; it has noted that vicarious suffering is laid upon group for group rather than upon individual for individual; it has seen the problem of salvation as a social problem and it has worked for the conversion or “change” of societies rather than of individuals who, no matter how much they may be changed, yet remain bound by common social evils and participants in common social sin.⁴¹

The social gospel argues that an individual’s problem stems from his/her social location, which is very different from the apostle Paul’s argument described in Romans 3:23: “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Paul again describes humanities’ sin problem in Ephesians 2 reminding believers that apart from Jesus Christ humans are dead in sin and transgressions. Many reformed theologians refer to this as total depravity. This total depravity is not a result of social location but sin against God. In describing the soteriology of Jupiter Hammon, Thabiti Anyabwile comments,

Hammon believed regeneration or new birth was a prerequisite to saving faith due to man’s moral inability. In his essay *An Evening’s Improvement*, he saw in the raising of Lazarus (Jn 11:43-44) a parallel to the spiritual deadness and moral inability of all men. . . . “It is only by the precious blood of Christ we can be saved, when we are made sensible of our own imperfections and are desirous to love and fear God; this we cannot do of ourselves, for this is the work of God’s Holy Spirit.”⁴²

Not only is the gospel not a social construct, neither is the gospel an economic success strategy aimed at improving one’s wealth, health, and happiness. From the time of Father Divine and Daddy Grace in the 1930s to Kenneth Hagin, Creflo Dollar, and others today, the idea that the gospel results in personal wealth is exposed. In describing the prosperity hermeneutic, Anyabwile notes, “Prosperity preachers approach the Bible in

⁴¹ Ronald C. White and Howard Hopkins, *The Social Gospel: Religion and Reform in Changing America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1976), 264.

⁴² Thabiti M. Anyabwile, *The Decline of African American Theology: From Biblical Faith to Cultural Captivity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2007), 179.

search of a liberation message, much like the liberationist. The difference, however, is that proponents of prosperity theology define liberation not in terms of social and political freedoms but in terms of personal wealth, health and possessions.”⁴³ In his *Bibliotheca Sacra* article, “A Theological Evaluation of the Prosperity Gospel,” theologian Ken Sarles describes how the role of the Abrahamic Covenant of Genesis is used to promote the prosperity gospel: “The provision of wealth centers on the application of the Abrahamic Covenant. The personal blessings God bestowed on Abraham by the covenant He made with him are extrapolated as benefits for believers today. According to [Kenneth] Hagin, Abraham’s blessing was threefold: spiritual, physical, and also financial.”⁴⁴ To further support the idea that the Abrahamic Covenant applies to current believers, exposers of the prosperity gospel reference Galatians 3:14, which alludes to the blessing of Abraham coming upon Gentiles. Their incorrect interpretation of the Abrahamic Covenant has led to an erroneous application.

What the gospel is. The gospel is the good news that Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection saved humanity from eternal damnation. The Bible teaches, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23). Because of this sin, which goes back to Adam and Eve, humans are not righteous and outside of fellowship with God. While sins render humans utterly hopeless, God’s love brings about hope and good news. The hopelessness is that sin leads to death and the good news is that Jesus Christ leads to eternal life: “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 6:23).

In the Septuagint, the word *evangelizo* is generally used to proclaim news of something good that has happened to rescue people from destruction. In the New

⁴³ Thabiti M. Anayabwile, *Reviving the Black Church: A Call to Reclaim A Scared Institution* (Nashville: B & H, 2015), 24.

⁴⁴ Ken L. Sarles, “A Theological Evaluation of the Prosperity Gospel,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 143, no. 572 (October 1986): 337.

Testament, the word *evangelion* is used to describe good news. The good news of the gospel is described John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.” The gospel is proclaiming the good news that the free gift of God is found in the fact that Jesus Christ died in humanity’s place as payment for humanity’s sins and that God raised him from the dead. Paul shares the gospel with the church in Rome: “If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness and with the mouth he confesses resulting in salvation” (Rom 10:9-10). As the apostle Paul shared this good news in his time, and Jupiter Hammon shared it in his time, believers should do so now. Presenting the gospel to a postmodern audience with only a rational argument that appeals to the intellect, however, is not enough. The gospel must be shared in a way that reaches the hearer both craniologically and cardiologically, which can be done through the power of personal testimony. Using Romans 1-4, Greg Gilbert suggests that at the heart of the gospel is the answer to four critical questions:

Now, having looked at Paul’s argument in Romans 1–4, we can see that at the heart of his proclamation of the gospel are the answers to four crucial questions:

1. Who made us, and to whom are we accountable?
2. What is our problem? In other words, are we in trouble and why?
3. What is God’s solution to that problem? How has he acted to save us from it?
4. How do I—myself, right here, right now—how do I come to be included in that salvation? What makes this good news for me and not just for someone else?

We might summarize these four major points like this: God, man, Christ, and response.⁴⁵

Sharing Your Testimony

The actions of the Samaritan woman in John 4 demonstrate the power of personal testimony. Upon returning to her community and telling them about Jesus she

⁴⁵ Greg Gilbert, *What Is the Gospel?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 31.

did not try to simply convince them intellectually, she stated, “He told me all the things that I have done” (John 4:39). To be an effective witness, one must be able to share what has happened personally as a result of believing the gospel. Theodore Soares is correct that the apostle Paul’s effectiveness was not on the part of his public speaking but his personal witness:

Indeed, the success of Paul’s evangelism is not attributable in the main to his public preaching, but to his private teaching or rather to his personal influence. It was not a series of platform campaigns: it was the testimony of a life and a faith. Many a man who can sway thousands by magnetic speech has not the personal power to help the lonely human soul to fight its doubts, and meet its problems, and reach out to God. There are not wanting indications that the rapid spread of the gospel under Paul was most largely the result of the personal influence of that man of deep religious experience and passionate human sympathy.⁴⁶

One of the things that aided in Paul in sharing his personal testimony was developing a friendship with individuals. When arriving in Macedonia, he met women praying on the Sabbath near the river and he spent time having a conversation with them: “And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer; and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled” (Acts 16:13). Kennedy suggests that becoming a friend is the most important aspect of personal evangelism: “The most important objective of the introduction is establishing friendship. Whether in the conversational introduction, the witnessing-as-a-way-of-life approach, or in questionnaire evangelism, building friendship is essential to effective evangelism.”⁴⁷

In approaches to sharing that gospel that were aimed at the modern scientific mindset, attention was given to apologetics. With the rise of Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution and other scientific advancements, there was a need to provide evidence for faith and proof of God’s existence with a logical argument. While this approach was

⁴⁶ Theodore Gerald Soares, “Paul’s Missionary Methods,” *The Biblical World* 34, no. 5 (1909): 335.

⁴⁷ Kennedy, *Evangelism Explosion*, 55.

effective during the modern era and with modern thinkers, it is not as effective with postmodern thinkers because their epistemology is very different. Describing this difference, Richardson notes,

In the medieval culture, truth was religious and universal. In modern culture, truth was scientific and universal. In a postmodern world, truth is experiential and personal or communal. People aren't looking for absolutes or universal truth. People today are looking for truth that is real, truth that resonates with their lives, their experiences and the experiences of their community.⁴⁸

The postmodern person is searching for a truth that is not only real but also personal and that truth is only found in Jesus Christ. The personal testimony of a believer is a demonstration that the gospel is effective. Sharing the gospel accurately and its impact on one's life is not enough—there is also a need to ask the right questions and call for commitment.

Asking the Right Questions

The questions asked by Jesus in Mark 8 provide insight into the importance of asking the right question. After the initial step in healing a blind beggar in Bethesda, Jesus asked the right question to ensure that change had taken place. Jesus asked the blind man, “Do you see anything?” (v. 23) Because of Jesus's willingness to ask the right question, the man was able to receive full sight. Once again, Jesus asked the right question of His disciples concerning His identity. After asking the disciples a general question regarding the opinion of others, Jesus directly asked His disciples, “But who do you say that I am?” (v. 29). It was not enough for the disciples to know the opinion of others, there was a need to personalize their response.

Following the example of Jesus, there is a need for believers to ask the right questions when sharing the gospel. These questions are helpful in diagnosing a person's receptiveness to the gospel. Will McRaney is correct—there is a need for believers to be listener-centered: “Today we need to give more attention to training the witness to listen.

⁴⁸ Richardson, *Evangelism Outside the Box*, 45-46.

We should ask ourselves questions such as, ‘How is the listener responding to the message and to me? Is the listener connecting with the message?’”⁴⁹ Personal evangelism must be dialogical where in the nonbeliever is able to share this understanding of the gospel presentation. One way to help the gospel be presented well is that the believer could ask open-ended questions to diagnose the non-believer’s understanding of the gospel.

Kennedy suggests two diagnostic questions to ascertain whether they are saved and what they base their hope of eternal life upon: “Have you come to a place in your spiritual life where you know for certain you have eternal life, or is that something you would say you’re still working on? . . . Suppose you were to die tonight and stand before God, and He were to ask you, ‘Why should I let you into My heaven?’ What would you say?”⁵⁰

Albert Mohler has developed two questions that may be more relevant in a postmodern era, “What do you do? What are you living for?”⁵¹ For Mohler, these two questions allow for evangelistic conversations in an era when many do not have the categories to answers heaven and hell questions posed by Kennedy. The diagnostic questions move beyond monologue and encourage meaningful dialogue that can be an entry for inviting a non-believer to accept Christ as their savior.

Jimmy Scroggins recognizes the challenge of sharing the gospel in a postmodern era and developed the 3 circles conversation guide for sharing with people who have no church background. This evangelism model explains that in the first circle, “God’s Design,” God has a design for humanity and when people violate that design with sin circle two “Brokenness” people enter into a period of brokenness. The only way to

⁴⁹ Will McRaney, *The Art of Personal Evangelism* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 167.

⁵⁰ Kennedy, *Evangelism Explosion*, 75-77.

⁵¹ Albert Mohler, North American Mission Board (NAMB), “Albert Mohler GC:60,” *Facebook*, March 12, 2018, accessed April 4, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/NAMB.SBC/videos/1804426542922311/>.

escape the brokenness is through repentance and circle three the gospel. Scroggins describes the three circles model:

He began by explaining that God has a design—physical and spiritual laws that govern the universe—and when people violate spiritual laws, there are certain consequences. Everyone departs from God’s design in different ways by sinning, leading to brokenness. When people find themselves in brokenness, Scroggins said, they try to alleviate the pain by relying on their own strength and the instincts of their hearts, pushing them further from God’s design and deeper into brokenness, Scroggins said. People know they need to change—to repent and believe—but they’re powerless and unguided. That’s why they need the Gospel, the good news that Jesus can help them recover and pursue God’s design.⁵²

While approaches to sharing the gospel vary, there is a need to communicate the gospel during a postmodern era. Whether one using Kennedy’s diagnostics questions, Mohler’s two questions, or Scroggins’ three circles, believers must personally engage in sharing the gospel with nonbelievers.

Calling for Commitment

Once the relationship is built and diagnostic questions about the non-believer’s faith walk have been asked, there is a need to ask the non-believer to accept Christ as his personal lord and savior and commit to being His disciple. In Acts 2, the crowd’s heart was pierced because of Peter’s sermon, but they were unaware of what to do next. Peter called for commitment by inviting those in the crowd to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins. In Acts 16, the jailer is amazed by God’s power, but amazement alone was not enough, he asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” (v. 30). Personal evangelism is not complete until one invites a non-believer to confess his sins to accept Christ as his personal savior.

At this point there is a need for clarification of commitment. Kennedy warns, “However, another danger at the point of closing is a premature commitment—a

⁵² Erin Roach, “‘3 Circles’ Gospel-Sharing Tool Gains Momentum” *SBCLife*, September 1, 2014 accessed April 5, 2019, <http://www.sbclife.net/article/2308/3-circles-gospelsharing-tool-gains-momentum>.

commitment which is not based on a thorough understanding of what is involved in accepting Christ as Savior and Lord.”⁵³ Commitment to Christ is more than an emotional feeling—it is a lifestyle change. It is essential to help a non-believer understand what is involved in becoming a disciple. Kowalski is correct when he states, “Commitment to discipleship demands the unconditional response of turning aside to a life that is new. It requires an immediate response allowing for no hesitation, whatsoever, in this self-dedication. This is the response called for from the Twelve and the future followers of Christ.”⁵⁴ As more believers make personal evangelism a part of their lifestyle, the potential for a modern great awakening is increased. There is a need for believers to intentionally build relationships with non-believers in the hope that more will make a personal commitment to Christ. Personal evangelism may help keep the gospel relevant in a secularized world.

This chapter has shown the challenge of evangelizing in the twenty-first century to a secularized society, as opposed to evangelizing in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were influenced by the culture’s receptiveness to open air preaching during the Great Awakening. The Great Awakening was also instrumental in exposing enslaved African Americans to the gospel. The secularized postmodern mind of the twenty-first century challenges Christianity’s claim that absolute truth can be found in the Bible by its belief that there are no absolute truths. To be effective in a secularized society there is a need to share a relevant gospel rooted in scripture that addresses modern questions. Churches must deploy believers to take an active part in sharing the gospel within their spheres of influence via personal evangelism. This practice of personal evangelism can be strengthened by employing helpful tactics, such as Kennedy’s diagnostics questions, Mohler’s two questions or Scroggins’ 3 Circles method.

⁵³ Kennedy, *Evangelism Explosion*, 99.

⁵⁴ Wojciech Kowalski, “The Call to Discipleship: A Challenge to Personal Commitment,” *AFER* 36, no. 6 (December 1994): 371.

CHAPTER 4

PERSONAL EVANGELISM TRAINING

In May 2018, I began the implementation process for my ministry project at Uplift Church. Because the members of Uplift Church were interested in ways to attract and retain new members, they agreed to take part in a six-week training on personal evangelism. The objective of this training was to accomplish four goals that would strengthen the evangelist efforts of the church. The goals of the training were (1) increase biblical knowledge relating to evangelism, (2) improve evangelistic skills, (3) increase participation in personal evangelism, and (4) increase accountability in evangelism.

Prior to the start of the project, two pastors and two millennials were asked to evaluate the strength of the curriculum. L. K. Floyd serves as the founder and pastor of Heart Changers Baptist Church in Maryland. Because he is a successful church planter and has sustained his ministry for over fifteen years with effective evangelism, his perspective was helpful in ensuring that the lessons on evangelism were both theological and practical. Lyle Pointer serves as the young adult pastor at Round Oak Baptist Church in Maryland, and because he is responsible for ministering to millennials, his perspective on the curriculum's relevance for millennials was helpful. The two millennials were not members of Uplift, which was helpful in removing bias regarding Uplift. They were both believers and active within the local social scene. Their perspective helped to ensure that the approaches to sharing the gospel were relevant to nonbelievers in the Washington, DC area. Each curriculum evaluator was given a Curriculum Evaluation Form and asked to evaluate curriculum to ensure that it was biblically faithful, sufficiently thorough, and

practically applicable.¹ The curriculum was divided into six sections: introduction, get started, Bible study, group conversation, one-on-one, and personal application. In the “introduction,” a recap of the previous week’s lesson was offered and a probing question leading into the session topic for the week. In the “get started” section, an ice breaker question was asked to further guide the conversation and the lesson. In the “Bible study” section, Scripture was explained to help participants gain an understanding of God’s Word regarding the lesson topic. In the “group conversation” section, questions were asked of the group regarding the lesson as a reflection of the Bible study. In the “one-on-one” section, participants were provided an initial question and encouraged to help each other think more deeply about the lesson. The “personal application” section provided students with a question or instructions for the week.

Announcements were made regarding the project and interested members were invited to participate. Those interested in learning more about evangelism and sharing the gospel were encouraged to participate in the project. Church members were made aware that the class required significant commitment and would challenge them to make personal evangelism a way of life.

The requirements for each participant included attending six training sessions on Sunday mornings at 9:00 a.m. and acting on the personal application suggested in the session. The participants were asked to take a pre-test to indicate their experiences in personal evangelism. At the introductory meeting held on May 27, 2018, 6 people (4 men and 2 women) agreed to participate in the project. The pre-test revealed that only 1 participant had experience in personal evangelism. It also revealed that while all participants thought having a relationship with Jesus Christ was essential, none had ever led a non-believer to a relationship with Christ. I informed the group that the sessions would begin on Sunday, June 3, 2018.

¹ See appendix 2.

Week 1: The Gospel

On the first day of the project, participants were welcomed and given the evangelism survey.² Participants were asked to answer the questions truthfully and informed that no answer was incorrect. They were informed that the goal of the survey was to gain a baseline of their view on evangelism. After completing the evangelism survey, the class covered the gospel. Participants learned about original sin found in Genesis 3, as well as imputed sin. With a better understanding of sin and human depravity, participants learned the meaning of the term “gospel.”

With an understanding of original sin and the gospel, the lesson moved to the “Bible Study” section and participants were given a biblical explanation of God’s wrath as found in Romans 1:16, and God’s love as found in John 3:16 and Romans 5:8. Participants were then given an explanation of Christ’s finished work on the cross and why it matters to the gospel. The Bible study section concluded with an explanation of repentance as found in 1 Corinthians 7:9-10 and Romans 10:9.

Participants were invited to engage in a group conversation regarding the Bible study by reflecting on how the lesson relates to their view of the gospel. The lesson concluded with participants engaging in one-on-one discussions of the lesson by describing how their view of persons unaware of the gospel was affected by the lesson. Participants were asked to reflect throughout the week on what, if anything, they would do different as a result of the lesson.

Week 2: Evangelism

As participants arrived, they were invited to share what, if anything, they did differently throughout the week as a result of the lesson on the gospel. One participant shared that she was troubled because she realized how little she knew about the gospel. Another participant shared that she discussed the lesson with a close friend and found the

² See appendix 1.

conversation helpful. Participants were asked to describe views of common ideas regarding evangelism. We moved into the “Get Started” section and participants were asked to describe what the word “evangelism” meant to them and what shaped their understanding of the term.

We moved into the “Bible Study” section of the lesson with a theological definition of “evangelism” and used Matthew 28:1-10 as a biblical reference. With an understanding of evangelism, participants learned the role all believers play in sharing the gospel. In an effort to provide biblical support for the believer’s role in evangelism, an explanation of Matthew 28:19-20, Mark 16:15, and 1 Peter 3:15 was offered.

Participants were invited to engage in a group conversation regarding the Bible study by sharing how they came to hear the gospel and how the Bible study may or may not have affected their view of the believer’s role in evangelism. The lesson concluded with the participants engaging in one-on-one discussions of the lesson by describing how their view of Christian responsibility and evangelism was affected by the lesson. Participants were asked to reflect throughout the week on what, if anything, they would do differently as a result of the lesson.

Week 3: Personal Evangelism as a Way of Life

As participants arrived for week 3, they were invited to share what, if anything, they did differently throughout the week as a result of the lesson on evangelism. One participant shared that he had more of a desire to share the gospel but was somewhat afraid because he did not feel as if he had enough biblical knowledge to address rebuttals or possible questions about God. Several other participants shared that they felt the same way. One participant shared that she invited her neighbor to church as a result of the lesson on evangelism. Participants were asked to describe their thoughts regarding personal evangelism as a way of life. One participant shared that he thought it meant someone who planned their day around evangelizing or someone in full-time ministry. Most admitted that they did not have an understanding of the term.

We moved into the “get started” section and participants were asked to describe their view of personal evangelism and how that view developed. Participants were also asked if they thought every Christian should practice personal evangelism. All participants agree that every Christian should practice personal evangelism.

Next we moved into the “Bible Study” section, which began with a discussion on the importance of prayer as it relates to personal evangelism. Mark 1:35 and Ephesians 6:9 were used as biblical examples of the importance of prayer in evangelism. We discussed the importance of noticing opportunities for personal evangelism and used as biblical reference John 4:1-26, Acts 8:26-40, and Acts 17: 22-34.

Participants were invited to engage in a group conversation regarding the Bible study by sharing times when they felt as if they missed an opportunity to share the gospel. The lesson concluded with the participants role playing leading a friend to Christ. They were asked to reflect on how they would treat future opportunities for sharing the gospel.

Week 4: Sharing One’s Testimony

As participants arrived, they were invited to share what, if anything, they did different throughout the week as a result of the lesson on personal evangelism. One participant shared that she steered a lunch conversation with her co-worker into a conversation about church. She shared that she asked her co-worker if she attended church. Her co-worker informed her that she did attend church and the participant expressed that it felt easy to change a conversation into work about the gospel or church.

A brief description of the power that stories have on humans was shared and participants were asked to share their thoughts regarding personal testimony. Next, we moved into the “get started” section and willing participants were asked to share their personal testimony of coming to know Christ. We then moved into the “Bible study” section of the lesson. Biblical support for the importance of personal testimony was provided by explaining how personal testimony was used by the woman at the well in John 4:39 and Paul’s argument in 1 Corinthians 2:1-5.

In the “group conversation” section, participants were asked to reflect on John 4:39 and share to whom they thought their personal testimony might best appeal. The lesson concluded with the participants sharing one-on-one how their personal testimony might help draw someone to Christ. Participants were asked to pray for courage to share their personal testimony with someone they had not shared it with before.

Week 5: Connecting the Dots

As participants arrived, they were invited to share what, if anything, they did differently throughout the week as a result of the lesson on sharing their personal testimony. One participant shared that she had previously felt embarrassed to share her personal testimony because she believed it would cause people to look at her as a bad person. Another participant shared that he started a conversation with someone on public transit and changed the conversation into one about the gospel. He also shared that the conversation led into him discussing his personal testimony and that the person became interested in his experience with Christ. A brief discussion was had regarding the phrase “lead someone to Christ” and what participants thought the phrase meant. Next, we moved into the “get started” section and participants were asked to describe what next steps should be taken after leading someone to Christ. Most participants agreed that the person should be connected with a local church. One participant suggested that, if possible, contact information should be exchanged in an effort to follow up with the person and if needed, bring them to church.

After discussing the importance of connecting a person to a local congregation, we moved into the “Bible study” section in which we discussed the role of the Holy Spirit in sharing the gospel as found in John 16:8-11. This passage helped participants understand that the Holy Spirit is responsible for opening a person’s heart to the gospel. Next, we discussed the importance of repentance and used 2 Corinthians 7:9-10 and Romans 10:9-10 as a biblical support. The “Bible study” section concluded with a reference to Phillip’s conversation with the Ethiopian eunuch found in Acts 8:26-40.

We moved into the “group conversation” section of the lesson, which started by reading Acts 2:42-44. Participants were asked what role they believed the local congregation played after a person had heard the gospel and accepted Christ. All participants agreed that the local congregation was to disciple the new believer. In the “one-on-one” section of the lesson participants were asked to share with each other ways to lead an evangelism conversation into one that asks a person to make a commitment to Christ. The lesson concluded with participants being asked to list three people with whom they would actively seek to share the gospel.

Week 6: Handling Objections

As participants arrived for week 6, they were invited to share what, if anything, they did throughout the week as a result of the lesson on connecting the dots. One participant shared that he had been discussing the lessons with a friend and that led to him sharing his personal testimony with the friend. He was overjoyed because that friend agreed to attend church with him. Participants were asked if they have ever felt reluctant to share the gospel because of fear of rejection. Most participants admitted that they were reluctant in the past. The discussion about reluctance continued into the “get started” section of the lesson as participants were asked if they have ever experienced rejection when attempting to share the gospel. One participant shared that he attempted to steer the conversation toward Christianity with a co-worker at lunch and his co-worker refused to discuss Christianity because the co-worker viewed Christianity as an oppressive religion. Participants were also asked if they thought a non-believer’s rejection was a rejection of them or of Christ, everyone agreed that the rejection was a rejection of Christ and not them personally.

Next we moved into the “Bible study” section of the lesson and discussed spiritual blindness as found in 2 Corinthians 4:4. We also discussed Jesus’ instructions for handling rejections found in Matthew 10:5-15. In the “group conversation,” participants were asked to discuss ways to avoid arguments when rejections arise. In the

“one-on-one” section, participants spent time practicing responding to rejection. Participants were then challenged to pray for courage to respond in kindness when rejection arises. Finally, participants took the post-test, which is discussed in chapter 5.

In week 1, participants learned about the gospel by discussing God’s wrath, love, and the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. In week 2, participants discussed evangelism and the responsibilities of all believers to fulfil the Great Commission found in Matthew 28:19-20. Week 3 challenged participants to consider personal evangelism as a way of life by looking for opportunities to share the gospel like Philip did with the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts 8:26-40. Week 4 exposed participants to the importance of sharing their personal testimony and used the story of the woman at the well in John 4 as an example of how one’s personal testimony is influential. Week 5 participants learned how to connect the dots by linking new believers with a local body so that they may be discipled. Week 6 equipped participants to handle objections well by relying on the power of the Holy Spirit and responding to objection as instructed by Jesus in Matthew 10:5-15

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

This ministry project took place at Uplift in Laurel, Maryland. Uplift launched in September 2014, with 177 in attendance for its first worship service in the multi-purpose room of Deerfield Run Elementary School. The average Sunday attendance ranges between 20 and 30 persons, approximately 5 to 8 children under the age of 15 and 15 to 20 adults. Of the adults in attendance, 75 percent are single professionals, many of whom are government employees. Uplift is purposeful in its effort to reach millennials and draw them to Christ. The church does a great job marketing and creating awareness about service times and events, which has resulted in many people from the community visiting Uplift. Because Uplift continues marketing and outreach in the city of Laurel, many residents are aware of Uplift's presence. Each week, Uplift places yard signs around the city, and each month a group of lay leaders go throughout the community and leave door hangers at homes. The church runs ads on Facebook and YouTube three to four times per month. While attention has been given to marketing strategy, there was a need to equip members to fulfill the Great Commission.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The project's purpose was to train members at Uplift Church in Laurel, Maryland, for personal evangelism in an effort to help members fulfill the Great Commission. Reliance on marketing strategies for evangelism is unbiblical and negates the responsibility of believers to be witnesses of Christ death, burial, and resurrection. There was a need for members of Uplift Church to personally share the gospel. The project included a six-week curriculum on personal evangelism. The participants met once per week to discuss the curriculum and personal application at the end of each

lesson. Each lesson contained an introduction, get started, Bible study, group conversation, one-on-one, and personal application. Each personal application section contained a challenge for participants to practice personal evangelism.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

The first goal of this project was to assess the current evangelism practices among select members of Uplift Church. The second goal was to develop a six-week curriculum to educate select members on the gospel and the practice of personal evangelism. The third goal was to use the curriculum to improving select members understanding of the gospel and practice of personal evangelism. The fourth goal was to increase the number of members engaged in personal evangelism.

Goal 1

The first goal of this project was to assess the current personal evangelism practices among the members of Uplift. With Matthew 28:19-20 as a biblical support, it was important to ensure that members of Uplift Church had a healthy biblical understanding of evangelism and the practical application of personal evangelism as a way of life. To gain an understanding of the members' value for evangelism, members were invited to take part in the project and an initial assessment of participants' evangelism practice was performed. To accomplish this goal, a survey was developed that measured the participants' understanding of living in obedience to God, Christian responsibility, understanding the Great Commission, practice of personal evangelism, spirituality of millennials, and social interaction of millennials. The target for this goal was for the survey to be taken by 5 of the 20 in regular attendance at Uplift Church. This goal was successfully accomplished as 6 people completed the survey.

Goal 2

The second goal of the project was to develop a six-week curriculum on evangelism to increase participants' knowledge of personal evangelism. To accomplish

this goal, a curriculum was developed with the aim of helping participants gain a better understanding of the need for and practice of personal evangelism. The curriculum was evaluated by a panel consisting of two local pastors and two millennials. This panel utilized a rubric to evaluate the course material to ensure it was biblically faithful, sufficiently thorough, and consistent with applicable teaching methodology and ministry practice. This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criteria met or exceeded the sufficient level. This goal was successfully accomplished.

Goal 3

The third goal of this project was to equip members to personally evangelize using the developed curriculum. To accomplish this goal, a six-week curriculum was developed, which was both theologically sound and practically applicable. To test the effectiveness of the curriculum, participants retook the initial evangelism survey after the project. The results of the two surveys were compared to measure if participants' understanding of the personal evangelism increased. The targets of this goal were to observe a 20 percent increase in the participants' objective knowledge of the Great Commission and a 20 percent increase in their subjective opinion of their practice of personal evangelism.

Questions 2, 4, and 9 were used to indicate the participants' knowledge of the Great Commission. The teaching on the Great Commission to the participants made a statistically significant difference resulting in an increase in their understanding of the Great Commission ($t(9) = -0.234, p < 0.836$).

Questions 4, 5, 8, and 16 were used to indicate the participants' opinion about their practice of personal evangelism. The teaching on personal evangelism to the participants made a statistically significant difference resulting in the increase in their practice of personal evangelism ($t(9) = -0.592, p < 0.595$). This goal was successfully accomplished. This goal was successfully met.

Goal 4

The fourth goal of this project was to increase the number of members engaged in personal evangelism. To accomplish this goal, lessons 4 and 5 challenged participants to share the gospel with three people whom they had not previously shared the gospel. In class participants shared stories of their efforts to share the gospel or share their personal testimony. Four participants shared the gospel with at least three people and two participants shared the gospel with one person with whom they had not shared the gospel before. This goal was moderately accomplished.

Strengths of the Project

One of the strengths of the project was having a group of pastors and millennials evaluate the curriculum for both biblical soundness and applicability. The comments were helpful in identifying suggested improvements. Having millennials as evaluators was helpful because it aided in insuring that the curriculum addressed issues that may be of concern to the millennial generation. The second strength was using a curriculum tailored to both the theology of personal evangelism and its practical application. Participants benefited from the theological training because it strengthened their biblical understanding. The third strength was the group discussion and one-on-one practical application sections of each lesson helped make the curriculum applicable for the participants. Challenging participants weekly to apply what they had learned from the lesson helped reinforce the tenets of each lesson. The fourth and final strength of the project was the class size. Having six participants allowed for group bonding and encouraged participants to engage. Participants were able to freely express their personal testimony as well as describe their experiences sharing the gospel.

Weaknesses of the Project

One weakness of the project was that questions were asked about millennials in the survey but there was no lesson tailored to millennial spirituality. It would have been helpful if two or three lessons added a component on millennials, which would have

helped participants gain a better understanding of how to share the gospel with millennials. The second weakness was the scheduled meeting time. Since the sessions began before the start of the Sunday morning worship service, there was limited time for one-on-one interaction. Participants may have benefited more from having time to practice the applications of each lesson. The third weakness of the project was post-project follow-up. Other than the post-test, there was no follow-up to see if participants made a lifestyle change to add personal evangelism as part of their lifestyles. Having a two- or three-month post-project assessment would have been helpful.

What I Would Do Differently

The things I would do differently are based on the areas of weakness. The first thing I would do differently would be to include more in the curriculum on millennial spirituality. Given that Uplift's membership is over 50 percent millennials, I would want to make sure the curriculum was relevant to millennials. At the outset I did not address millennials specifically because I felt that the focus on personal evangelism would apply to every generation. Given that I specifically asked questions about millennials on the survey the pre- and post-survey analysis would have reflected the impact of the curriculum on the participants.

The second thing I would do differently is change the meeting time. Originally the time was set for Sunday mornings before service, assuming that more members would participate; however, that did not allow time for sufficient group discussion and one-on-one interaction. It would have been better to schedule the sessions for after service or a day other than Sunday.

The third thing I would do differently is offer a third survey, two to three months post-project. While there was a post-survey during the final session, the results only reflected the participants immediate reflection after the session. Allowing for two or three months to elapse after the project and then offering a survey may have reflected

whether the participants had a life change causing them to practice personal evangelism post project.

Theological Reflections

Upon reflection of this project, I am convinced that there is a great need to train believers to practice personal evangelism. While marketing and event-based forms of outreach are helpful, Matthew 28:19-20 commands believers to go and make disciples. This command cannot be outsourced to a marketing agency. Chapter 2 of this project required that I offer both biblical and theological support for my assertion. To provide such support, I researched Matthew 28:19-10, Luke 24:44-49, John 4:28-30; 39-42, and Acts 1:8.

Matthew 28:19-20 shows that the commission to reach the world was something in which each disciple was to take part; they had to become personally responsible for sharing the gospel. As shared in chapter 2, one of the challenges of Christianity in America is the emphasis on the word “go” make disciples—too often believers prioritize going to a foreign country to share the gospel and miss opportunities to go make disciples in their community.

Luke 24:44-49 shows the importance of personal evangelism. While Matthew 28:19-20 commands believers to make disciples, Luke shows the importance of being witnesses of Christ. Researching this passage was helpful because it reminded me of the need to take witnessing personal because it is my responsibility as a believer. Like the disciples once were assured of Christ resurrection, all believers are to be witnesses of that resurrection.

John 4:28-30; 39-42 served as a biblical example of personal evangelism at work. This text pulled all the important elements from other texts referenced. The woman practiced going as she went to her own community; she did not need to go to a foreign country. The woman was a witness as she shared how her life had been impacted by Christ.

The woman practiced personal evangelism because she did not simply share how her life had been change—she invited others to come and see for themselves.

Acts 1:8 reminds believers of what is required to be effective at witnessing. This text was helpful because it reminded me that strategy and knowledge alone were not enough; the Holy Spirit is required if witnessing is to be life changing. As I researched the text I was personally convicted because at times I have placed more emphasis on strategy and knowledge and little emphasis on the Holy Spirit.

Personal Reflections

I focused this project on personal evangelism because personal evangelism can aid in drawing more people to Christ and to local churches. If millennials were to practice personal evangelism, America could experience a new great awakening. Given that the millennial generation is now the largest generation in America's history, sparking a passion for personal evangelism amongst them would be helpful. This is also important because I am a millennial and I have a desire to see more of my generation drawn to Christ and to the local church.

Having served as a youth and young adult pastor, and now as a church planter with a small congregation, this project has given me a reason to believe that church growth is still possible in a postmodern era if we place emphasis on personal evangelism. This project also reminded me of the need to rely on the power of the Holy Spirit to soften hearts as while actively going and making disciples.

Conclusion

For churches to see effective growth, personal evangelism must be practiced by believers. While effective marketing campaigns may help a community become more aware of a church, the biblical mandate is for believers to share the gospel. The millennial generation is the largest living generation in America's history, yet fewer of that generation claim a relationship with Jesus when compared with previous generations.

This comparison highlights the great need for more personal evangelism. This project was completed to help the members of Uplift Church make personal evangelism a part of their daily lives. The efforts of this project will not end with the post-test but will continue for years to come as the curriculum is used regularly to train members to make personal evangelism a part of their lives.

APPENDIX 1

EVANGELISM SURVEY

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to assess your current understanding of personal evangelism. This research is being conducted by Marquez Ball for the purpose of collecting data for a dissertation project. In this research, you will answer questions before the project and you will answer the same questions at the conclusion of the project. 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 response in this research.

Date: _____

Name (or 4 digit code): _____

Directions: Please mark the appropriate answer using the following scale:

- | | |
|-------------------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Agree Somewhat |
| Disagree | Agree |
| Disagree Somewhat | Strongly Agree |

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. My commitment to Jesus Christ is important in my life.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. It is only the responsibility of the pastor to tell people about Jesus.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Millennials (18-35-year olds) are more technologically savvy than previous generations.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Christians should ask others about their relationship with God.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I purposefully share my faith with others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. I live in obedience to the will of God.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Millennials are NOT very spiritual.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. My personal testimony can help draw others to Christ.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Jesus is the only way to salvation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Millennials seek God less than previous generations.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Christians should attend church regularly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Millennials get most of their news via the Internet.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. My Christian faith is important in my daily life.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Millennials are more willing to share their personal life via social media than previous generations.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. Studying the Bible is important for Christian growth.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. I am hesitant to share my testimony with others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. If I understood something to be the will of God for me I would strive to do it.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. Millennials are more likely to commit to a church than previous generations.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

APPENDIX 2
PERSONAL EVANGELISM CURRICULUM
EVALUATION

The following evaluation was sent to an expert panel consisting of two millennials (ages 18-35) and two local church pastors. This panel evaluated the course material to ensure it is biblically faithful, sufficiently thorough, and practically applicable.

Name of evaluator: _____

Date: _____

Personal Evangelism Curriculum Evaluation					
1 = insufficient; 2 = requires attention; 3 = sufficient; 4 = exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Biblical Faithfulness					
The content of the curriculum is hermeneutically sound. All Scripture is properly interpreted, explained, and applied.					
The content of the curriculum is theologically sound.					
Scope					
The content of the curriculum sufficiently covers each issue it is designed to address.					
The curriculum sufficiently covers the basics of personal evangelism.					
Methodology					
The curriculum sufficiently addresses personal evangelism.					
The curriculum makes use of various learning approaches such as lecture, discussion, role play, and homework.					
Practicality					
The curriculum includes opportunities to practice personal evangelism.					
At the end of the course, participants will be able to practice personal evangelism in their daily lives.					

APPENDIX 3
CLASS CURRICULUM

Lesson 1: The Gospel

I. Introduction

- a. Common ideas regarding the Gospel

II. Get Started

- a. What does the word “Gospel” mean to you?
- b. What helped shape your understanding of the term “Gospel”?

III. Bible Study

- a. Original Sin
 - i. Adam’s disobedience, Gen. 3:1-15
 - ii. All sinned in Adam, Rom. 5:12-19
- b. Definition: “The Gospel is a message about how we have been rescued from peril. The very word gospel has as its background a news report about some life-altering event that has already happened.”¹
 - i. God’s wrath, Rom. 1:16-18
 - ii. God’s Love, John 3:16, Rom. 5:8
 - iii. Jesus bore our sins, 1 Pet. 2:24

IV. Group Conversation

- a. Has the scriptural study impacted your understanding of the Gospel if so how?

¹ Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 29.

V. One on One

- a. How does your view of the Gospel impact your view of persons who have never heard the Gospel?

VI. Personal Application

- a. What will you do different this week based on your understanding of the Gospel?

Lesson 2: Evangelism

I. Introduction

- a. What if anything did you do last week as a result of the lesson on the Gospel?
- b. Common ideas regarding Evangelism

II. Get Started

- a. What does the word “Evangelism” mean to you?
- b. What helped shape your understanding of the term “Evangelism”?

III. Bible Study

- a. Definition: In the Septuagint the word *evangelizo* is generally used to proclaim news of something good that has happened to rescue people from destruction. In the New Testament the word, *evangelion* is used to describe good news.
 - i. Women at the tomb, Matt. 28:1-10
- b. We too are to share the Gospel as evangelist
 - i. Matt. 28:19-20
 - ii. Mark 16:15
 - iii. 1 Peter 3:15

IV. Group Conversation

- a. How did you first hear the Gospel?
- b. Who’s responsibility is it to share the Gospel?

V. One on One

- a. How does your understanding of evangelism impact your understanding of Christian responsibility?

VI. Personal Application

- a. What will you do differently this week based on your understanding of evangelism?

Lesson 3: Personal Evangelism as a Way of Life

I. Introduction

- a. What if anything did you do different this past week as a result of the lesson on evangelism?
- b. When you hear the words, “personal evangelism as a way of life” what do you think?

II. Get Started

- a. What helped shape your view of personal evangelism?
- b. Do you believe that personal evangelism should be practiced by every Christian?

III. Bible Study

- a. The importance of prayer
 - i. Mark 1:35
 - ii. Eph. 6:19
- b. Noticing opportunities
 - i. John 4:1-26
 - ii. Acts 8:26-40
 - iii. Acts 17:22-34

IV. Group Conversation

- a. Has the opportunity to share the Gospel ever arisen for you to share the Gospel but you did not?

V. One on One

- a. Role play leading a conversation with a friend into sharing the Gospel

VI. Personal Application

- a. If presented with the opportunity to share the Gospel this week, how will you respond?

Lesson 4: Sharing Your Testimony

I. Introduction

- a. What if anything did you do this past week as a result of the lesson on personal evangelism?
- b. The power of personal stories
- c. When you hear the term personal testimony what comes to mind?

II. Get Started

- a. For those who feel comfortable sharing, how did you come to know Christ?
- b. The importance of sharing your personal testimony

III. Bible Study

- a. Woman at the well, John 4:39
- b. Paul in Philippi, 1 Cor. 2:1-5

IV. Group Conversation

- a. Considering the story of the woman at the well in John 4:39 to whom might your testimony appeal most and why?

V. One on One

- a. Describe how sharing your personal testimony with someone might help them come to know Christ.

VI. Personal Application

- a. Pray for the courage to share your personal testimony of salvation with someone you've never shared it with before.

Lesson 5: Connecting the Dots

I. Introduction

- a. Have you ever found yourself having a conversation with someone that needed salvation but were afraid to lead them to Christ if so why?
- b. When you hear the words “lead someone to Christ” what comes to mind?

II. Get Started

- a. After sharing the Gospel with someone and leading them to Christ is there more to do?

III. Bible Study

- a. Holy Spirit: John 16:8-11
- b. Repentance: 2 Cor. 7:9-10, Romans 10:9-10
- c. Example Acts 8:26-40

IV. Group Conversation

- a. Acts 2:42-44 what role does the local congregation play after a person has heard the Gospel and accepted salvation?

V. One on One

- a. What are some ways to ask a person to make a commitment to Christ?

VI. Personal Application

- a. List three people that you will pray for and make a point to share the Gospel with.

Lesson 6: Handling Objections

I. Introduction

- a. Do you think some people choose not to share the Gospel because of the possibility of rejection if so why?

II. Getting Started

- a. Have you ever attempted to share the Gospel with someone who rejected it?
- b. If someone rejects your offer of the Gospel is it a rejection of you?

III. Bible Study

- a. 2 Cor. 4:4
- b. Matt. 10:5-15

IV. Group Conversation

- a. What are some ways to avoid arguments when objections arise?

V. Personal Application

- a. Pray for the courage to respond in kindness when objects arise.

Personal Evangelism

How to Use This Guide

Group Size

The Personal Evangelism sessions are best experienced in a group setting such as Bible study, Sunday school class or small group. To ensure everyone has enough time to participate in group discussions it is recommended to limit the group size to no more than ten. If the group is larger than ten it is recommended that the group be broken into small groups.

Timing

Each session is timed for one hour. Time notations – for example (10 minutes)—indicate that suggested times for each activity or discussion. Adhering to suggested times will aid you in completing each session in one hour.

Day One Welcome

Take a few minutes and introduce yourself and the goal of the group. It is important to set a tone of mutual respect. Developing authentic community is a journey involving sharing our stories with each other and growing together. Initially participants may be reluctant to engage in discussion but as you share your personal story you provide space for others to becoming more open.

Invite all participants to introduce themselves. Participants should share their names, approximate length of time in church and one interesting fact about themselves.

Set group expectations:

1. Participants must arrive on time and be prepared to discuss the lesson.
2. Must bring a Bible or have a Bible app.

Lesson 1: The Gospel

Meet and Greet

For the first 5 minutes, have the participants introduce themselves. Ask them to share one thing they hope to get out of the coming weeks, or simply why they decided to take part in the study.

Introduction (5 Minutes)

The goal in this section is to “set up” the study and discuss the group’s purpose. Use the following to help guide your discussion:

- The goal of this group is to help believers practice personal evangelism in their daily lives.
- This first lesson is to help set the stage for the next few weeks together, help us all get to know each other and the get an overview of what the “gospel” is.

Get Started (10 Minutes)

Leader asks the group the follow questions and allow time for discussion:

Question: What does the word gospel mean to you?

Question: What helped shape your understanding of the term gospel

NOTES

Bible Study (20 Minutes)

Original Sin

Original Sin can be described as the state of sinful captivity impacting humanity sin the original sin of Adam in Genesis. **Read** Gen. 3:1-15.

Here we see sin enter into the story of humanity and its impact on Adam and Eve and their descendants.

The Apostle Paul makes reference to it in Romans 5:12.

“ Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned”

The Gospel

In the Gospel we find the solution to humanities sin problem.

The Gospel can be described as a breaking news story about how we have been rescued from sin.

This breaking news story can be described in three segments: (read each passage)

1. God's wrath, Rom. 1:16-18
2. God's love, John 3:16; Rom. 5:8
3. Jesus bearing our sin, 1 Peter 2:24

Group Conversation (10 Minutes)

Invite each participant to answer.

Question: Has the scriptural study impacted your understanding of the Gospel if so how?

One on One (5 Minutes)

All participants to partner up and serve as a partner if needed.

Question: How does your view of the Gospel impact your view of persons who have never heard the Gospel?

Personal Application

Invite participants to reflect on this question throughout the week.

Question: What will you do different this week based on your understanding of the Gospel?

Closing Prayer

Lesson 2: Evangelism

Introduction (5 Minutes)

As participants arrive allow time for discussion on the first question, more are provided if time allows.

Question: What if anything did you do last week as a result of the lesson on the Gospel?

Question: What are some common ideas regarding evangelism?

Get Started (10 Minutes)

Leader asks the group the follow questions and allow time for discussion:

Question: What does the word evangelism mean to you?

Question: What helped shape your understanding of the term “Evangelism”?

Bible Study (20 Minutes)

Evangelism

In the Septuagint the word *evangelizo* is generally used to proclaim news of something good that has happened to rescue people from destruction. In the New Testament the word, *evangelion* is used to describe good news. **Read** Matt. 28:1-10.

Here we see the women at the tomb expecting to find the body of Christ still in the tomb. The angel of the Lord shared with them the good news that Jesus had risen and

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they were instructed to tell that good news to the disciples.

Who Should Evangelize?

Sharing the good news about Jesus was not limited to the angel's instruction to the women at the tomb.

Read: Matt. 28:19-20

Jesus commissioned all disciples go to a make disciples and part of disciples making involves telling the story of Jesus' death, burial and the good news of his resurrection.

Read: Mark 16:15

Jesus commands His followers to go into the world and proclaim the good news.

Read: 1 Peter 3:15

As believers we are responsible for sharing the gospel as our reason for hope.

Group Conversation (10 Minutes)

Invite each participant to answer.

Question: How did you first hear the gospel (church, family, friend etc.)?

Question: Who's responsibility is it to share the gospel?

One on One (5 Minutes)

All participants to partner up and serve as a partner if needed.

Question: How does your understanding of evangelism impact your understanding of Christian responsibility?

Personal Application

Invite participants to reflect on this question throughout the week.

Question: What will you do differently this week based on your understanding of evangelism?

Closing Prayer

Lesson 3: Personal Evangelism as A Way of Life

Introduction (5 Minutes)

As participants arrive allow time for discussion on the first question, more are provided if time allows.

Question: What if anything did you do last week as a result of the lesson on evangelism?

Question: When you hear the words, “personal evangelism as a way of life” what do you think?

Get Started (10 Minutes)

Leader asks the group the follow questions and allow time for discussion:

Question: What helped shape your understanding of the term “Personal Evangelism”?

Question: Do you believe that personal evangelism should be practiced by every Christian?

Bible Study (20 Minutes)

Evangelism

In the Septuagint the word *evangelizo* is generally used to proclaim news of something good that has happened to rescue people from destruction. In the New Testament the word, *evangelion* is used to describe good news. **Read** Matt. 28:1-10.

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Jesus commands His followers to go into the world and proclaim the good news.

Read: 1 Peter 3:15

As believers we are responsible for sharing the gospel as our reason for hope.

Group Conversation (10 Minutes)

Invite each participant to answer.

Question: Has the opportunity to share the Gospel ever arisen for you to share the Gospel but you did not?

One on One (5 Minutes)

All participants to partner up and serve as a partner if needed.

Role Play: Role play leading a conversation with a friend into sharing the Gospel

Personal Application

Invite participants to reflect on this question throughout the week.

Question: If presented with the opportunity to share the Gospel this week, how will you respond?

Closing Prayer

Lesson 4: Sharing Your Testimony

Introduction (5 Minutes)

As participants arrive allow time for discussion on the first question, more are provided if time allows.

Question: What if anything did you do last week as a result of the lesson on personal evangelism?

Question: Do you believe that personal stories are powerful if so why?

Question: When you hear the words, “personal testimony” what do you think?

Get Started (10 Minutes)

Leader asks the group the follow questions and allow time for discussion:

Question: For those who feel comfortable sharing, how did you come to know Christ?

Personal stories are powerful in news, movies and in sharing evangelism. Our willingness to open up about our lives and what Christ means for us, helps get past natural human defenses.

Bible Study (20 Minutes)

Last session we took a look at John 4 and we saw Jesus responding to an opportunity to share the gospel. This text is also a great example of the power of personal testimony.

Read: John 4:39

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The actions of the Samaritan woman in John 4 demonstrate the power of personal testimony. Upon returning to her community and telling them about Jesus she did not try to simply convince them intellectually, she stated, “He told me all the things that I have done”. To be an effective witness, one must be able to share what has happened personally as a result of believing the gospel.

Read: 1 Cor. 2:1-5

Paul’s effectiveness was not on the part of his public speaking but his personal witness and influence. The postmodern person is searching for a truth that is not only real but also personal and that truth is only found in Jesus Christ. The personal testimony of a believer is a demonstration that the gospel is effective.

Group Conversation (10 Minutes)

Invite each participant to answer.

Question: Considering the story of the woman at the well in John 4:39 to whom might your testimony appeal most and why?

One on One (5 Minutes)

All participants to partner up and serve as a partner if needed.

Dialogue: Describe how sharing your personal testimony with someone might help them come to know Christ.

Personal Application

Invite participants to reflect on this question throughout the week.

Prayer: Each day over the next week pray for the courage to share your personal testimony of salvation with someone you've never shared it with before.

Closing Prayer

Lesson 5: Connecting the Dots

Introduction (5 Minutes)

As participants arrive allow time for discussion on the first question, more are provided if time allows.

Question: Have you ever found yourself having a conversation with someone that needed salvation but were afraid to lead them to Christ if so why?

Question: Do you believe that personal stories are powerful if so why?

Question: When you hear the words, "lead someone to Christ" what comes to mind?

Get Started (10 Minutes)

Leader asks the group the follow questions and allow time for discussion:

Question: After sharing the Gospel with someone and leading them to Christ is there more to do?

Bible Study (20 Minutes)

The Role of the Holy Spirit

Some Christians are reluctant to share the gospel with others for fear of rejection or not feeling sufficiently equipped to respond to a possible rebuttal. We must remember that it is our responsibility to share the gospel not change minds and hearts to hear and receive it.

Read: John 16:8-11

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The Holy Spirit has the responsibility of changing minds and hearts.

The Role of Repentance

Once the gospel has been shared and the Holy Spirit has change a person's mind a heart, there is a need to repent of sins and rely on Christ.

Read: 2 Cor. 7:9-10; Rom. 10:9-10

The Apostle Paul sheds light on the role of godly grief when confronted by ones on sinfulness. He also shows how one might place their hope in Christ as Lord.

Read: Acts 8:26-40

In Acts we see a practical example of Philip responding to the opportunity to share the gospel and the Ethiopian's response to hearing the gospel and desiring baptism.

Group Conversation (10 Minutes)

Invite each participant to answer.

Question: Looking at Acts 2:42-44 what role does the local congregation play after a person has heard the Gospel and accepted salvation?

One on One (5 Minutes)

All participants to partner up and serve as a partner if needed.

Question: What are some ways to ask a person to make a commitment to Christ?

Personal Application

Invite participants to reflect on this question throughout the week.

Take Action: List three people that you will pray for and make a point to share the Gospel with.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Closing Prayer

Lesson 6: Handling Objection

Introduction (5 Minutes)

As participants arrive allow time for discussion on the first question, more are provided if time allows.

Question: you think some people choose not to share the Gospel because of the possibility of rejection if so why?

Get Started (10 Minutes)

Leader asks the group the following questions and allow time for discussion:

Question: Have you ever attempted to share the Gospel with someone who rejected it?

Question: If someone rejects your offer of the Gospel is it a rejection of you?

Bible Study (20 Minutes)

Whenever sharing the gospel it's important to know that objections may arise, but we must remember that the Holy Spirit works on a person's mind and heart, we are responsible for simply sharing the gospel as Christ witness.

Read: 2. Cor. 4:4

Because salvation is a spiritual work, the devil tries to raise a defense. Knowing this helps us understand that the person may raise objections because they have been spiritually blinded.

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Jesus gives instructions for disciples to handle objection to the gospel.

Read: Matt. 10:5-15

Group Conversation (10 Minutes)

Invite each participant to answer.

Question: What are some ways to avoid arguments when objections arise?

One on One (5 Minutes)

All participants to partner up and serve as a partner if needed.

Question: What are some ways to ask a person to make a commitment to Christ?

Personal Application

Invite participants to reflect on this question throughout the week.

Reflection: This week Pray for the courage to respond in kindness when objects arise.

Closing Prayer

APPENDIX 4
RESULTS OF MEASUREMENT TOOLS

In this appendix, each statement from the pre-test and post-test is analyzed.

Statement 1: My commitment to Jesus Christ is important in my life.

In the pre-test, 83 percent of participants strongly agreed with this statement and 17 percent agreed. In the post-test, 83 percent of participants strongly agreed and 17 percent agreed. Given that most of the participants began the project with a belief that their commitment to Christ was important in their lives, the curriculum's impact was null.

Statement 2: It is only the responsibility of the pastor to tell people about Jesus.

In the pre-test, 17 percent of participants somewhat agreed, 67 percent disagreed, and 17 percent strongly disagreed. In the post-test, 33 percent disagreed and 67 percent strongly disagreed. The curriculum had a substantial impact on the participants' perspective of Christian responsibility. The curriculum helped the participants understand that it is the responsibility of all believers to share the gospel.

Statement 3: Millennials (18-35-year olds) are more technologically savvy than previous generations.

In the pre-test, 50 percent of participants strongly agreed and 50 percent agreed. In the post-test, 67 percent of participants strongly agreed and 33 percent agreed. Given that no particular lesson addressed millennials specifically, it would appear that group dynamics played a part in causing some participants to move from agree to strongly agree regarding millennials and technology. Millennials' use of cell phones during the lesson may have contributed to the overall increase.

Statement 4: Christians should ask others about their relationship with God.

In the pre-test, 67 percent of participants agreed, 17 percent somewhat agreed, and 17 percent disagreed that Christians should ask others about their relationship with God. In the post-test, 17 percent of participants strongly agreed, 83 percent agreed, and 17 percent somewhat agreed that Christians should openly ask others about their relationship with God. Prior to the start of the project, there was a clear difference of opinion amongst participants regarding asking non-believers about their relationship with God. The lessons on sharing the gospel and discussions on sin impacted the participants overall perspective on questioning others' relationship with God. There was a positive increase toward participants' willingness to engage others regarding their relationship with God.

Statement 5: I purposefully share my faith with others.

In the pre-test, 50 percent of participants agreed, 17 percent somewhat agreed, and 33 percent somewhat disagreed. In the post-test, 17 percent of participants strongly agreed, 50 percent agreed, and 33 percent somewhat agreed. Prior to the start of the project, three of the six participants purposefully shared their faith with others and the remainder either somewhat agreed or somewhat disagreed. During the project, many participants voiced their apprehension to sharing the gospel with others. The lesson on personal evangelism and the one-on-one activities may have contributed to those who disagreed with sharing their faith, moving to somewhat agree. While the aim of the project was for more members to actively share their faith, the progress suggests that there is momentum toward sharing the gospel.

Statement 6: I live in obedience to the will of God.

In the pre-test, 17 percent of participants agreed and 83 percent somewhat agreed that they live in obedience to the will of God. In the post-test, 100 percent somewhat agreed that they live in obedience to the will of God. It appears that those who initially believed that they lived in obedience to the will of God may have been convicted

with regard to personal evangelism. The curriculum addressed Christian responsibility and part of that responsibility was sharing the gospel with others. While only one participant initially agreed that he or she lived in obedience to the will of God, after the project that participant believed that he or she somewhat lived in obedience.

Statement 7: Millennials are NOT very spiritual.

In the pre-test, 17 percent of participants agreed, 50 percent somewhat agreed, 17 percent somewhat disagreed, and 17 percent strongly disagreed that millennials are not very spiritual. In the post-test, 33 percent of participants somewhat agreed, 33 percent somewhat disagreed, and 17 percent disagreed that millennials are not very spiritual. While there was not a particular lesson geared toward millennials, it would appear that group dynamics played a part in shaping participants perspective of millennials post-project.

Statement 8: My personal testimony can help draw others to Christ.

In the pre-test, 67 percent of participant agreed and 33 percent somewhat agreed that their personal testimony could help draw others to Christ. In the post-test, 50 percent of participants strongly agreed and 50 percent agreed that their personal testimony could help draw others to Christ. Prior to the project, most participants believed that their personally testimony could draw others to Christ, but they did not have strong convictions regarding their personal testimony. After the lesson on the power of personal testimony, participants may have gained a new appreciation for the importance of their testimony and how it can aid in sharing the gospel. The new-found appreciation may have resulted in 50 percent of participants strongly agreeing that their personal testimony can help draw others to Christ.

Statement 9: Jesus is the only way to salvation

In the pre-test, 83 percent of participants agreed and 17 In the post-test, disagreed that Jesus is the only way to salvation. In the post-test, 33 percent strongly agreed, 33 percent agreed, and 17 percent somewhat agreed. Prior to the project most

participants believed that Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation and one participant disagreed. The lesson on the gospel and evangelism may have contributed to participants gaining more assurance and conviction regarding Jesus as the only way to salvation. Post-project there was an evident shift toward participants holding a more gospel-centered view of Jesus and the way of salvation.

Statement 10: Millennials seek God less than previous generations

In the pre-test, 50 percent of participants agreed, 17 percent somewhat agreed, 17 percent somewhat disagreed, and 17 percent disagreed that millennials seek God less than previous generations. In the post-test, 17 percent of participants agreed, 33 percent somewhat agreed, and 17 percent somewhat disagreed. While there was no particular lesson on millennials' perspective on God, it would appear that group dynamics played a part in shaping participants' perspective of millennials post-project. Prior to the start of the project, most participants agreed that millennials sought God less than previous generations. Post-project responses show that participants had a change of perspective and a majority of participants somewhat agreed that millennials seek God less than previous generations.

Statement 11: Christians should attend church regularly.

In the pre-test, 17 percent of participants strongly agreed, 50 percent agreed, 17 percent somewhat agreed, and 17 percent somewhat disagreed. In the post-test, 50 percent of participants strongly agreed, 33 percent agreed, and 17 percent somewhat agreed that Christians should attend church regularly. It appears that those who held a high view of regular church attendance did not change their opinion between the pre-test and post-test. Those who held a moderate to low view of church attendance changed their opinion resulting in a shift toward a higher view of church attendance. The lesson on connecting the dots may have helped those with a moderate to low view of church attendance gain more of an appreciation for attending church.

Statement 12: Millennials get most of their news via the internet.

In the pre-test, 50 percent of participants strongly agreed and 50 percent agreed that millennials get most of their news via the internet. In the post-test, 33 percent of participants strongly agreed and 67 percent agreed that millennials get most of their news via the internet. While there was no particular lesson on millennials and their reliance on the internet for news, it would appear that group discussions during the lessons played a part in shaping participants perspective of how millennials receive news causing some participants option to shift from strongly agree to agree.

Statement 13: My Christian faith is important in my daily life.

In the pre-test, 33 percent of participants strongly agreed, 50 percent agreed, and 17 percent somewhat agreed that their Christian faith was important in their daily lives. In the post-test, 50 percent strongly agreed, 33 percent agreed, and 17 percent somewhat agreed. Prior to the start of the project, most participants held a high view of their Christian faith. There was a change of opinion between the pre-test and post-test as a participant who initially agreed moved to strongly agree. The remainder of participants showed no change of option between pre-test and post-test.

Statement 14: Millennials are more willing to share their personal life via social media than previous generations.

In the pre-test, 50 percent of participants strongly agreed and 50 percent of participants agreed that millennials were more willing than previous generations to share their personal life via social media. In the post-test, 33 percent of participants strongly agreed and 67 percent agreed that millennials were more willing than previous generations to share their personal life via social media. While there was no particular lesson on millennials and their willingness to share their personal life via social media, it would appear that group discussions during the lessons played a part in shaping participants' perspective of how millennials interacted on social media causing some participants option to shift from strongly agree to agree. Prior to the start of the project, 50 percent of

participants strongly agreed that millennials were more willing to share personal information via social media than previous generations and 50 percent agreed. Post-test results showed that a majority, 67 percent of participants, agreed that millennials were more willing to share personal information via social media than previous generations.

Statement 15: Studying the Bible is important for Christian growth.

In the pre-test, 17 percent of participants strongly agreed, 50 percent agreed, and 33 percent somewhat agreed that studying the Bible is important for Christian growth. In the post-test, 33 percent of participants strongly agreed, 50 percent agreed, and 17 percent somewhat agreed that studying the Bible is important for Christian growth. Prior to the start of the project, most participants agreed that studying the Bible was important for Christian growth. There was a difference of opinion between pre-test and post-test. After the project there was a shift of opinion as some participants who somewhat agreed changed their opinion to agree and some participants who agreed changed to strongly agree. Participation in the project for six weeks with consistent Bible study overall may have played a part in changing participants' opinions of the importance of Bible study for growth.

Statement 16: I am hesitant to share my testimony with others.

In the pre-test, 33 percent of participants agreed, 17 percent somewhat agreed, 17 percent somewhat disagreed, and 33 percent disagreed that they were hesitant to share their personal testimony with others. In the post-test, 33 percent somewhat agreed, 50 percent disagreed, and 17 percent strongly disagreed. Responses suggest that prior to the project participants were split with 50 percent either agreeing or somewhat agreeing and 50 percent somewhat disagreeing or disagreeing. There was a change of opinion between pre-test and post-test. After the project, most participants disagreed, which suggests that the lessons on evangelism and sharing one's personal testimony helped boost participants confidence in sharing their personal testimony.

Statement 17: If I understood something to be the will of God for me I would strive to do it.

In the pre-test, 100 percent of participants agreed that if they understood something to be the will of God for their lives, they would strive to do it. In the post-test, 100 percent of participants agreed that if they understood something to be the will of God for their lives, they would strive to do it. There was no change of opinion between pre-test and post-test.

Statement 18: Millennials are more likely to commit to a church than previous generations

In the pre-test, 17 percent of participants somewhat agreed, 17 percent somewhat disagreed, and 67 percent disagreed that millennials are more likely to commit to a church than previous generations. In the post-test, 17 percent of participants somewhat disagreed and 83 percent of participants disagreed. While there was no particular lesson on millennials and their willingness to commit to church, it would appear that group discussions during the lessons played a part in shaping participants' perspective of how millennials commit to church, causing a majority of participants to disagree.

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ABSTRACT

TRAINING MEMBERS AT UPLIFT CHURCH IN LAUREL, MARYLAND FOR PERSONAL EVANGELISM

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2019
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This project sought to equip members of Uplift Church in Laurel, Maryland, to practice personal evangelism in their daily lives. Chapter 1 presents the history and ministry context of Uplift and the goals of this project. Chapter 2 provides exegesis of two passages of Scripture (Matt 28:19; John 4:1-45) to show that every Christian has a responsibility to share the gospel message and their personal salvation story serves as a tool for evangelism. Chapter 3 addresses the cultural differences between the twentieth and twenty first century as it relates to personal evangelism. Chapter 4 describes the project itself, recounting the content and teaching methodology of the specific course curriculum. Chapter 5 evaluates the efficacy of the project based on completion of the specified goals. Ultimately, this project sought to equip Christians with the confidence and competency to evangelize in their daily lives.

VITA

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