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A BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL, AND MISSIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS  
OF THE HOMOGENEOUS UNIT PRINCIPLE AND  
ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR EVANGELISM AND  
CHURCH GROWTH IN NORTH AMERICA

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Doctor of Ministry

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by  
Todd Daniel Kube

May 2013

**APPROVAL SHEET**

A BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL, AND MISSIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS  
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To Traci Lynn,

עֵזֶד כְּנֶגְדוֹ

together as one in spirit and love,

living life and serving God

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A.G.A.P.E.	Asking God and Approaching People, Evangelistically
CGM	Church Growth Movement
LTEG	Lausanne Theology and Education Group
HCSB	Holman Christian Standard Bible
HU	Homogeneous Unit
HUC	Homogeneous Church
HUP	Homogeneous Unit Principle
NA27	Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament
NASB	New American Standard Bible, 1995

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## PREFACE

To God be the glory. I thank God for His working in me and all around me. It is a life-changing event when I experience God at work in my life. I thank God for my Christian parents. I thank God for calling me into the ministry as a pastor and allowing me work with His church. People's support, love, and prayers over the years have been critical in the demanding work of ministry.

I thank God for experiencing Him through the illumination of my mind by His Holy Spirit in revelation and wisdom. In general, I thank God for Southern Seminary for providing the intellectual and spiritual renewal which pastors need. I thank God for allowing me to hear His guidance when Chuck Lawless first suggested my doing a thesis on the homogeneous unit principle. Then, when Chuck left, I thank God for Jeff Walters, who helped me to pick up the ball and run with it until the goal-line was reached.

Above all, I thank God for giving me my "help-meet," Traci, who was uniquely suitable for me. With her love, support, and encouragement, she helped me to persevere in accomplishing this task. As a devoted wife and mother of our children – Amy Michelle ("Beloved, who is like the Lord?") and Gabrielle Amanda ("God is my strength and is worthy of love!") – she is truly God's best for me.

Todd D. Kube

Mechanicsville, Virginia

May 2013

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

My ministry has been impacted by a variety of factors, but none more than the Church Growth Movement (CGM) in recent years.<sup>1</sup> The founder of the CGM was a missionary to India, Donald A. McGavran.<sup>2</sup> Of McGavran's many contributions to missiological thought, one contribution has been the most controversial. John Wimber writes in the foreword to an important church growth book, "By far the most criticized and misunderstood of all church growth principles is the homogeneous unit principle (HUP)."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The CGM, partially defined, is a "discipline which investigates the nature, expansion, planting, multiplication, function, and health of Christian churches as they related to the effective implementation of God's commission to 'make disciples of all peoples' (Matt. 28:19-20)." A. Scott Moreau, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), s.v. "Church Growth Movement," by C. Peter Wagner. This partial definition is from the bylaws of the North American Society for Church Growth.

<sup>2</sup>"McGavran was the person who used the label 'church growth' to describe the missiological paradigm he was developing. The accepted date for the beginning of the Church Growth Movement is 1955, the year of the publication of [his book] *The Bridges of God*." Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>C. Peter Wagner, *Church Growth & The Whole Gospel: A Biblical Mandate* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1998), foreword. The body of literature concerning the HUP supports Wimber's assertion. Cf. Thom S. Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth: History, Theology, and Principles* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 254.

At this time, the homogeneous unit principle can best be understood as a "serious attempt to respect the dignity of individuals and the social units to which they belong, and to encourage their decisions for Christ to be religious decisions rather than social decisions." Moreau, *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, s.v. "Homogeneous Unit Principle" by C. Peter Wagner. More information will follow in chap. 2 when the HUP is further explained.

Chap. 4 will examine survey results which will include whether or not and to what extent pastors are aware of the CGM as a discipline of study and more specifically, what knowledge and application of the homogeneous unit principle do they currently have and use.

Criticism and misunderstanding have led to a lack of conversation concerning the HUP as a powerful tool in both the numerical and the spiritual growth of the church. Kent R. Hunter writes, “It used to be that church growth people talked a lot about the homogeneous unit principle. However, now those words are rarely used.”<sup>4</sup> This ministry research thesis will continue the conversation of the HUP. To begin this conversation, a rudimentary understanding of the HUP and the controversy that surrounds it will serve as a precursor to the purpose, goals, and rationale of this thesis.

### **The HUP**

The HUP “states an undeniable fact. Human beings do build barriers around their own societies” and that “people *like to become* Christians without crossing . . . [those] barriers.”<sup>5</sup> Thus, the principle is that evangelistic efforts should respect those barriers.<sup>6</sup> The barriers may be race, language, class, et cetera.

### **The Controversy**

The controversy arises when those barriers are respected and the resulting church still has cultural barriers of race, language, class, et cetera. Critics of the HUP

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<sup>4</sup>Kent R. Hunter, “What Ever Happened to the Homogeneous Unit Principle?” *Global Church Growth* 27, no. 14 (1990): 1.

<sup>5</sup>Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, rev. and ed. C. Peter Wagner, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1990), 163, emphasis added. By emphasizing “like to become,” the distinction is being made between a sociological preference and not an ecclesiastical necessity.

<sup>6</sup>As Chuck Van Engen explains, adding the term “principle” to “homogeneous unit” was actually done by McGavran’s most famous student, C. Peter Wagner. Chuck Van Engen, “Is the Church for Everyone? Planting Multi-Ethnic Congregations in North America,” *Global Missiology*, <http://ojs.globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/article/viewFile/122/353> (accessed March 28, 2013). The addition of the word principle by Wagner elevated the HUP into a theological rule instead of a phenomenological tool.

argue that the resulting church and hence the growth of the universal church is not what God desires. Orlando Costas writes,

Not all church growth is good. There is good and bad, positive and negative, healthy and unwholesome, Christian and demonic church growth. Only to the extent that the growth of the church takes place in a liberating context; only when it affects in depth both the personal life of men and women and their structured life situations can the growth of the church be understood as a legitimate expression of God's mission.<sup>7</sup>

The church has three options with relation to cultural barriers and evangelistic efforts. One, the church could first try and correct the barriers and then evangelize. Two, the church could respect the barriers and grow the church regardless of the barriers. Or three, the church could try and correct the barriers and evangelize at the same time.

For McGavran, cultural barriers during the discipling stage are not as important as the greater importance of reaching people for Christ.<sup>8</sup> Those barriers can be broken down during the perfecting stage.

No one should minimize the importance of perfecting. At the same time, all should be certain that undiscipled pagan multitudes must be added to the Lord before they can be perfected. . . . Today's great vision, which calls the churches to

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<sup>7</sup>Orlando E. Costas, *The Church and Its Mission: A Shattering Critique from the Third World* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1974), 310.

<sup>8</sup>"Discipling" for McGavran means "helping a people (a segment of *non-Christian* society) turn from non-Christian faith to Christ." McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 123. Discipling describes the pre-conversion state. For McGavran, discipling does not include the process of becoming more like Christ. McGavran calls this process "perfecting," and perfecting deals with the post-conversion state: "Discipling was to be followed by perfecting, that is, by the whole complex process of growth in grace, ethical improvement, and the conversion of individuals in that first and succeeding generations." *Ibid.*, 123.

This differentiation between a discipling and perfecting stage is not consistent with the contemporary use of the term "to disciple" or of discipleship and has led to much of the confusion surrounding the HUP. "A person becomes a disciple of Jesus when he or she confesses Jesus as Savior and God and is regenerated by the Holy Spirit (cf. John 3:3-8; Titus 3:5). The participles "baptizing" and "teaching" in Matt 28:18 describe activities through which the new disciple grows in discipleship. Growth includes both identification with Jesus' death and resurrection (baptism) and obedience to all that Jesus had commanded the disciples in his earthly ministry (teaching)." Moreau, *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, s.v. "Disciple, Discipleship" by Michael J. Wilkins.

rectify injustices in their neighborhoods and nations, is good; but it must not supplant the vision that calls them to make disciples of all nations. . . . The least perfected church is superior to its non-Christian origins.<sup>9</sup>

The controversy can be characterized in some degree as miscommunication.

Hunter writes,

The reason for rejection by so many may lie in poor communication. That may partly be due to deficiency among church growth teachers and partly due to the enormous paradigm shift or world-view change that is necessary for many to grasp the homogeneous unit principle. Further, the fires of controversy may be fanned by the conceptual nature of the homogeneous unit principle which many people, especially literalists, would find difficult to internalize.<sup>10</sup>

The controversy also goes beyond miscommunication. If the controversy were simply a matter of miscommunication, there would be hope that the controversy could be eliminated with better communication. It is not the intent of this thesis to suggest that the miscommunication can be entirely corrected, because at the heart of the miscommunication are differing core values which affect one's epistemological view of the world, and in this case, the church.<sup>11</sup>

One area of confusion and miscommunication is the term itself. In the term HUP, the word "principle" should be understood as descriptive of the culture, not descriptive of the church. When the word "principle" is incorrectly applied toward the church, then it is understood as an ecclesiastical necessity. That is, because the culture has placed on itself certain barriers, the church also needs to have those barriers.

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<sup>9</sup>McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 123-24.

<sup>10</sup>Hunter, "What Ever Happened to the Homogeneous Unit Principle?" 1.

<sup>11</sup>It is beyond the scope of this thesis to describe all the different core values and varying views of the church. Some core values will be discussed later. For example, most church growth proponents accept the evangelistic priority of the church. The evangelistic priority is a core value.

However, when the word “principle” is correctly applied toward the culture, then the term can be understood as a tool of social analysis. That is, what are the barriers that this culture has placed on itself, and what impact will those barriers have on the evangelistic mandate? Skip Bell writes,

To observe how a church is growing is not to say that is how a church should grow, or to suggest that such a correlate is even within God’s will. It is mere observation. Since early church growth researchers were for the most part missiologists, they were distinctly sensitive to implications of separation or prejudice the homogeneous unit principle presented as they observed it in diverse world cultures. They applied careful research to the question of church growth, and their finding may be received in one perspective as objective observation and not *prescriptive*.<sup>12</sup>

While cultural barriers may well be initially respected in the discipling stage, they are not intended to be ignored in the perfecting stage. The provisional makeup of the church in the discipleship stage is not the “ultimate ideal” of the church in the perfecting stage.<sup>13</sup> McGavran writes, “The church exists not for herself but for the world. She has been saved in order to save others. She always has a twofold task: winning unbelievers to Christ and growing in grace. While the tasks overlap, they are distinct. Neither should be slighted.”<sup>14</sup>

For McGavran, although both should be done, the evangelistic mandate takes priority over the cultural mandate. He writes,

Parallelism is seen as the right policy in mission. This is the doctrine, conscious or unconscious, that all the many activities carried on by missions are of equal value. They are parallel thrusts. No one of them as basic priority. . . . Certainly many things should be done. The task *is* extremely complex; but this complexity must

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<sup>12</sup>Skip Bell, “What is Wrong with the Homogeneous Unit Principle? The HUP in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Church,” *Journal of the American Society for Church Growth* 14 (Fall 2003): 4, emphasis added.

<sup>13</sup>Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth*, 262.

<sup>14</sup>McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 124.

never be made to mean an aimless parallelism. World evangelism is a chief and irreplaceable work of the church.<sup>15</sup>

Hence, the discipling stage is the most important stage, though perfecting cannot be ignored.

Critics argue that the discipling stage and the perfecting stage cannot be separated when breaking down barriers. C. René Padilla writes,

The breaking down of the barriers that separate people in the world was regarded as *an essential aspect of the gospel*, not merely as a result of it. Evangelism would therefore involve a call to be incorporated into a new humanity that included all kinds of people. Conversion was never a merely religious experience; it was also a way of becoming a member of a community where people would find their dignity in Christ rather than in a race, social status, or sex.<sup>16</sup>

Fueling the controversy, there exists also a false dichotomy between the HUP and *koinonia*.<sup>17</sup> HUP opponents appear to measure *koinonia* by the level of diversity.<sup>18</sup>

Padilla writes,

The New Testament clearly shows that the apostles, while rejecting ‘assimilationist racism,’ never contemplated the possibility of forming homogeneous unit churches that would then express their unity in terms of interchurch relationships. Each church was meant to portray *the oneness of its members* regardless of their racial, cultural, or social differences, and in order to reach that the apostles suggested practical measures.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 64-65, emphasis included.

<sup>16</sup>C. René Padilla, “The Unity of the Church and the Homogeneous Unit Principle,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 6, no. 1 (1982): 29, emphasis in original.

<sup>17</sup>As will be discussed, *koinonia* is a rich word with deep meaning and will be discussed below in greater detail. In the Bible, *koinonia* is most often translated as fellowship although participation, sharing, and contribution are also frequently used.

<sup>18</sup>Ralph Elliott writes, “This view [concerning HU’s] contrasts with the very understanding of the church as being inclusive of all people, as they are represented in the community of which I am a part. At the same time, case study records make it clear that the church growth philosophy and methodology obviously succeed in building a ‘religious institution.’ Its greatest danger may be that it obviously succeeds.” Ralph H. Elliott, *Church Growth That Counts* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1982), 13-14.

<sup>19</sup>Padilla, “The Unity of the Church and the Homogeneous Unit Principle,” 29.

This thesis is not suggesting that the HUP opponents' definition of *koinonia* is diversity. Rather, as stated, it is suggesting that diversity appears to be a measuring stick of their understanding of *koinonia*. HUP opponents argue that when the HUP is employed, the resulting "church" fails to, or is in danger of failing to, live up to the New Testament ideal of *koinonia*. Carl S. Dudley writes, "The homogeneous-unit principle of the church growth movement has emphasized a cultural sectarianism. This principle has been used to justify increased racial and economic segregation."<sup>20</sup> In other words, despite any pragmatic results of church growth that may occur in using the HUP, the use of the HUP in evangelism is not justified because the resulting level of diversity of the church is insufficient.

Diversity in the church or *koinonia* is also seen as the measuring stick of the church's message of liberation. Ralph Elliot writes, "No matter how much an institution may grow numerically, if it neglects to contribute to the liberation of humankind in all walks of life, that successful institution is something less than the church."<sup>21</sup> Thus, the HUP as an evangelistic tool, no matter how effective or efficient it might be, should not be employed because it is in opposition to *koinonia*. However, as stated, and as will be explained later, this dichotomy is a false one.

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<sup>20</sup>Carl S. Dudley, "Measuring Church Growth," Religion Online, <http://www.religion-online.org/cgi-bin/research.dll/showarticle.asp?title=1237.html> (accessed March 28, 2013). If the HUP is seen as an ecclesiastical necessity in order for the church to grow, Dudley's complaint is warranted. However, when the HUP is properly understood as a phenomenological analysis in understanding why people respond differently to different people, then the church has a tool in its possession that will allow the church to more effectively reach people and to grow. Wagner writes, "In the first place, McGavran's statement is descriptive, not normative. It is phenomenological, not theological." Wagner, *Church Growth & the Whole Gospel*, 167.

<sup>21</sup>Elliott, *Church Growth That Counts*, 67.

## **The Dilemma**

The dilemma is whether or not the HUP should be used as an evangelistic tool. Is the HUP a faithful attempt in fulfilling the Great Commission, or does it lead to churches being built on racism and elitism? Does the HUP hinder or help *koinonia*? Does the HUP make a mockery of the unity of the church? Is the HUP biblical? Critics and proponents disagree on the answers to these questions. If the HUP can be found to be biblically defensible, theologically sound and missiologically appropriate, then it should be employed as an evangelistic tool.

## **Purpose and Goals**

The purpose of this ministry research thesis was to demonstrate how the HUP is an excellent tool to reach and transform one's culture for Christ. In fact, this thesis contends that the failure to recognize and utilize the HUP as a tool in evangelism can actually lead to the homogeneous churches that its opponents are so quick to criticize. Consequently, the goals were that a clear understanding and definition of the HUP be actualized and that such an understanding and definition be analyzed and found to be biblically defensible, theologically sound, and missiologically appropriate.

After such an analysis was made, the North American landscape was analyzed in a variety of ways to underscore the vast diversity of American culture and the potential application and even necessity of implementing the HUP as an evangelistic and church growth tool. A survey of Virginia pastors for their possible use of the HUP was performed to gather insight and to provide further suggestions in applying the HUP. Finally, implications for how the HUP can be used as an evangelistic and church growth tool in the North American context are discussed.

## **Rationale**

Over the next fifty years, North America is projected to be increasingly diverse in its demographic makeup.<sup>22</sup> The U.S. Census Bureau projects that the primary increase will be in Hispanic and Asian populations. In effect, the world is coming to America. Multiculturalism will be an ever increasing reality in all areas of the country. In addition, religious pluralism and Christianity's various self-understandings among its different theological camps (Evangelicals, Fundamentalists, Liberals, Liberation Theology, Catholicism, etc.) will continue to affect who, how, and when Christians evangelize.

A potentially great tool – the HUP – has received harsh and unfair criticism. This criticism comes from the HUP being mislabeled and misunderstood and has caused this potentially great tool to be underutilized. A continuing effort to refute this criticism and to properly label and explain the HUP in order to bring out its potential is warranted in order to be wise stewards in proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.

## **Definitions**

Definitions are important when discussing the HUP because, as previously stated, miscommunication is at the heart of the controversy concerning the HUP – especially when considering McGavran's use of term discipling. One may define the following essential terms and key concepts somewhat differently, but this thesis will use the following definitions for clarity in communication.

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<sup>22</sup>U.S. Bureau of the Census, "U.S. Census Bureau Projections Show a Slower Growing, Older, More Diverse Nation a Half Century from Now," U.S. Bureau of the Census, <http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/population/cb12-243.html> (accessed March 28, 2013).

## Homogeneous Units

A homogeneous unit (HU) is “simply a section of society in which all the members have some characteristic in common.”<sup>23</sup> That characteristic could be gender, geography, race, language, or age. By this definition, one can see how broad and elastic the term HU is.

To illustrate HUs, Figure 1 is offered as simple HUs based on gender. Figure 2 is offered as simple HUs based on geography. Figure 3 is offered a composite of the HU’s based on gender and geography from Figure 1 and Figure 2 respectively.

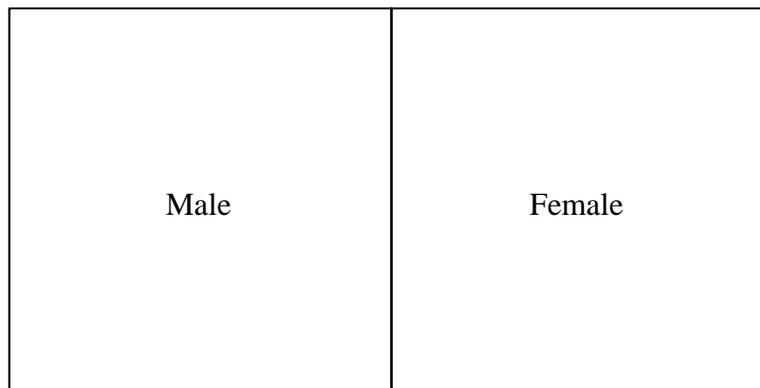


Figure 1. Simple HUs illustrated:  
gender relationship

The complexity of HU will increase with the number of characteristics. For example, suppose that from the population in Figure 3, there were four races represented and that the total population spoke five languages. There would be 120 different potential subgroups within this population. Furthermore, if one also classified the

---

<sup>23</sup>McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 81, cf. 69.

Rural
Suburban
Metropolitan

Figure 2. Simple HUs illustrated:  
geographic relationship

Male – Rural	Female – Rural
Male – Suburban	Female – Suburban
Male – Metropolitan	Female – Metropolitan

Figure 3. HUs illustrated: gender and  
geographic relationship

population into seven different age groups, there would be 840 different potential subgroups within this population. Continuing further, if one were to add to this classification items like musical preference, educational background, and religious beliefs, then, one can see the diverse nature of a population. While some characteristics of people may be easy to identify and classify, the real challenge and opportunity regarding HUs and evangelism is “people consciousness,” defined below.

## People Consciousness

People consciousness is when members of a HU “think of themselves as separate.”<sup>24</sup> The relevance of people consciousness to evangelism comes in the degree of people consciousness that any one particular HU has and how the “barrier” of people consciousness can best be overcome. Concerning this relevance, McGavran writes,

The degree of people consciousness is an aspect of social structure that greatly influences when, how and to what extent the gospel will flow through that segment of the social order. Castes or tribes with high people consciousness will resist the gospel primarily because to them becoming a Christian means joining another people. They refuse Christ not for religious reasons, not because they love their sins, but precisely because they love their neighbors.

In India, Brahmins and many others whose people consciousness is very high discipline their members rigorously. They ostracize those who marry non-Brahmins and read the funeral ceremony over them. They have debased the blood and must be excluded.

It may be taken as axiomatic that whenever becoming a Christian is considered a racial rather than a religious decision, there the growth of the church will be exceedingly slow. . . .

The resistance of most Hindus, Buddhists, and Muslims to the Christian faith does not arise primarily from theological considerations. . . . Their resistance arises primarily from fear that “becoming a Christian will separate me from my people.”

. . . The fact is that men and women, high and low, advanced and primitive, usually turn to Christian faith in numbers only when some way is found for them to become Christian without leaving their kith and kin.

The great obstacles to conversion are social, not theological. . . . It is patently true that among societies with high people consciousness those methods of propagating the gospel which enable individuals to accept Christ without renouncing their peoples are blessed of God to the growth of his church.<sup>25</sup>

People consciousness in a HU is illustrated in Figure 4. The thickness of the lines represents the degree of people consciousness, with the thicker lines representing high people consciousness.

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 155.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 155-56.

Male – Rural	Female – Rural
Male – Suburban	Female – Suburban
Male – Metropolitan	Female – Metropolitan

Figure 4. People consciousness illustrated:  
gender and geographic relationship

In this hypothetical population, rural males and rural females have a low level of people consciousness whereas metropolitan males have the highest level of people consciousness. While this figure is simplistic, one can quickly understand how people may place barriers between them – barriers like gender, race, language, and religion.

The theoretical relationship between the HUP and people-consciousness is as follows. The greater a HU has people-consciousness, the harder it is for non-HU members to evangelize the HU. Also, the greater a HU has people-consciousness, the more likely that a HU member’s decision will affect other group member’s decisions. Likewise, the less a HU has people-consciousness, the easier it will be for non-HU members to evangelize and the less likely that a HU member’s decision will affect other group member’s decisions. McGavran writes, “It takes no great acumen to see that when marked differences of color, stature, income, cleanliness, and education are present, nonbelievers understand the Gospel better when expounded by their own kind of people.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 167.

## **Ethnikitis and People-Blindness**

Closely related to people consciousness are two church diseases: Ethnikitis and People-Blindness. There are churches that are “virtually an island of one kind of people, in the midst of a community of another kind of people, and very little communication between the two. Such a church has contracted what we call ‘ethnikitis.’ It begins to decline, first of all, because the people in the neighborhood are no longer being won into their neighborhood church.”<sup>27</sup> People-blindness is “the malady that prevents us from seeing the important cultural differences that exist between groups of people living in geographical proximity to one another—differences that tend to create barriers to the acceptance of our message.”<sup>28</sup>

## **Koinonia**

Because the concern for *koinonia* plays such a large part in the criticism of the HUP, its definition is expounded upon in this section. This definition will play an important role in understanding the biblical justification of the HUP in chapter 3. *Koinonia* is the born-again relationship among believers that expresses itself in participation with one another in the gospel.<sup>29</sup> From this definition, three important concepts of *koinonia* will be expounded upon: relationship, purpose, and interdependency.

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<sup>27</sup>C. Peter Wagner, *The Healthy Church* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1996), 28.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 60.

<sup>29</sup>The definition is derived through a word analysis of *κοινωνία*, the root *κοινός*, and the verb form *κοινωνέω*. In chap.3, this definition will also be used for the church in order to relate and evaluate the HUP, *koinonia*, and the church.

**Relationship.** *Koinonia*'s root means "to share something in common."<sup>30</sup> The common relationship then becomes the basis of unity. Although *koinonia* means any sort of group or association, it is a favorite expression of the marriage relationship.<sup>31</sup> In a biblical and Christian context, the rebirth by the Holy Spirit causes the common relationship among believers and thus becomes the basis of their unity. By understanding *koinonia* in the context of the intimate and close relationship of marriage, one can see the mystical tie that binds two hearts as one, and it serves as a good analogy of the binding of Christian hearts in Christian love.<sup>32</sup> Thus, *koinonia* is the intimate and mystical relationship that Christians share one with another because of the rebirth by the Holy Spirit and their being the children of God.

**Purpose.** *Koinonia* is more than relationship; it is relationship with purpose. Generally that purpose is very altruistic, and words like generosity, sharing, and contributing are used in translating the Greek word into English. In a Christian context, the purpose of the church's *koinonia* is God's mission in the world. Thus, the unity of relationship is closely tied to the unity of purpose. As Christians, the unity of relationship (being born again and being the children of God) and the unity of purpose (God's mission) both help to establish *koinonia* in the church.

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<sup>30</sup>Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, ed. and trans. William F. Arndt, F. Wilber Gingrich, and Frederick W. Danker, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), s.v. "κοινωνέω."

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., s.v. "κοινωνία."

<sup>32</sup>Col 2:2, "Their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ."

**Interdependency.** But relationship with a purpose is still deficient when understanding *koinonia*. *Koinonia* is not actualized until believers participate with other believers in working toward their common purpose. It is the outward expression (participation with one another in accomplishing God’s mission) of an inward reality (the relationship among believers through the rebirth by the Holy Spirit). This interdependency can be seen in Paul’s understanding of the church as the body of Christ in 1 Corinthians 12:12-31.

### **Evangelism**

There is debate concerning the definition of evangelism. The Greek word *εὐαγγέλιον* simply means good news, and the verb form *εὐαγγελίζω* means announcing the good news.<sup>33</sup> For the Christian, the good news is the gospel of Christ Jesus. The debate focuses on the question, “what does it mean to announce the good news?” The division of thought centers around three categories: presence, proclamation and persuasion.<sup>34</sup>

**Presence.** Presence evangelism states that as long as Christians are performing “good works” (such as building hospitals and schools or feeding the poor) in the presence of unbelievers, the church is practicing evangelism. In this understanding, evangelism is evaluated by ministries performed and the emphasis is on more of a social gospel.

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<sup>33</sup>Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, s.v. “εὐαγγέλιον” and “εὐαγγελίζω” respectively.

<sup>34</sup>Wagner, *Church Growth & The Whole Gospel*, 54-57.

**Proclamation.** Proclamation evangelism states that Christians need to verbally proclaim the gospel and that simply doing “good works” without the proclamation of the gospel is insufficient to be called evangelism. Thus, evangelism is evaluated on the faithfulness of the people in proclaiming the good news. This understanding of evangelism is consistent with the Greek meaning of the word.

**Persuasion.** Persuasion evangelism goes beyond proclamation evangelism in that it requires the hearers’ positive response to the good news. The positive response is not simply a decision made for Christ, but rather a decision that is characterized by responsible church membership or fruit-bearing disciples. In other words, if the hearer responds positively to the good news, then evangelism has taken place. Thus, evangelism is evaluated based upon the number of positive responses that were made. The Church Growth Movement (CGM) considers this understanding to be consistent with the biblical intent of the word.

Persuasion evangelism is concerned with results. . . . Persuasion evangelism is intentional preaching with a view of bringing men to Christ and into responsible church membership. . . . Disciples are countable and their number can be expanded. Hence, disciples are the result of evangelism. The term “make disciples” means to bring a person to Christ, but it includes more than getting a person to make a decision for Christ; it implies motivating the person to follow Christ as his disciple.<sup>35</sup>

**Responsible church membership.** McGavran’s understanding of evangelism is similar to persuasion evangelism.

God, who “became flesh and dwelt among us,” is primarily concerned that people be saved, and his mission must also be concerned. Christian outreach in today’s responsive world demands a theology of the harvest that the New Testament

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<sup>35</sup>Elmer L. Towns, “Evangelism: The Why and How,” in *Church Growth: State of the Art*, ed. C. Peter Wagner (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1988), 44-45.

uniquely offers. Yet at this critical time many Christians are firmly committed to a theology of seed sowing, which might also be called a theology of search.<sup>36</sup>

McGavran saw evangelism as “incomplete” until one became a responsible follower of Jesus Christ as evidenced by responsible church membership. Rainer explains, “He saw evangelism as more than just proclaiming of the gospel; he insisted that evangelization is incomplete until the person becomes a responsible disciple of Christ.”<sup>37</sup> McGavran calls this process “discipling.”<sup>38</sup> Thus, evangelism can be evaluated “numerically” through responsible church membership or fruit-bearing discipleship, which is at the core of the CGM: “the heart of church growth is to see those new Christians develop into fruit-bearing disciples of Jesus Christ.”<sup>39</sup>

It cannot be overemphasized that the majority of controversy over the HUP comes from McGavran’s focus of the HUP in the discipling stage. As stated, discipling or evangelism includes the turning of one to faith from non-faith and is evidenced by responsible church membership. Perfecting, which is not evangelism, refers to the individual as growing in grace, which would also include the social dimensions of the gospel message. The HUP deals with evangelism, not perfecting. McGavran writes,

Discipling is one thing, perfecting is another. This point gains importance because many a Christian leader confuses perfecting for discipling. Distinguishing

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<sup>36</sup>McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 24.

<sup>37</sup>Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth*, 35.

<sup>38</sup>McGavran actually delineates between three types of discipling: D-1, D-2 and D-3: “D-1 would mean the turning of a non-Christian society for the first time to Christ. D-2 would mean the turning of individuals from nonfaith to faith in Christ and their incorporation into a church. D-3 would mean teaching an existing Christian as many of the truths of the Bible as possible.” McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 123.

<sup>39</sup>Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth*, 20.

these two stages is essential for those who lead peoples [HU's] to become Christian. The second stage overlaps the first, but it cannot precede it without destroying it.<sup>40</sup>

**E-0, E-1, E-2, and E-3.** Evangelism may be divided up into four categories: E-0, E-1, E-2, and E-3.<sup>41</sup> E-0 evangelism is evangelizing existing church members. E-1 evangelism is evangelizing non-church members within the churches' cultural, linguistic, and ethnic unit. E-2 evangelism is evangelizing non-church members outside the church's cultural, linguistic, and ethnic unit, but in a unit that is similar. E-3 evangelism is evangelizing non-church members outside the church's cultural, linguistic, and ethnic unit with that unit being unfamiliar. It is obvious then that the difficulty of the evangelistic endeavor increases as one's cultural, linguistic, and ethnic unit differences increase.<sup>42</sup>

**Church mandates.** God's work in the world through the church is understood as two mandates: the evangelistic mandate and the cultural mandate. Wagner writes, "The term 'evangelistic mandate' forms a pair with 'cultural mandate.' They are as clear and useful as any expressions I have found to describe the two major areas of human responsibility in carrying out God's program in the world."<sup>43</sup> The evangelistic mandate is

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<sup>40</sup>McGavran, *Bridges of God* (New York: Friendship Press, 1981), 16.

<sup>41</sup>McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 47-48. Credit for this typology in the missiological and church growth vocabulary belongs to Ralph D. Winter. This typology is stating the same idea as the relationship between evangelism and the people consciousness of an HU as was discussed above. Again, note that the reference is descriptive of the culture and how it relates to evangelizing different cultural groups.

<sup>42</sup>The difficulty relates directly to people-consciousness as discussed, above. The greater a HU has people-consciousness, the harder it is for non-HU members to evangelize the HU.

<sup>43</sup>Wagner, *Church Growth & The Whole Gospel*, 51.

simply the call of the church to reach and save the lost.<sup>44</sup> The cultural mandate is the call of the church to minister to the needs of society through social service and to reform society through social action. Wagner writes, “As the church moves into the world to fulfill the cultural mandate, two general avenues of potential ministry open up. Students of the social concerns of the church have called them by different names. I prefer the terms *social service* and *social action*.”<sup>45</sup> These two mandates together are the mission of the church and are often referred to as holistic mission.<sup>46</sup>

While both mandates are by definition mandatory, in church growth theology, the evangelistic mandate is given priority and urgency over the cultural mandate. Wagner writes, “When I argue that the evangelistic mandate has priority over the cultural mandate, this does not mean that I have any intention of neglecting the cultural mandate. But recognizing the priority of the evangelist mandate is, in my opinion, the best starting point for the maximum fulfillment of *both* the cultural and the evangelistic mandates.”<sup>47</sup>

Furthermore, Wagner distinguishes between evangelism, nurture and service (cultural mandate) as three distinct activities in how God works through the church:

Evangelism (whether E-1, E-2, or E-3) is, as we defined it in Chapter 3, making disciples of Jesus Christ. It is presenting Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit in such a way that men and women will believe in him as their savior

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 51.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 35, emphasis in original. Wagner defines social service as “the kind of social ministry geared to meet the needs of individuals and groups of persons in a direct and immediate way.” Ibid., 36. Wagner defines social action as “the kind of social ministry geared toward changing social structures.” Ibid., 36.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 91, emphasis in original – “I now believe that the mission of the church embraces both the cultural and the evangelistic mandates. *I believe in what is now being called ‘holistic mission.’*”

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 87, emphasis in original. In a conversation, Charles E. Lawless, Jr., former Dean of the Billy Graham School of Evangelism, Missions and Church Growth of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, stated that Wagner has revised his position and that they cannot be separated and prioritized.

and serve him as their Lord in the fellowship of his church. The message of evangelism is directed to the unbeliever, not to believers. Its goal is to win souls, to see sinners saved by the grace of God, and enter into the kingdom of God as responsible disciples.

*Christian nurture* (whether N-1, N-2, or N-3) is a ministry directed toward Christians, not unbelievers. Its objective is helping them develop in their faith. It enables spiritual “children” who may be “carried about with every wind of doctrine” to grow into perfect people “unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:13-14). Helping a Christian pray more fervently, read the Bible more intelligently, sing more melodiously, witness more aggressively, or give more generously is not evangelism. It is nurture.

*Service* (whether S-1, S-2, or S-3) is neither evangelism nor nurture. Its focus is the implementation of the cultural mandate. It helps meet the physical, social or material needs of people. It can be directed toward believers or unbelievers or both. It includes social action and social service. God may use service to open the hearts and minds of men and women to the message of the gospel, or he may not. But *service doesn't save sinners—evangelism does.*<sup>48</sup>

### **The Principle of Receptivity**

The principle of receptivity “postulates that at a given point in time certain people groups, families, and individuals will be more receptive to the message of the Gospel than others.”<sup>49</sup> McGavran explains the importance to church growth:

“Fluctuating receptivity is a most prominent aspect of human nature and society. It marks the urban and the rural, advanced and primitive, educated and illiterate. It vitally affects every aspect of world evangelization, and must be studied extensively if church growth is to be understood.”<sup>50</sup> This principle or theory has a very pragmatic value:

“Since resources of time, personnel, talent, money, and energy are all limited, decisions have to be made as to where they can best be used. This necessarily involves setting

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<sup>48</sup>Wagner, *Church Growth & the Whole Gospel*, 94, emphasis added.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 77.

<sup>50</sup>McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 179.

priorities.”<sup>51</sup> It cannot be overstated that the principle of receptivity is understood as God’s working in His world. Thus, understanding receptive people is not simply a “human” or “unspiritual” task. Rather, it is the mark of wise steward who is being good and faithful to the Great Commission.

### **Limitations**

As with any thesis, this treatise attempts to advance a new point of view resulting from research and prayerful reflection. Although the history of the HUP is discussed, it is not the intention of this thesis to give a full history of the HUP. The focus is on McGavran’s original use and understanding of the term and how the HUP can be used today in the North American context. Some authors, like Wagner in particular, may have changed certain viewpoints over time. It is not the purpose of this thesis to explore changes in thought in the various authors through the years.

### **General Direction**

Chapter 2 presents a clear understanding of the HUP. Chapter 3 examines that understanding from a biblical, theological, and missiological perspective, with the emphasis being on the biblical perspective. Chapter 4 presents results of a survey from a defined sub-population of pastors and their familiarity with and use of the HUP. Chapter 5 offers some practical applications of the HUP as an evangelistic tool.

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<sup>51</sup>Wagner, *Church Growth & the Whole Gospel*, 77.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE HUP: TOWARD A WORKING DEFINITION

This chapter presents three definitions of the HUP: a classical definition, a dictionary definition, and a working definition. The classical definition will be restated, and one of the main problems with the use of the classical definition will be noted. A dictionary definition is given for comparative purposes. The dictionary definition highlights the need for a working definition. Then, the bulk of the chapter explores the context of how and why the HUP was theorized. From an understanding of this context, important concepts were revealed. These important concepts lead to a new definition or a working definition of the HUP. Finally, how the HUP could be used was illustrated in three situations: international missionary field, church planting site, and an established church setting.

#### **Classical Definition**

As stated in chapter 1, the HUP “states an undeniable fact. Human beings do build barriers around their own societies,” and “people like to become Christians without crossing *racial*, linguistic, or *class* barriers.”<sup>1</sup> This quote is what this thesis refers to as the classical definition of the HUP.

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<sup>1</sup>Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., rev. and ed. C. Peter Wagner (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1990), 163, emphasis added.

This classical definition was succinctly explained by McGavran: “It takes no great acumen to see that when marked differences of color, stature, income, cleanliness, and education are present, unbelievers understand the Gospel better when expounded by their own kind of people.”<sup>2</sup> For McGavran, then, barriers and differences in the discipling stage should be respected. The controversy arises when those barriers or differences are respected and the resulting church still has those barriers or differences of race, language, class, et cetera.

In the classical definition of the HUP, it is easy for critics to fixate on the words “racial” or “class.” For example, when Bruce W. Fong wrote a book critiquing the HUP, he clearly stated that his emphasis would be on the racial aspect: “While the HUP theory deals with the three general areas of race, language and class differences, it is the issue of race or ethnicity that will dominate this discussion.”<sup>3</sup>

When the focus was on race or ethnicity, the HUP quickly becomes a lightning rod for controversy. Instead of being understood as an instrumentation of evangelism, it is misunderstood by many as a justification of racial or class segregation in the church. As racial and class segregation is an unacceptable foundation of church unity, the HUP could be attacked as being an unacceptable instrumentation of evangelism:

Some of the criticisms have been uninformed and unfair. But, certain arguments are worthy of careful scrutiny and wise attention. In particular, brotherhood and unity are essential to the church; but, they would be damaged by the application of the HUP theory. The application of the HUP theory would excuse the church for standing apart from the world on the matter of racial unity. In response, proponents

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 167.

<sup>3</sup>Bruce W. Fong, *Racial Equality in the Church: A Critique of the Homogeneous Unit Principle in Light of a Practical Theology Perspective* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1996), xx.

admit to the potential misuse of the theory but also clarify that their intent is theologically, Biblically, and practically defensible.<sup>4</sup>

### **Dictionary Definition**

One dictionary definition of the HUP eliminates the explosive words of race or ethnicity: “The homogeneous unit principle is a serious attempt to respect the dignity of individuals and the social units to which they belong, and to encourage their decisions for Christ to be religious decisions rather than social decisions.”<sup>5</sup> While this definition is certainly more innocuous, it does not bring out some of the original thinking, and more importantly, some of the context behind the term.<sup>6</sup>

For example, the HUP was part of a stewardship concern of McGavran. The stewardship concern included an understanding of accountability and responsibility. In addition, the HUP was also was part of a harvest mentality in evangelistic efforts. Perhaps most importantly, McGavran had a very clear understanding of God at work and the HUP was part of the process of recognizing God at work. Therefore, to better understand the HUP, it is both prudent and necessary to analyze the HUP in the context that it was theorized and according to the man who theorized it.

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., xix.

<sup>5</sup>A. Scott Moreau, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), s.v. “Homogeneous Unit Principle,” by C. Peter Wagner.

<sup>6</sup>It would be preposterous to suggest that the Peter Wagner did not understand the original thinking or the context behind the term HUP. What is being argued is that there is more to the HUP than this dictionary definition encompasses. By failing to encompass more of the original thinking behind the term and context of the term, this innocuous dictionary definition does little to demonstrate how the HUP is an excellent tool to reach and transform one’s culture for Christ, which is the purpose of this research ministry thesis. By analyzing the HUP in the context that it was theorized and according to the man who theorized it, important concepts will be revealed which will flesh out a stronger and more helpful definition of the HUP.

## Working Definition

When the context of why the HUP was theorized is analyzed, and when the man who theorized it is studied, key concepts will emerge and a working definition of the HUP can be identified and formulated. This working definition will serve as a basis for a biblical, theological, and missiological evaluation of the HUP in chapter three. Thus, it is now essential that Donald A. McGavran and his works be discussed.

## Evangelistic Heart

Donald McGavran, the father of the CGM, is also the originator of the term HUP.<sup>7</sup> Simply put, McGavran had a heart for evangelism. He reveals his heart's desire when he writes concerning God's desire:

Among other desires of God-in-Christ, he beyond question wills that lost persons be found—that is, be reconciled to himself. Most cordially admitting that God has other purposes, we should remember that we serve a God *who finds persons*. He has an overriding concern that men and women should be redeemed. However we understand the word, biblical witness is clear that people are “lost.” The finding God wants them *found*—that is, brought into a redemptive relationship to Jesus Christ where, baptized in his name, they become part of his household. He is not pleased when many findable sheep remain straggling on the mountain, shivering in the bitter wind. The more found, the better pleased is God.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>As discussed earlier, adding the term “principle” to “homogeneous unit” was actually done by Peter Wagner. Chuck Van Engen, “Is the Church for Everyone? Planting Multi-Ethnic Congregations in North America,” *Global Missiology*, <http://ojs.globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/article/viewFile/122/353> (accessed March 28, 2013). As will be discussed, the word “principle” in the term HUP should be understood as a task or a tool.

Also, by recognizing McGavran as the originator of the term and as the Father of the CGM, the forerunners of the CGM and influences on McGavran, like Roland Allen and J. Waskom Pickett, should be noted. For a brief summary, see Thom Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth* (Nashville: Broadman Press), 27-31.

<sup>8</sup>McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 21, emphasis McGavran's.

The CGM is considered to have its beginning in 1955 when McGavran published his book, *The Bridges of God*. In this magnum opus, McGavran asks this simple question, “How do peoples become Christian?”<sup>9</sup> The question that McGavran was asking was an evangelistic question. The HUP was a part of the answer to that question. Therefore, any reasonable understanding of the HUP must be put into the evangelism context.<sup>10</sup>

### **Stewardship Strategy**

McGavran’s vocation was that of a missionary. As a missionary, McGavran struggled with limited financial resources and the stewardship issue of how best to spend those monies. An egalitarian approach to missionary spending and budgets would dictate that monies be spent equally, irrespective of any difference in evangelistic effectiveness. McGavran was opposed to such an egalitarian approach to missionary spending: “Mission administrators must not—dare not—act as if church growth did not matter. This is to betray the gospel. Mere continuation of an uncritical egalitarianism is not the answer.”<sup>11</sup>

**Harvest mentality.** In McGavran’s missiological thought, results or a harvest mentality were important. He writes, “It is not enough to search for lost sheep. The

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<sup>9</sup>Donald A. McGavran, *Bridges of God* (New York: Friendship Press, 1955), 1.

<sup>10</sup>In McGavran’s understanding of evangelism, he distinguishes between discipling and perfecting. He explains, “[The church] always has a two-fold task: winning unbelievers to Christ and growing in grace. While these tasks overlap, they are distinct. Neither should be slighted.” McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 124. For McGavran, discipling is evangelism; perfecting is not evangelism.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 59.

Master Shepherd is not pleased with a token search; he wants his sheep found.”<sup>12</sup>

However, it appears that his contemporaries’ major accountability concern was simply “faithfulness in proclamation,” and others just presence evangelism without serious regard for the growth of the church.

Christian mission should take serious account of the many churches marked by slight growth. Specialists in carrying water abound, but there are few masons. Tons of mortar arrive, but few stones. The wall does not go up. Slight church growth characterizes many whole denominations, both liberal and conservative. Worse, the lack of growth is taken as natural and unavoidable.<sup>13</sup>

Focusing on the HUP was a partial response from a man who was concerned about the lack of growth of God’s church. Thus, the HUP should be understood within the context of stewardship.

**Responsible accountability.** Two major concerns of stewardship are accountability and responsibility. McGavran writes,

Sometimes, when shepherds return empty-handed, it is because the sheep refuse to be found and flee at their approach. Sometimes, however, empty-handedness becomes a habit and is caused by peering into ravines where there are no sheep, resolutely neglecting those who long to be found in favor of those who refuse to be. Sometimes it is a question of sticking for decades to methods that have proved ineffective. Suffice it to say that lack of church growth is an unnecessary trait, or experience, of many branches of the church and many missionary societies. It can, and should be remedied.<sup>14</sup>

The HUP was part of a strategy devised by McGavran to help remedy his stewardship concern of the lack of growth of God’s church. McGavran’s writings show

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 6.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 34.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 36.

that keeping track of HUs was a task to be done rather than just a principle to follow.

The analysis of the growth of HUs was a fairly simple task to meet one's responsibility of "doing one's part" in one's accountability to God.

One can hope that, as church growth comes to be taken with greater seriousness, homogenous unit growth will be recorded separately. This small addition to routine procedures would enable leaders of the churches to see which clusters of congregations were growing and which were not. The reasons for growth would then become clearer.<sup>15</sup>

### **Receptive People**

Using numerical statistics, it is fairly easy to identify when and where a church is growing. However, the significant question is "Why is it growing?" One reason why a church grows is that there are people who are receptive to the gospel. The question progresses to, "Do these receptive people have some characteristic in common?" If these receptive people have some characteristic in common, then one can likely identify a HU.

It is essential to note how people become receptive to the gospel. For McGavran, receptive people were God's work – part of His sovereignty. This understanding of God at work or God's initiative was clearly expressed in McGavran's writings:

We have described certain human factors in church growth. We shall go on to describe others. But we are not describing a human enterprise. The redemption of the world is the chief concern of God. This is the central doctrine in the Christian religion. This is what the incarnation was to achieve. This was the purpose of the Cross. The great Commission, comprising the last words of Christ during His earthly ministry, describes what must be done if the purposes of God in Christ are carried out.

The growth of the Church is always brought about by the action of the Holy Spirit. As in the New Testament Church, so today, the Holy Spirit leads, convicts of sin, converts, builds up, selects missionaries and thrusts them out to ripened fields. The concern of Christians today must be to understand the workings of the Holy

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 104.

Spirit and to be open to His leading. We talk of factors producing readiness to accept the Saviour-but who produces the factors? It is largely the Holy Spirit of God. We but describe the way in which He acts. He upbuilds the Church, extends and nurtures it. Men are the channel through which He works.<sup>16</sup>

## **Effective Work**

Being effective and efficient in reaching people for Christ is at the intersection of one's stewardship responsibility and one identifying where God is at work in making people receptive. The evangelist is merely a channel through which God works. When God's work can be identified in HUs, then the evangelist can have confidence in the evangelistic efforts because the evangelist understands that God is already at work in that HU. McGavran writes, "one of the better ways of motivating Christians to effective evangelism is to persuade them that growth is possible and to show them how the Holy Spirit has caused it."<sup>17</sup> For McGavran, "effective and efficient" is analogous to pragmatic. McGavran's pragmatism should be understood within these three parameters: (1) how God works in making people receptive to the gospel; (2) how one responds to God's work in identifying those receptive people; and, (3) how one is used by God in evangelizing those receptive people. McGavran argues that evangelism is most effective and efficient when receptive HU's are identified and evangelized: "Whenever people consciousness is high . . . the correct policy of evangelism is to disciple each homogeneous unit out to its fringes."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Donald A. McGavran, *How Churches Grow: The New Frontiers of Mission* (New York: Friendship Press, 1959), 55.

<sup>17</sup> McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 87.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 176-77.

Thus, one would be better stewards of God's resources if one responded to God's work. McGavran writes, "The Holy Spirit is sovereign, and he is not subject to contextual or institutional factors. He frequently acts in surprising, nontraditional ways, and it is up to those Christian leaders who want to be effective in growth to have an ear to hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches."<sup>19</sup>

### **Useful Tool**

The use of homogeneous units is properly understood as a tool, not as a principle. McGavran writes, "The homogenous unit is an elastic concept, its meaning depending on the context in which it is used. However, it is a most useful *tool* for understanding church growth."<sup>20</sup> The word "tool" implies a resource that can be used in helping to accomplish one's task. The word "principle" implies a rule or conduct that must be followed in order to accomplish one's task.

As a tool, the HUP was intended to help missiologists understand church growth – "Graphs of homogeneous unit church growth contribute greatly to the understanding of causes [of church growth]."<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, HUs were understood within a sociological and anthropological framework, or a tool of cultural consciousness and sensitivity. McGavran writes,

It cannot be too strongly emphasized that sociological and anthropological knowledge is *not* Christian mission. Mission is always the proclamation of Jesus Christ and His atoning death and empowering resurrection. Sociology and

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 19.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 70, emphasis added.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 101.

anthropology serve mission as tools. They help the Church to know where proclamation will be most effective. They identify those social units that are ready to hear the Good News and act upon it.<sup>22</sup>

### **Clear Communication**

McGavran's training and the place of McGavran's missionary work is important. McGavran was a missionary in India and used cultural anthropology to understand India's culture. India is a society built around the caste system which builds barriers between people based upon tradition and heredity as well as through an economic social stratification.<sup>23</sup> Thus, the barriers among people that were in place in India were quite extensive.

McGavran's training in cultural anthropology allowed him to study how people relate to one another. He observed that people will respond more favorably to the gospel when exposed to it by their own people. Thus, the HUP is a tool of evangelistic communication. Furthermore, because of the barriers that people build around their societies, the best, clearest way to communicate the gospel is through E-1 evangelism, not E-3 evangelism.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Donald Anderson McGavran, "Homogeneous Populations and Church Growth," in *Church Growth and Christian Mission*, ed. Donald A. McGavran (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 80, emphasis McGavran's.

<sup>23</sup>For an understanding of the caste movement in India and the barriers it creates, see J. Waskom Pickett, *Christian Mass Movements in India: A Study with Recommendations* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1933), 28-35. Pickett was a forerunner of McGavran whose writings were influential on McGavran.

For more insight into India and its influence on Donald McGavran, see J. Waskom Pickett, "Donald A. McGavran: Missionary, Scholar, Ecumenist, Evangelist," in *God, Man and Church Growth: A Festschrift in Honor of Donald Anderson McGavran*, ed. A. R. Tippett (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1973).

<sup>24</sup>E-1 evangelism is evangelizing non-church members within the churches' cultural, linguistic, and ethnic unit. E-3 evangelism is evangelizing non-church members outside the church's cultural,

As previously mentioned, McGavran's understanding of evangelism was persuasion evangelism.<sup>25</sup> Persuasion evangelism requires the hearers' positive response to the good news. The positive response is not simply a decision made for Christ, but rather a decision that is characterized by responsible church membership or fruit-bearing disciples. McGavran writes, "Faithfulness to God implies doing our part, empowered by the Holy Spirit, to *persuade* all men and women to become disciples of Jesus Christ and responsible members of his church."<sup>26</sup> The question is, "Who are the best people to persuade people of an HU?" It is people within the same HU, who can most clearly communicate to others with the HU.

## People Groups

When McGavran refers to people in the classical definition of the HUP, he is referring to a homogeneous unit or a specific people group. A homogenous unit has a cultural consciousness which gives the homogeneous unit an identity that distinguishes it from other homogeneous units. This cultural identity, then, is what makes people distinct

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linguistic, and ethnic unit with that unit being unfamiliar. It is obvious then that the difficulty of the evangelistic endeavor increases as one's cultural, linguistic, and ethnic unit differences increase. See McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 47-48. Credit for this typology in the missiological and church growth vocabulary belongs to Ralph D. Winter. This typology is stating the same idea as the relationship between evangelism and the people consciousness of an HU as was discussed in chap. 1 of this ministry thesis. Again, note that the reference is descriptive of the culture and how it relates to evangelizing different cultural groups.

<sup>25</sup>"Persuasion evangelism is concerned with results . . . Persuasion evangelism is intentional preaching with a view of bringing men to Christ and into responsible church membership . . . Disciples are countable and their number can be expanded. Hence, disciples are the result of evangelism. The term "make disciples" means to bring a person to Christ, but it includes more than getting a person to make a decision for Christ; it implies motivating the person to follow Christ as his disciple." Elmer L. Towns, "Evangelism: The Why and How," in *Church Growth: State of the Art*, ed. C. Peter Wagner (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1988), 44-45.

<sup>26</sup>McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 9, emphasis added.

from one another. This distinction can serve as a barrier when it comes to the spread of the gospel from one homogeneous unit to another homogeneous unit. Distinctions, it should be noted, are also part of the created order. McGavran sees this created order as a beautiful mosaic: “The world’s population is a mosaic, and each piece has a separate life of its own that seems strange and often unlovely to men and women of other pieces.”<sup>27</sup>

**Cultural phenomenon.** As stated in the previous section, at the heart of these barriers is a communication issue. The HUP identifies and respects people groups who are receptive to the gospel. The idea that people “like to hear” the gospel expounded upon by their own people is a phenomenological issue. It is not a theological issue that people “ought to hear” the gospel expounded upon by their own people. In addition, cultural barriers are normative and descriptive of the culture, not prescriptive of the church.<sup>28</sup>

McGavran writes, “It takes no great acumen to see that when marked differences of color, stature, income, cleanliness, and education are present, *unbelievers* understand the Gospel better when expounded by their own kind of people.”<sup>29</sup> This cultural phenomenon is often called “homophily” or literally, “love of the same.”<sup>30</sup> It is the people-consciousness of any HU.

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 163.

<sup>28</sup>C. Peter Wagner, *Church Growth & the Whole Gospel: A Biblical Mandate* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1998), 167.

<sup>29</sup>McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 167, emphasis added.

<sup>30</sup>There is no one single definition of homophily. However, there are common characteristics which remain salient throughout. First, homophily constitutes similarity or likeness between entities. The similarities are in characteristics such as location, origin, language or race. Second, homophily generally is

**Missiological method.** When McGavran used the phrase “like to become,” he meant that there is a preferred missiological method to communicate the gospel. It is a method of less resistance. It is a method which is understood as being more practical. While other methods might work, they would not be as efficient and effective from a stewardship perspective.

**Final product.** Because the HUP is one of many methods that one could use to evangelize, the HUP should be seen as a tool, task, or a process rather than a principle. In other words, the church is not required to use it but may find it beneficial to do so. McGavran used the words “to become” in the classical definition of the HUP because it is the initial stage or the starting point of being a Christian. As previously stated, McGavran understands this stage as the discipling stage, which he distinguishes from the perfecting stage.

What the people or homogeneous units are to become is also critical. They are to become Christians. This tool or process, then, is an evangelistic one. The purpose of

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used when describing the communicative relationship between people. That is, people who are similar in sociodemographic backgrounds are more likely to communicate because they are homophilous (Cook, McPherson, & Smith-Lovin, 2001). The common saying, ‘birds of a feather flock together,’ represents the elementary definition of homophily (McPherson and Rotolo, 2001). Conversely, the opposite of homophily would be heterophily or dissimilarity in persons (Bloch, Cameron, & Yin, 2001).” Mike Donnelly et al., “Embedded Journalism: How War is Viewed Differently from the Frontlines versus the Sidelines,” Department of Defense, <http://www.ou.edu/deptcomm/dodjcc/groups/03D1/INDEX.htm> (accessed March 28, 2013).

There are brief mentions of homophily in the volumes of data which discuss the HUP. For example, A. Scott Moreau refers to the homophily principle in discussing sociological and anthropological considerations of the HUP when he writes, “The HUP is similar to the homophily principle in communication (*Dynamics*, pp. 229-39), which is that we tend to share information with similar persons. One interesting aspect of this is that, ‘As a result of similarity, information is received more readily and persuasion occurs more frequently’ (Ibid., p. 232).” A. Scott Moreau, “The Homogeneous Unit Principle,” Docstoc, <http://www.docstoc.com/docs/2235726/The-Homogeneous-Unit-Principle-A-Scott-Moreau-1-What-is-the-H> (accessed March 28, 2013).

the HUP is not to build HU churches; it is to reach and to save the lost. McGavran writes, “Homogeneous unit churches that are only evangelizing their homogeneous unit are not pleasing to God.”<sup>31</sup> The purpose of the HUP is to fulfill the Great Commission.

### **Social Dislocation**

When McGavran talks about “without crossing barriers,” he means without denying and abandoning one’s own people. It is a concern for cultural sensitivity of one homogeneous unit toward another. By acknowledging and respecting the culture of a HU, one can be more effective and efficient in evangelistic efforts. What McGavran is emphasizing is that one should not expect people to be “perfected” before they are “discipled.”

No one should minimize the importance of perfecting. At the same time, all should be certain that undisciplined pagan multitudes must be added to the Lord before they can be perfected. The church exists not for herself, but for the world. She has been saved in order to save others. She always has a twofold task: winning unbelievers to Christ and growing in grace. While these tasks overlap, they are distinct. Neither should be slighted. Today’s great vision, which calls the churches to rectify injustices in their neighborhoods and nations, is good; but it must not supplant the vision that calls them to make disciples of all nations.<sup>32</sup>

Discipling should occur within a minimum of social dislocation. Becoming a Christian should be a religious decision, not a social decision. Thus initially, the primary focus of the evangelist and the one being evangelized is not on the social implications of the decision. Wagner explains,

If becoming a Christian involves a social rather than a religious or spiritual decision, most of them [unreached people] will not even hear it. They will choose to remain with their people, in their sins, and outside the kingdom of God. This is the central

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 73.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 123-24.

thrust of the homogeneous unit principle. It should not be interpreted as expounding the ideal way that *Christians* should relate to one another, but the way in which unbelievers become followers of Jesus Christ and responsible members of his church.<sup>33</sup>

Furthermore, social dislocation becomes a greater issue where people consciousness is higher. McGavran writes, “It is patently true that among societies with high people consciousness those methods of propagating the gospel which enable individuals to accept Christ without renouncing their peoples are blessed of God to the growth of his church.”<sup>34</sup>

### **Summarized Concepts**

By analyzing the HUP in the context that it was theorized and according to the man who theorized it, important concepts have been revealed. Those concepts include: McGavran’s heart for evangelism, his concern for stewardship, his understanding of receptiveness, and his desire for effectiveness. It was further shown that for McGavran, the HUP was a useful tool of clear communication which could be used in people groups in order to help prevent social dislocation.

These important concepts form the basis of a new or working definition of the HUP which this thesis formulates in the following way: “A stewardship strategy of evangelism which postulates that when receptive people are identified, the most effective and efficient tool of evangelistic communication occurs when people hear the gospel from their own people and are able to respond to the gospel with limited social

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<sup>33</sup>Wagner, *Church Growth & the Whole Gospel*, 167-68, emphasis Wagner’s.

<sup>34</sup>McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 156.

dislocation.” This new or working definition will serve as one basis of analysis in chapter 3.

### **HUP Illustrations**

As stated earlier, the HU is an elastic concept that is context driven. Therefore, it can be applied in a variety of ministry settings. Because McGavran served as a missionary in India, it is natural to first illustrate the HUP in a missionary field ministry setting. In discussing the missionary field, the new or working definition of the HUP will be emphasized. In addition, the HUP has obvious applications to planting churches. Thus, a brief illustration of the HUP in a church planting site will follow the missionary field setting. The primary focus of this thesis is one of applying the HUP in an established church. Therefore, the majority of the discussion and of illustrating the HUP will occur in an established church setting.

#### **Missionary Field**

The working or new definition of the HUP states that “when receptive people are identified.” While acknowledging the spiritual aspect of the principle of receptivity, the identification of receptive people is a pragmatic exercise. McGavran writes,

Columns of figures giving the membership of any church and its homogeneous units contain locked-up knowledge. By careful study the figures can be forced to reveal their secrets, but the process is tedious. When, however, each set of figures is transformed into a graph of growth, the secrets leap out at the reader. Those who would understand church growth should construct line graphs showing at a glance what has transpired. They can then ask why it happened.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 95.

In particular, what concerned McGavran is that the total church may appear to be growing, when in effect, only some parts were growing. The parts that were growing were probably due to a HU that was growing. Thus, McGavran writes, “It is particularly necessary for historians to see the growth history of homogeneous units when they set forth hypotheses as to growth. Otherwise they describe causes for growth that never took place, or relate as true for the whole what was true for only one of several parts.”<sup>36</sup> In fact, McGavran goes on to say, “Graphs of homogeneous unit church growth are essential.”<sup>37</sup>

After receptive people are identified and the reasons for growth are analyzed, the stewardship aspect is fairly obvious. Mission monies should flow to where people are responding to the gospel. McGavran writes,

Since the gospel is to be preached to all creatures, no Christian will doubt but that both the receptive and resistant people should hear it. And since gospel acceptors have an inherently higher priority than gospel rejectors, no one should doubt that, whenever it comes to a choice between reaping ripe fields or seeding others, the former is commanded by God.

Winning the winnable while they are winnable seems sound procedure. This is the strategic meaning of our Lord’s words, “beginning at Jerusalem.” While the Palestinian Jews were responsive, the Holy Spirit led the church to focus on them. The first fifteen years saw a powerful one-race church built up among the residents of Jerusalem and Judea. When either masses or classes are winnable, they should hear the gospel, be baptized, and added to churches that immediately, without pause to consolidate, go out to win their still receptive fellows.<sup>38</sup>

After receptive people are identified and mission monies are flowing to the receptive people, it is important to ask, “How can those people best be reached?” The

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 96.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 101.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 207.

message of the gospel is eternal, but the methods, institutions, and missionary personnel are contextual. Thus, the most effective and efficient tool of evangelistic communication occurs when people hear the gospel from their own people. McGavran writes,

Unless Christian leaders in all six continents are on the lookout for changes in receptivity of homogeneous units within the general population, and are prepared to seek and bring persons and groups belonging to these units into the fold, they will not even discern what needs to be done. They will continue generalized church and mission work that, shrouded in fog as to the chief end of mission, cannot fit outreach to increasing receptivity. An essential task is to discern receptivity and – when this is seen – to adjust methods, institutions, and personnel until the receptive are becoming Christians and reaching out to win their fellows to eternal life. *Effective* evangelism is demanded. It finds the lost, folds those found, feeds them on the word of God, and incorporates them into multitudes of new and old congregations. That is why it is called effective evangelism.<sup>39</sup>

Finally, after receptive people are identified; mission monies are flowing; and methods, institutions, and missionary personnel are contextualized, it is also important that people are permitted to respond to the gospel with limited social dislocation. As a social anthropologist, McGavran was sensitive to social norms and cultural pressures in the mission field. McGavran writes,

At this point I will repeat that most opposition to the Christian religion arises not from theological but from sociological causes. Individuals resist separating themselves from their own people to join another. This rouses their emotions. They then look around for reasons to back up their feelings of fear and disgust and announce that they reject Christianity because of some theological weakness in it. For example, Muslims say it is blasphemous to affirm that God has a Son; but for tens of thousands of Indonesian Muslims this theological objection vanished like the morning mist as soon as they found they could become Christians without abandoning their people. One should not affirm that theological objections are mere rationalizations, but it can scarcely be doubted that they have been greatly overrated. If Jews could come to Christ without losing their identity as Jews, many of their theological difficulties would – to say the least be greatly reduced, as Peter, James and John well know.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 192, emphasis McGavran's.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 239.

## Church-planting Site

As the father of the CGM, it is somewhat axiomatic that McGavran was interested in the growth of the church. What may not be as obvious is how McGavran envisioned the growth of the church. It was not primarily the growth of existing churches, but rather the growth of new churches. McGavran writes, “In understanding church growth it is not enough to see the faulty assumptions that prevent maximum multiplication of sound churches. We must go on to devise and operate intelligent and adequate plans for establishing church after church throughout the whole populations.”<sup>41</sup>

What is particularly interesting is the practical application of the HUP in the planting of new churches. In McGavran’s writings, elements of the HUP like cultural sensitivity, effective methods, and stewardship responsibility are apparent: “Their [God’s obedient servants] goal is to devise an intelligent plan for planting churches – one that fits their population, is similar to plans that have multiplied churches in other populations of this sort, and can be carried out with the resources God has put into their hands.”<sup>42</sup>

Finally, the planting of churches was seen as effective as neighbor evangelized neighbor. In fact, McGavran sees a great opportunity lost and denominations to be held accountable before God for the lack of recognizing God at work in the life of HUs. His passion for winning lost souls and his urgency for using an understanding of HUs in the growth, through church planting, of the church are apparent in his writings:

It is a sound principle that each national church evangelizes its neighborhood, and missionaries residing there help the church do so; but in case some national church sits calmly by, neglecting a homogeneous unit prepared to accept the gospel,

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 286.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 287.

God will not hold the mission guiltless that also sits calmly by, sharing the neglect. If the mission cannot inspire the church to action, it should draw a circle around each moribund congregation and in the vast territory outside the circles put into operation and intelligent and adequate plan for multiplying churches. The work is urgent, the day is far spent, and God want his lost children found. No church has the right to cordon off populations hungry for the word, neither feeding them nor permitting other churches to do so. “Dog in the manger” comity is displeasing to God. The sovereignty of each church should not be inflated to mean that its indifference to the salvation of the peoples of its land binds the hands of God’s people elsewhere.<sup>43</sup>

### **Established-church Setting**

Certainly, McGavran’s missionary background and education as a cultural anthropologist greatly influenced his understanding of using HUs in growing the church in the missionary field and in a church planting situation. Furthermore, as previously noted, the HUP should be understood as a very elastic concept. But the question may remain, “How can an understanding of HUs be used in the local church setting?” Furthermore, “Would McGavran agree with how HUs might be understood and used in the local church setting?”

McGavran answered both these questions in referencing the work of Lyle E. Schaller.<sup>44</sup> McGavran writes,

One of his [Schaller’s] most telling illustrations of homogeneous units *within* seemingly homogeneous wholes is this: young marrieds looked at one way are a single group. They are quite different from the senior citizens or the high schoolers. Looked at from a different angle, the young marrieds themselves have several groups within them. There are significant differences among the members of this

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 287.

<sup>44</sup>In this chap., the primary focus was to analyze the HUP in the context that it was theorized and according to the man who theorized it. Thus, it is important to reference McGavran when illustrating the HUP in these three ministry contexts. Chap. 3 will discuss the HUP from a missiological perspective and will include more analysis from other authors.

one group that older members refer to simply as “the young married couples.” Each of the following subgroups has different needs and schedules. (a) Many 22-year-old couples with no children feel nearly a generation younger than the 28-year-old husband with the 26-year-old wife and two children; (b) the couple with both husband and wife employed outside the home and the couple with only the husband employed; and (c) the couple born and reared in this community and the couple living 1,000 miles from “back home.”

Note that none of these homogeneous units on which Schaller focuses our attention is an ethnic or linguistic group. Yet they are important for church growth. The same kind of subgroupings affect the growth of churches in all continents. In many countries of Africa, for example, the early growth of the church has come from older school boys; but the *great* growth did not come until the mature started becoming Christian in groups of like-minded persons.

Men and women do like to become Christian with crossing barriers.<sup>45</sup>

In other words, an effective tool of evangelistic communication for 22-year-old couples with no children is another 22-year-old couples with no children. Likewise, the 28-year-old husband with the 26-year-old wife with children can best be reached with a similar demographic makeup.

As a practical application of the HUP in a local church environment, one way to effectively evangelize the community is to identify and relate to HUs at some level of need that they may have.<sup>46</sup> For example, recently divorced moms, a HU, may have a level of need and people-consciousness that the church can try to meet and evangelize. The evangelistic investment might be in offering a divorce recovery workshop. If the HU of recently divorced moms is receptive, the church would continue to invest in efforts to

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<sup>45</sup>McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 165-66, emphasis McGavran’s. It should also be noted that when McGavran referenced Schaller’s work, he uses the words “needs” and “feel” to reflect an anthropological phenomenon. The anthropological phenomenon of the needs of people represents an example of the elastic nature of the HUP. While it may be easy to categorize people with regard to race, language and class, it takes greater effort to identify and understand a HU at its level of need and then to be able to evangelize the HU.

<sup>46</sup>“People-consciousness” means that members of a HU “think of themselves as separate.” Ibid., 155.

evangelize the HU of recently divorced moms to its fringes. However, if the HU were not receptive, resources could be redirected and used in reaching other HUs through other ministries. The best allocation of resources is why the HUP is an important stewardship strategy of evangelism. By definition, resources are best allocated when HUs can be identified as responding. While this analysis is very pragmatic, McGavran recognizes God as the One who is moving people. The task of the evangelist is to identify those people whom God is moving and determine if a HU exists and if an HU exists, how best to evangelize that HU to its fringes.

Like missionaries, churches deal with limited funds. Furthermore, a church could feel overwhelmed with the amount of diversity among unchurched people, HUs, in their ministry setting. Nevertheless, despite limited funds and the wide variety of HUs, the church must remain faithful to the Great Commission and to use the HUP tool.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

McGavran believed that the discipling process was not complete until unbelievers become responsible church members or fruit bearing disciples.<sup>47</sup> In a local church setting, many unchurched people may think of themselves as Christians, but remain unchurched in a variety of homogeneous units. Thus, the church needs to disciple these people until they become responsible church members or fruit bearing disciples. One important, but overlooked way to reaching these unchurched homogeneous units is to identify and to relate to them at their point of people-consciousness – their HU. The

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<sup>47</sup>Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth*, 20, 35.

HUP is an effective and efficient stewardship strategy or evangelistic tool which attempts to identify receptive people and allow the communication of the gospel to flow naturally within their group without forcing the receptive people only to hear the gospel in the “language” of another group of people.

## CHAPTER 3

### A BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL AND, MISSIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE HOMOGENEOUS UNIT PRINCIPLE

In chapter 2 of this D.Min. research thesis, the homogeneous unit principle (HUP) was examined in the context that it was theorized – a missionary setting – and from the perspective of the man who theorized it – Donald McGavran.<sup>1</sup> When both the context and the author’s perspective were examined, key concepts emerged. Those concepts included: McGavran’s heart for evangelism, his concern for stewardship, his understanding of receptiveness, and his desire for effectiveness. It was further shown that for McGavran, the HUP was a useful tool of clear communication which could be applied to people groups in order to help prevent social dislocation. As a result of this examination and from the key concepts that emerged, a working definition of the HUP was formulated as follows:

A stewardship strategy of evangelism which postulates that when receptive people are identified, the most effective and efficient tool of evangelistic communication occurs when people hear the gospel from their own people and are able to respond to the gospel with limited social dislocation.

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<sup>1</sup>Unless otherwise noted, all references to “thesis” in this chap. refers to this D.Min. research thesis.

A homogeneous unit is “simply a section of society in which all the members have some characteristic in common.” Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, rev. and ed. C. Peter Wagner, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1990), 81; cf. 69. The HUP deals with the “evangelization” of that homogeneous unit.

The eventual goal of this chapter was to evaluate the working definition of the HUP from a biblical, theological, and missiological perspective. As discussed earlier in this thesis, “the homogeneous unit [HU] is an elastic concept, its meaning depending on the context in which it is used.”<sup>2</sup> Likewise then, the HUP is context driven and can be applied in a variety of ministry settings: missionary, church planting, or a local church.<sup>3</sup> Much of the conversation and controversy surrounding the HUP comes from a church planting ministry context in which the HUP was used to establish or maintain homogeneous unit churches (HUCs). The context and focus of this thesis is on the ministry setting of a local church.

The application of the HUP in a local church setting will by nature differ from using the HUP for the establishment of HUCs. In fact, one hypothesis of this thesis is that the failure to recognize and utilize the HUP as a tool in evangelism can actually lead to HUCs, which is the primary criticism of the HUP. In other words, the homogeneity of a local church may adversely affect the church’s ability to reach different people groups within its community. To reach different people groups by use of the HUP in evangelism poses both a challenge and opportunity with regard to people consciousness.<sup>4</sup> The

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 70.

<sup>3</sup>This thesis used the term “church planting ministry setting” to mean the establishment of new homogeneous unit churches as well as applying the HUP to maintain homogeneous unit churches. The local church setting was understood to mean an established church who applies the HUP in an attempt to reach new people groups.

Note the error in Ralph Elliott’s writing when he misrepresents the thesis of church growth: “The basic thesis of the church growth movement is that churches must be built with only homogeneous people.” Ralph H. Elliott, *Church Growth That Counts* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1982), 44.

<sup>4</sup>“People consciousness” arises or exists when members of a HU “think of themselves as separate.” McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 155.

challenge of people consciousness in evangelism comes in the degree of people consciousness that any one particular HU has. The opportunity of people consciousness in evangelism is to understand how any “barrier” of people consciousness can best be overcome. The failure to understand that there are HU’s and that they have varying degrees of people consciousness, or the failure to use the HUP as an evangelism tool, may result in the church reaching people groups only like themselves. Thus, not using the HUP highly correlates to the probability that there are HUs that are not being effectively evangelized because of their people consciousness.

Because much of the controversy of the HUP lies in the application of the HUP in a church planting setting, it was not be the purpose of this thesis to provide a history of the theological arguments, both pro and con, concerning the HUP. On the other hand, before the eventual goal of evaluating the working definition of the HUP can be realized, there are items concerning the history of the HUP that must be addressed and discussed.

As a church growth topic, the HUP has been extensively analyzed.<sup>5</sup> One important analysis comes as a result of the Lausanne Covenant.<sup>6</sup> Following the

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<sup>5</sup>The conversation and the controversy surrounding the HUP can be seen most extensively in the body of literature from the 1970s to early 1980s. By 1990, Kent Hunter writes, “It used to be that church growth people talked a lot about the homogeneous unit principle. However, now those words are rarely used.” Kent R. Hunter, “What Ever Happened to the Homogeneous Unit Principle?” *Global Church Growth* 27, no. 14 (1990): 1. Synonyms for the HUP will be discussed in chap. 5 of this thesis.

<sup>6</sup>In 1974, Christians from a variety of nations and churches met in Lausanne, Switzerland (International Congress on World Evangelization, also known as the Lausanne Movement) and formulated a set of theological pronouncements known as Lausanne Covenant. Tom Houston, “The Story of the Lausanne Covenant: Case Study in Cooperation,” Lausanne Movement, <http://www.lausanne.org/en/gatherings/global-congress/lausanne-1974/story-of-the-covenant.html> (accessed March 28, 2013).

The importance of the Lausanne Movement is explained by Thom Rainer: “No contemporary body of literature has shaped church growth’s theology so much as the literature that emerged from the International Congress of World Evangelization in Lausanne in 1974.” Thom S. Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth: History, Theology, and Principles* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 74.

Lausanne Covenant, a task group was formed to explore implications of the covenant, of which the first implication to be explored was the HUP:

The Lausanne Theology and Education group (LTEG) was set up by the Executive of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization during its meeting in Berlin in September 1976. Its task is to promote theological reflection on issues related to world evangelization and, in particular, to explore the implications of the Lausanne Covenant.

Charged with this responsibility, LTEG chose as the first topic for discussion – the controversial “homogeneous unit principle,” which has been developed by Fuller Seminary’s School of World Mission.<sup>7</sup>

The analysis from the LTEG is both a summary and evaluation of the HUP. Furthermore, the analysis came from a joint consultation of both proponents and opponents of the HUP. Therefore, the analysis provides a good starting point in continuing the conversation of the HUP. Also, as discussed earlier in this thesis, the controversy surrounding the HUP can be characterized in some degree as miscommunication.<sup>8</sup> At the heart of the miscommunication are differing core values which affect one’s view of the church, missions, evangelism, and God’s involvement in the church, missions, and evangelism. Therefore, an extensive review of LTEG analysis, supporting documentation, and other related material was performed to identify specific

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<sup>7</sup>Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, *The Pasadena Consultation on the Homogeneous Unit* (Wheaton, IL: Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 1978), 1.

In addition to the LTEG analysis calling it controversial, John Wimber writes in the foreword to an important church growth book, “By far the most criticized and misunderstood of all church growth principles is the homogeneous unit principle (HUP).” C. Peter Wagner, *Church Growth & The Whole Gospel: A Biblical Mandate* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1998), Foreword. The body of literature concerning the HUP supports Wimber’s assertion. Cf. Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth*, 254.

<sup>8</sup>Kent Hunter writes, “The reason for rejection by so many may lie in poor communication. That may partly be due to deficiency among church growth teachers and partly due to the enormous paradigm shift or world-view change that is necessary for many to grasp the homogeneous unit principle. Further, the fires of controversy may be fanned by the conceptual nature of the homogeneous unit principle which many people, especially literalists, would find difficult to internalize.” Hunter, “What Ever Happened to the Homogeneous Unit Principle?,” 1.

issues related to the miscommunication and core values that dominated the conversation of the HUP for so long. The issues that were identified and need to be addressed and discussed are as follows:

1. An understanding of the church in terms of ownership (Who does the church belong to?) and an understanding of the church in terms of growth (Who or what makes the church grow?)
2. An understanding of the church in terms of unity with an emphasis on *koinonia* (fellowship)<sup>9</sup>
3. The content of the gospel message
4. The nature of repentance in relation to faith
5. The mandates of the church and their respective priorities
6. The nature of grace in relation to evangelism

To discuss these six items as well as the working definition of the HUP, this chapter will be divided into four sections: God's church, God's mission, God's work, and God's tool. The section on God's church will discuss (1) an understanding of the church in terms of ownership and growth, and (2) an understanding of the church in terms of unity with an emphasis on *koinonia*. The section on God's mission will concentrate on (3) the content of the gospel message, (4) the nature of repentance in relation to faith, and (5) the mandates of the church and their respective priorities. The section on God's work will discuss (6) the nature of grace in relation to evangelism. After discussing these six items, the working definition of the HUP from chapter 2 of this thesis will be analyzed in the section God's tool. A final section entitled biblical paradigm, will briefly summarize

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<sup>9</sup>The most common translation of *κοινωνία* is "fellowship," which may imply simply friendship or camaraderie. Therefore, the transliteration of *κοινωνία* – *koinonia* – will be used instead of fellowship to convey a stronger, deeper, and more meaningful connotation than that of fellowship.

and conclude this chapter. In addition to the five sections above, an exposition of Acts 2:42 is found in Appendix 1.

The primary focus of analysis for all sections will be from a biblical perspective. The theological analysis will show how the working definition of the HUP fits in a systematic understanding of God at work. The missiological perspective will simply highlight and continue a conversation on how proponents and opponents view various aspects of the HUP.

### **God's Church**

As previously stated, a view of the church is a core value and part of the miscommunication surrounding the HUP. There are questions as to what constitutes a legitimate, authentic, and complete church in the terms of its makeup as well as how does a church grow to maturity. The LTEG analysis states,

All of us are agreed that in many situations a homogeneous unit church can be a legitimate and authentic church. Yet we are also agreed that it can never be complete in itself. Indeed, if it remains in isolation, it cannot reflect the universality and diversity of the Body of Christ. Nor can it grow into maturity. Therefore, every HU church must take active steps to broaden its fellowship in order to demonstrate visibly the unity and the variety of Christ's church. This will mean forging with other and different churches creative relationships which express the reality of Christian love, brotherhood, and interdependence.<sup>10</sup>

Specifically, with regards to the church and unity, there exists a false dichotomy between the application of the HUP and *koinonia*.<sup>11</sup> HUP opponents appear

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<sup>10</sup>Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, *The Pasadena Consultation on the Homogeneous Unit*, 4-5.

<sup>11</sup>This criticism of the HUP is in the application of the HUP in a church planting ministry setting which was described as the establishment of new HUCs as well as applying the HUP to maintain HUCs.

to measure the “true” *koinonia* of a church by the amount of cultural diversity.<sup>12</sup> Or, that the unity of a church can only be seen or demonstrated by the diversity of the membership of the church.<sup>13</sup>

To discuss the issues surrounding the church, this section, God’s church, will be divided into two parts. The first part will be called *ἐκκλησία*, which is the Greek word that is most often translated as “church.” The purpose of this part is as follows: (1) to highlight the ownership of church which has implications with regards to the makeup, legitimacy, and completeness of the church, and (2) to introduce an understanding of how does a church grow.<sup>14</sup> The second part of this section will be called *κοινωνία*. The

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<sup>12</sup>Ralph Elliott writes, “This view [of HUCs] contrasts with the very understanding of the church as being inclusive of all people, as they are represented in the community of which I am a part. At the same time, case study records make it clear that the church growth philosophy and methodology obviously succeed in building a ‘religious institution.’ Its greatest danger may be that it obviously succeeds.” Elliott, *Church Growth That Counts*, 13-14.

Again, this thesis is not suggesting that the HUP opponents’ definition of *koinonia* is cultural diversity. Rather, as stated, it is suggesting that cultural diversity appears to be a measuring stick of their understanding of *koinonia*. HUP opponents argue that when the HUP is employed, the resulting “church” fails to, or is in danger of failing to, live up to the New Testament ideal of *koinonia*.

<sup>13</sup>René Padilla writes, “The New Testament clearly shows that the apostles, while rejecting ‘assimilationist racism,’ never contemplated the possibility of forming homogeneous unit churches that would then express their unity in terms of interchurch relationships. Each church was meant to portray *the oneness of its members* regardless of their racial, cultural, or social differences, and in order to reach that the apostles suggested practical measures.” C. René Padilla, “The Unity of the Church and the Homogeneous Unit Principle,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 6, no. 1 (January 1982): 29, emphasis in original.

Notice how Padilla uses the phrase “homogenous unit churches.” In the term HUP, the word “principle” should be understood as descriptive of the culture, not descriptive of the church. When the word “principle” is incorrectly applied toward the church, then it is understood as an ecclesiastical necessity. That is, because the culture has placed on itself certain barriers, the church also needs to have those barriers. However, when the word “principle” is correctly applied toward the culture, then the term can be understood as a tool of social analysis. Thus, what are the barriers that this culture has placed on itself and what impact will those barriers have on the evangelistic mandate?

<sup>14</sup>The growth of the church is discussed in more detail under the section entitled God’s work. Understanding the growth of the church in relation to a systematic theological framework of “God is at work” is at the core of comprehending and applying the HUP in a local church setting. Chap. 5 explores practical implications of God’s work for the church.

purpose of this part is more complex: to formulate a definition of the church as *koinonia*.<sup>15</sup>

### *Ἐκκλησία*

It is necessary to make some general observations concerning the Greek word that is often translated into English as church, *ἐκκλησία*.<sup>16</sup> The most frequent modifying clause concerning the church is that the church is “of God” (τοῦ θεοῦ).<sup>17</sup> The phrase is more than descriptive, it concerns ownership. Thus, Jesus states that the church is “my church” (Matt 16:18).<sup>18</sup> Similarly, Paul refers to “the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea” (1 Thess 2:14) as well as “the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thess 1:1). The issue of ownership is important concerning the makeup of the church. As Christians in a church, they are not their “own,” for they were “bought with a price” (1 Cor 7:19-20). Consequently, they are “slaves” (δούλοις, Acts 4:29) of the “Lord,” people who were “obtained with his [Jesus’] own blood” (Acts 20:28). Thus, to be “one in Christ” and to break down the “dividing

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<sup>15</sup>By defining the church as *koinonia*, this thesis is not suggesting that they are the same or can be used interchangeably at all times. Rather, it is suggesting that an understanding of church and *koinonia* overlap. Thus, there are certain contexts when you can interchange the two words – church and *koinonia* – without changing the meaning of the text.

<sup>16</sup>Van Engen notes that “a word study of *ekklēsia* [the called out ones; an assembly; the assembled ones] tells us little about the reason for which the group is called, the purposes and goals of the group, or the parameters that determine who is part of the group.” A. Scott Moreau, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), s.v. “Church,” by Charles Van Engen. Therefore, in order to understand these items in relationship to the church, the church will be defined as *koinonia* later in this chap.

<sup>17</sup>Cf. “the household of God, which is the church” (1 Tim 3:15).

<sup>18</sup>Unless otherwise noted, all biblical quotations are from the English Standard Version. Greek biblical references are from Barbara Aland et al., *The Greek New Testament*, 4th ed. (Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1993).

wall of hostility” is about the blood of Christ (Eph 2:13-14). Therefore, the issue is not whether a church is heterogeneous or homogeneous; the issue is whether or not the “assembly” belongs to God – purchased and obtained by the price of Jesus’ blood. Therefore, any group of people that God “assembles together” is by definition a church and thus legitimate and authentic – whether it is heterogeneous or homogeneous.<sup>19</sup> The significance of ownership through Jesus’ blood, justification (Rom 5:9), will be explored below in the section God’s mission.<sup>20</sup>

The issue of ownership is also important concerning the growth of the church. As the owner of the church, God expects His church to grow (the Great Commission).<sup>21</sup> The Bible teaches that the body, the church, is to grow up into the head, Jesus (Eph 4:15). Furthermore, the Bible teaches that God is the one who grows His church (1 Cor 3:6-7). Likewise, Jesus stated that he would “build” his “church” (Matt 16:18). To understand the growth of the church is to understand the ownership of the church and vice versa. Therefore, as Paul teaches, one should hold fast “to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, *grows with a growth*

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<sup>19</sup>This thesis is not suggesting that any group of people who call themselves a church is legitimate and authentic. There are marks of the church, like preaching and sound doctrine, which would help one discern the legitimacy and authenticity of a church. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss those marks. Jesus’ parable of the wheat and tares (Matt 13:24-30) is an acknowledgement of false doctrine.

<sup>20</sup>“Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. Justification brings the believer unto a relationship of peace and favor with God.” Baptist Faith and Message Study Committee, “Baptist Faith and Message 2000,” Southern Baptist Convention, <http://www.sbc.net/bfm/bfm2000.asp> (accessed March 28, 2013).

<sup>21</sup>Growth that is expected is both numerical and spiritual. Robert K. Hudnut in his book, *Church Growth Is Not the Point* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1975), confirms McGavran’s fears that “slight church growth characterizes many whole denominations, both liberal and conservative. Worse, the lack of growth is taken as natural and unavoidable.” McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 34.

*that is from God*” (Col 2:19, emphasis added). Therefore, the issue is not the HUP; the issue is whether or not God is growing His church.<sup>22</sup> Any “assembly” that God “grows together” is by definition a church and thus legitimate and authentic – whether it is heterogeneous or homogeneous. The significance of God causing the growth will be explored below in the section God’s work.<sup>23</sup>

At times, the leaders of the church are often distinguished from the church as a whole by titles like prophets and teachers (Acts 13:1) or apostles and elders (Acts 15:22).<sup>24</sup> From Ephesians 4:11-16, the Bible teaches concerning leadership that (1) God is the one who gives the leadership to the church, (2) the leaders have an equipping ministry to the church, (3) the church has a service ministry, and (4) the service ministry builds up the body, and (5) the body unites and matures (Eph 4:11-16). Thus, building up

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<sup>22</sup>Critics of the HUP argue that in some cases, by applying the HUP, the resulting church, and hence the growth of the universal church, is not what God desires. Orlando Costas writes, “Not all church growth is good. There is good and bad, positive and negative, healthy and unwholesome, Christian and demonic church growth. Only to the extent that the growth of the church takes place in a liberating context; only when it affects in depth both the personal life of men and women and their structured life situations can the growth of the church be understood as a legitimate expression of God’s mission.” Orlando E. Costas, *The Church and its Mission: A Shattering Critique from the Third World* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1976), 310.

There is the possibility that the HUP can be wrongly applied. Wagner writes, “Just as a knife can be used as an instrument of mercy in a surgical operation or as an instrument of horror in a murder, the homogeneous unit principle can be used for good or bad. Properly applied, it can be an effective force to reduce racism; wrongly applied, it can support racism. It must be admitted that the principle carries with it an element of risk.” Wagner, *Church Growth & The Whole Gospel*, 169.

This thesis is not defending HUCs in applying the HUP to maintain HUCs. Rather, the HUP is being supported so that a church can apply the HUP in reaching new people groups. Properly understood, the HUP is “a tool which many have found helpful in implementing the evangelistic mandate.” *Ibid.*, 167.

<sup>23</sup>Understanding the growth of the church in relation to a systematic theological framework of “God is at work” is at the core of comprehending and applying the HUP in a local church setting. Some of the criticism of the HUP, and of the CGM, is in its pragmatism. However, properly understood, the pragmatism is the result of one simply recognizing and responding to God at work. Chap. 5 will discuss the HUP in relation to God’s sovereignty and human responsibility.

<sup>24</sup>Eph 4:11 and 1 Cor 12:28 list examples of church leadership.

the body in unity and to maturity is from God – a process referred to as sanctification.<sup>25</sup>

The significance of sanctification will be explored below in the section God’s mission.

Another descriptive modifier of the church in the Bible concerns location. It is the church in Jerusalem (Acts 8:3), the church at Antioch (Acts 13:1), or even house churches (1 Cor 16:19). By geographic description then, it is understood that each church has a local, cultural context. As local churches, completeness does not come because there are Jerusalem Christians at the church of Antioch or Corinthian Christians at the church of Rome. Completeness comes in the sufficiency of God’s grace (2 Cor 9:8) through God bringing people together (1 Cor 12:13) as He chooses (1 Cor 12:18).<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, the people that God brings together: He gives a “diversity” of spiritual gifts, but all from the “same” Spirit; He gives a “diversity” of service, but all from the “same” Lord; and, He gives a “diversity” of activities, but empowered by the “same” God (1 Cor 12:4-6). In other words, the unity in diversity comes from God’s gift of “the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (1 Cor 12:7).

Completeness can further be understood when Paul refers to “the churches of the Gentiles” (Rom 16:4). This reference by Paul is understood as a fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:3, “in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (cf. Gal 3:8). This promise was a “yes” in Jesus Christ (2 Cor 1:20).

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<sup>25</sup>“Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God’s purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person’s life.” Baptist Faith and Message Study Committee, “Baptist Faith and Message 2000,” Southern Baptist Convention, <http://www.sbc.net/bfm/bfm2000.asp> (accessed March 28, 2013).

<sup>26</sup>Although 2 Cor 9:8 concerns the sufficiency of God’s grace in the believer being free to give generously with regard to finances, it is illustrative and applicable to makeup of the church. Cf. Phil 4:19.

Consequently, Christians are “one in Christ Jesus” in that all – Jews and Gentiles – are heirs according to the promise (Gal 3:28-29). Therefore, all are justified and redeemed by his death on the cross (Gal 3:11-12) “so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith” (Gal 3:14). The receipt of the Holy Spirit is called regeneration.<sup>27</sup> The significance of regeneration will be explored below in the section God’s church.

Completeness, then, is not about cultural diversity in any one, local church because it is bigger than any church in a local, cultural context. It is about the gospel being preached to all the nations (Matt 24:14; Mark 13:10; Luke 24:47; Rev 14:6) or to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8). The purpose of which is to fulfill God’s promise to David (2 Sam 7:4-17) in which David’s offspring (Jesus) will “build a house for my name [the church (Matt 16:18; 1 Tim 3:15)] and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever” (2 Sam 7:13).<sup>28</sup> Therefore, completeness is about the kingdom of God and His Christ (Rev 11:15) and the kingdom is bigger than any one, local church.<sup>29</sup> The significance of the kingdom of God will be explored below in the section “God’s Mission.”

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<sup>27</sup>“Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace.” Baptist Faith and Message Study Committee, “Baptist Faith and Message 2000,” Southern Baptist Convention, <http://www.sbc.net/bfm/bfm2000.asp> (accessed March 28, 2013).

<sup>28</sup>The kingdom is about both the reign or rule of God and the realm of God’s rule. It is both a present reality and an eschatological hope. Moreau, *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, s.v. “Kingdom of God,” by Arthur F. Glasser.

<sup>29</sup>Vicedom explains, “There is danger that the church itself may become the point of departure, the purpose, the subject of the mission. This is not, however, in accord with Scripture, since it is always the Triune God who acts, who makes His believers members of His kingdom. Even the church is only an instrument in the hands of God. The church herself is only the outcome of the activity of God who sends

In concluding, the issue about being an authentic church is whether or not the “assembly” belongs to God – purchased and obtained by the price of Jesus’ blood. If the assembly is a church, then the issue becomes is God growing the church – not how God chooses to grow the church (as in the HUP). One may question, “If the church has been purchased by God and He causes it to grow in relation to the fulfillment of His promises, then why is the church not perfect?” The answer lies in sin, sanctification, and glorification, all of which are discussed under the section God’s mission.<sup>30</sup>

### **Κοινωνία**

There are many ways to define and understand the word “church.”<sup>31</sup> Therefore, because there are many ways to define and understand the word “church” and because of a false dichotomy between the HUP and *koinonia*, for the purposes of this thesis, this thesis will use an understanding of the church by defining it as *koinonia*.

*Κοινωνία* is translated by several different English words throughout the New Testament. Table 1 has the word *κοινωνία* translated in five versions of the Bible.

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and saves.” Georg F. Vicedom, *The Mission of God: An Introduction to a Theology of Mission*, trans. Gilbert A. Thiele and Dennis Hilgendorf (St. Louis: Concordia, 1965), 4-5.

<sup>30</sup>“Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed.” Baptist Faith and Message Study Committee, “Baptist Faith and Message 2000,” Southern Baptist Convention, <http://www.sbc.net/bfm/bfm2000.asp> (accessed March 28, 2013).

<sup>31</sup>Moreau, *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, s.v. “Church,” by Charles Van Engen. Van Engen describes six ways to define or describe the church. They include (1) doing a word study of *ἐκκλησία*, (2) formulating a propositional definition, (3) using NT metaphors of the church, (4) using ecumenical creeds, (5) using “seemingly contradictory characteristics” such as “the church is both divine and human,” and (6) understanding the “shape” which the church has taken throughout its missionary expansion around the world.

Table 1. Translation of *κοινωνία*

Reference	ESV	NASB	NIV	HCSB	RSV
Acts 2:42	fellowship	fellowship	fellowship	fellowship	fellowship
Rom 15:26	contribution	contribution	contribution	contribution	contribution
1 Cor 1:9	fellowship	fellowship	fellowship	fellowship	fellowship
1 Cor 10:16	participation	sharing	participation	sharing	participation
1 Cor 10:16	participation	sharing	participation	sharing	participation
2 Cor 6:14	fellowship	fellowship	fellowship	fellowship	fellowship
2 Cor 8:4	part	participation	sharing	sharing	part
2 Cor 9:13	contribution	contribution	sharing	sharing	contribution
2 Cor 13:14	fellowship	fellowship	fellowship	fellowship	fellowship
Gal 2:9	fellowship	fellowship	fellowship	fellowship	fellowship
Phil 1:5	partnership	participation	partnership	partnership	partnership
Phil 2:1	participation	fellowship	common sharing	fellowship	participation
Phil 3:10	share	fellowship	participation	fellowship	share
Phlm 6	sharing	fellowship	partnership	participation	sharing
Heb 13:16	share	sharing	share	share	share
1 John 1:3	fellowship	fellowship	fellowship	fellowship	fellowship
1 John 1:3	fellowship	fellowship	fellowship	fellowship	fellowship
1 John 1:6	fellowship	fellowship	fellowship	fellowship	fellowship
1 John 1:7	fellowship	fellowship	fellowship	fellowship	fellowship

As can be gleaned from Table 1, the translation of *κοινωνία* varies and is dependent on the context. In addition, *κοινωνία* has several cognates that are important for a deeper understanding of the word as it relates to a definition of the church. Three of the important cognates are *κοινός*, *κοινωνέω*, and *κοινωνός*. *Κοινός* means shared or

common.<sup>32</sup> Κοινωνέω means to share or participate in something.<sup>33</sup> Κοινωνός is the one who is sharing or participating in something, hence a partner or companion.<sup>34</sup>

Κοινωνία is a close partnership or companionship, hence an association, communion, or fellowship.<sup>35</sup> From κοινωνία and its cognates, three important concepts emerge – relationship, purpose, and interdependency – which will help in defining the word with respect to the church.

**Relationship.** As Christians, one shares a common faith (κοινήν πίστιν, Titus 1:4) or a common salvation (κοινῆς ἡμῶν σωτηρίας, Jude 3). Thus, one’s relationship is in Christ (ἐν Χριστῷ) and that common relationship then becomes the basis of unity or oneness.<sup>36</sup> This unity or oneness does not emanate from the cultural diversity of the church, but from being born again (ἀναγεννήσας).<sup>37</sup> Thus, two people who are in Christ have *koinonia* because of that relationship, regardless of whether they are of the

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<sup>32</sup>Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, ed. and trans. William F. Arndt, F. Wilber Gingrich, and Frederick W. Danker, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), s.v. “κοινός.”

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., s.v. “κοινωνέω.”

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., s.v. “κοινωνός.”

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., s.v. “κοινωνία.”

<sup>36</sup>As seen in Rom 12:5, “so we, though many, are one body in Christ [ἐν Χριστῷ], and individually members one of another.” See also Gal 3:28, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus [ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ].”

<sup>37</sup>As seen in 1 Pet 1:3, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again [ἀναγεννήσας] to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” See also 1 Pet 1:23, “since you have been born again [ἀναγεγεννημένοι], not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God,” Cf. John 3:3, 7, “born from above” (γεννηθῆναι ἄνωθεν).

same or a different cultural background. In other words, church *koinonia* emanates from and is demonstrated through a common relationship. It does not emanate from nor is it demonstrated by people with different cultural backgrounds.

Furthermore, although *koinonia* means any sort of group or association, it is a favorite expression of the marriage relationship.<sup>38</sup> By understanding *koinonia* in the context of the intimate and close relationship of marriage, one can see the mystical tie that binds two hearts as one, and it serves as a good analogy of the binding of Christian hearts in Christian love.<sup>39</sup> Thus, *koinonia* is the intimate and mystical relationship that Christians share one with another because of the rebirth by the Holy Spirit and their being the children of God.<sup>40</sup>

**Purpose.** However, for purposes of understanding the church as *koinonia*, *koinonia* is more than an intimate and mystical relationship that is rooted and grounded in love. *Koinonia* involves a relationship that has a purpose or mutual interest that goes

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<sup>38</sup>Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, s.v. “κοινωνία.”

<sup>39</sup>“Their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God’s mystery, which is Christ” (Col 2:2). “God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (Rom 5:5). “So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love” (Eph 3:17). “The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.” (1 Tim 1:5). “Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart” (1 Pet 1:22).

<sup>40</sup>“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all” (2 Cor 13:14). “Knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God” (1 Pet 1:18-23).

beyond itself.<sup>41</sup> Generally that purpose is very altruistic, and words like generosity, sharing, and contributing are used in translating the Greek word into English.<sup>42</sup> One purpose of the church's *koinonia* is the gospel (εὐαγγέλιον).<sup>43</sup> Thus, a unity of relationship (“called [ἐκλήθητε] into the fellowship [εἰς κοινωνίαν] of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord”) is closely tied to the unity of purpose (“your partnership [ἡ κοινωνία ὑμῶν] in the gospel [εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον]”).<sup>44</sup> As Christians, it is the unity of relationship (being born again and being the children of God) and the unity of purpose (God's mission) which help to establish *koinonia* in the church.

**Interdependency.** But relationship with a purpose is still deficient when understanding the church as *koinonia*. *Koinonia* is not actualized until believers participate with other believers in working toward their common purpose.<sup>45</sup> *Koinonia* is an outward expression (participation with one another in accomplishing God's mission) of an inward reality (the relationship among believers through being born again). This

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<sup>41</sup>Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, s.v. “κοινωνία.” Phlm 6, “I pray that the sharing [κοινωνία] of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ.”

<sup>42</sup>Cf. Table 1 and the translation of κοινωνικός in 1 Tim 6:18, “They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share [κοινωνικός].”

<sup>43</sup>From Phil 1:5, “your partnership [κοινωνία] in the gospel [εὐαγγέλιον].” An understanding of the church's gospel purpose will be explored in the next section God's mission.

<sup>44</sup>From 1 Cor 1:9 and Phil 1:5 respectively. Cf. 1 John 1:3, “that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us [κοινωνία of purpose]; and indeed our fellowship [κοινωνία of relationship] is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

<sup>45</sup>Paul's joy comes from the church participating or partnering in the gospel: “I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership [κοινωνία] in the gospel from the first day until now” (Phil 1:3-5).

interdependency can be seen in Paul’s understanding of the church as the body of Christ in 1 Corinthians 12:12-31. Though commendable and valuable, the key to unity in the body of Christ is not in bringing together cultural differences of race, gender, or economic background. Rather it is bringing together the different gifts of the Spirit to work together and function as the body of Christ.

**Definition.** Because there many ways to define and understand the word “church” and because of a false dichotomy between the HUP and *koinonia*, for the purposes of this thesis, an understanding of the church would be formulated by defining the church as *koinonia*. Three important concepts emerged – relationship, purpose, and interdependency – from a review of *κοινωνία* and its cognates.

These concepts help to define *koinonia* in relationship to the church as follows: *koinonia* is the born-again relationship among believers that expresses itself in participation with one another in the gospel. Likewise then, the church can be understood and defined as the born-again relationship among believers that expresses itself in participation with one another in the gospel. Therefore, when stressing the church in the born-again relationship or in the participation in the gospel, this thesis will refer to the church as a *koinonia church*.

By examining the translations of *κοινωνία* in Table 1, there are two possible examples in Scripture that support an understanding of the church as *κοινωνία* where the words are interchangeable.<sup>46</sup> One possible example is Acts 2:42, “And they devoted

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<sup>46</sup>By defining the church as *koinonia*, this thesis is not suggesting that they are the same or can be interchangeably at all times. Rather, it is suggesting that an understanding of church and *koinonia*

themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers."<sup>47</sup> Hence, it could be reasonably understood that they devoted themselves to the church. The other example is 1 Corinthians 1:9, "God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." Hence, it could be reasonably understood that people are called into Jesus' church. To relate a *koinonia* church to the HUP requires further investigation into the term, "the gospel," which are discussed under the next section God's mission.

### God's Mission

Views of mission and evangelism are other core values and part of the miscommunication surrounding the HUP. For the purposes of this thesis, God's mission, or *missio Dei*, will be "everything God does for the communication of salvation and, in a narrower sense, everything the church itself is sent to do."<sup>48</sup> To evangelize will be understood as part of God's mission in the world through the church.<sup>49</sup> The issue

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overlap. Thus, there are certain contexts when one can interchange them without changing the meaning of the text.

<sup>47</sup>Acts 2:42 and its related context are particularly intriguing. Some of the issues surrounding the HUP are present in the narrative. Thus, Acts 2:42, along with its related context, will be examined in more detail in Appendix 1.

Also, in studying Acts 2:42, there is a definition of *koinonia* by A. T. Robertson that is similar to the one of this thesis, "A relation between individuals which involves a common interest and a mutual, active participation in that interest and in each other." Marvin Richardson Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2002), Acts 2:42.

<sup>48</sup>Moreau, *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, s.v. "*Missio Dei*," by John A. McIntosh. McIntosh describes this understanding of *missio Dei* as a comprehensive definition claimed by ecumenicals. For the purposes of this thesis, salvation will be considered as "the rescue of humans from the cause and effects of sin." Ibid., s.v. "Salvation," by Edward N. Gross.

<sup>49</sup>To evangelize, *εὐαγγελίζω*, means announcing the good news, *εὐαγγέλιον*. Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, s.v. "*εὐαγγελίζω*" and "*εὐαγγέλιον*" respectively.

surrounding the HUP is what is the scope of evangelism? Should evangelism be narrowly understood as reaching and saving the lost? Or, should it also include ministering to the needs and preaching against the sins of society? In effect, what is the content of the gospel message? Specifically, what is the correct understanding of repentance in the gospel message?

To relate these core values of mission and evangelism to the HUP involves further investigation into two items in a *koinonia church*. They are (1) what is the gospel, and (2) how do born-again believers participate in the gospel with one another? To address the first question, two aspects of the gospel are discussed. First, the gospel is a proclamation which has specific, historical content. Second, as a proclamation, the gospel calls for a response. Thus, the gospel involves both a proclamation and a response. To address the second question, a third aspect of the gospel will be addressed. Acceptance of the gospel proclamation necessitates obedience through participation in the gospel's purposes.<sup>50</sup> Prior to the discussion of the Gospel's proclamation, response, and participation, there is a necessity to recognize the need behind the gospel. Finally, this section – God's mission – will conclude with a summary based on the Pentecost narrative and a related excerpt from the LTEG analysis.<sup>51</sup> Therefore, this section will have five parts: the Gospel need, the Gospel proclamation, the Gospel response, the Gospel participation, and the Gospel summary.

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<sup>50</sup>As will be explained above in the section God's work, all three aspects of the gospel – the proclamation, the response, and participation in the purposes – are the work God.

<sup>51</sup>An exposition of Acts 2:42 – the conclusion of the Pentecost narrative – is included in Appendix 1.

## The Gospel Need

The need for the gospel arose from the consequences of the fall (Gen 3) and the corresponding need for salvation.<sup>52</sup> The need for salvation is both a temporal need – from the worldly effects of the fall – and an eternal need – from the spiritual effects of the fall. Although grace was given in the form of the law, it is only a respite from the worldly effects of the fall. The law could not justify someone or provide freedom from the spiritual effects of the fall (Gal 2:16, cf. Rom 8:2). Only the grace of God’s love and mercy could save us through faith.<sup>53</sup> Paul writes,

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (Eph 2:4–10)

**The fall.** From a spiritual and eternal perspective, the fall was an act of disobedience where everyone is guilty of being sinners (Rom 5:19). As sinners, people are enemies of God (Rom 5:10) and subject to God’s wrath (John 3:36). The just compensation for one’s sin is death (Rom 6:23) and eternal punishment (2 Thess 1:10). Furthermore, people’s fallen condition has so separated them from their creator, that they have no ability to understand and seek God (Rom 3:9-12). Furthermore, they have an

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<sup>52</sup>Thus, the gospel – good news – is “the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes” (Rom 1:16).

<sup>53</sup>In Eph 2:4-10, Paul talks about eternal salvation but with temporal consequences (good works).

inability to submit to God's law and cannot please God (Rom 8:7-8). Thus, people need to hear good news of salvation and be saved by faith [πίστις]: "I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes [πιστεύω]" (Rom 1:16).

In addition, from a worldly and temporal perspective, as a result of the fall, not only does the Bible teach that all people are sinners (Rom 3:23) but also that all of creation is "subjected to futility" and "in bondage to corruption" (Rom 8:20-21). Therefore, it comes as no surprise that sins like racism, classism, and sexism miss the mark of God's good creation and are part of human culture. Thus, cultures also need to be rescued from the vestiges of disobedience.

**The law.** Because of the graciousness and mercy of God (Exod 34:6), it should come as no surprise that God gives guidance and direction to people in this fallen world in the words of the law (Ps 119:102).<sup>54</sup> The law is seen as the goodness of God to teach us how to live in relationship with him and one another (the Ten Commandments, the Shema, Mic 6:8). In fact, since the creation story (Gen 1-2), the record of God's work in the Bible can be understood as salvation history or a cycle of sin (disobedience), judgment (punishment), and redemption (grace). However, despite the grace contained in the law, it is impossible for God's law to deliver us from the power of sin. Paul writes,

For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. (Rom 8:3-4)

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<sup>54</sup>One may recall Jesus's words when he stated that he came to fulfill the law and the prophets (Matt 5:17).

**The love.** Thus, as sinners in a fallen world, people never had the hope of salvation – either in a temporal sense or an eternal sense – through works of the law. Salvation is only possible through the love of God manifested in his grace and mercy in Jesus Christ by the gift of the Holy Spirit. Paul writes,

For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (Titus 3:3–7)

The Gospel according to John summarizes God’s love:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. (John 3:16–18)

As a word of caution, despite God’s love and grace, Christians still live in a sinful world with the consequences of the fall all around. Christians are to conduct their lives in a manner worthy of the gospel (Phil 1:27), but simply living by the law with good deeds will never bring salvation to a lost and fallen world (Rom 3:20). The gospel must be preached (Rom 10:17).

### **The Gospel Proclamation**

The gospel (*εὐαγγέλιον*) has many aspects that can be seen by examining the many distinct descriptions of *εὐαγγέλιον* in the NT. For example, it is the gospel of the Kingdom (Matt 4:23, with “of God” Luke 16:16); it is the gospel of Jesus Christ (Mark

1:1); it is the gospel of God (Mark 1:14); it is the gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24); it is the gospel of his son (Rom 1:9); it is the gospel of salvation (Eph 1:13); it is the gospel of peace (Eph 6:15); it is the gospel of the word of truth (Col 1:5); it is the gospel of the Lord Jesus (2 Thess 1:8); it is the gospel of the glory of the blessed God (1 Tim 1:11); and, it is the eternal gospel (Rev 14:6).

However, despite these distinct descriptions of *εὐαγγέλιον*, there is only one gospel (Gal 1:6-7). Therefore, because these distinct descriptions describe only one gospel, their distinct descriptions must be understood to overlap in meaning. From the discussion on *koinonia*, it was noted that Christians share a common faith (Titus 1:4) or a common salvation (Jude 3) and that their relationship is in Christ (*ἐν Χριστῷ*) which becomes the basis of unity or oneness. Therefore, *τὸ εὐαγγέλιον* must be about Jesus: his life, his message, and the meaning of his life and message.<sup>55</sup> This understanding of the gospel can be seen by continuing the discussion on the context of Acts 2:42 as found in the Appendix 1.

**Life.** At the day of Pentecost, Luke records the first example of the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20, Luke 24:44-49, John 20:21-23, and Acts 1:6-8) in action (Acts 2:1-42). From Acts 2:1-42, it can be seen that the gospel as a message has a specific, historical content which is the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus (Acts 2:22-24, 32). This historical content was prophesized in Scripture (Acts 2:16-35) and was

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<sup>55</sup>“All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.” Baptist Faith and Message Study Committee, “Baptist Faith and Message 2000,” Southern Baptist Convention, <http://www.sbc.net/bfm/bfm2000.asp> (accessed March 28, 2013).

God's plan (Acts 2:23). As commissioned, the apostles were witnesses to this historical content (Acts 2:32, 40).

Acts 2:14-42 can be compared to 1 Corinthians 15:3b-11, which Paul describes as the gospel he preached that the Corinthians received from him and in which they stand and by which they are being saved (1 Cor 15:1-2). The gospel that Paul delivered to them was the one which he had received and what was considered as of "first importance" (1 Cor 15:3a). The common elements of the gospel message found in both Scripture references are as follows:

1. The preaching or deliverance of the message with the corresponding response described as faith, belief, receipt, or acceptance with the implication of repentance and the assumption of baptism (1 Cor 15:1-3, 11)
2. The death of the Christ and his corresponding resurrection in accordance with Scripture and by extension part of God's plan (1 Cor 15:3-4)
3. The forgiveness of sins made possible by the Christ's death and related process of salvation with inference to the kingdom and the Christ's lordship (1 Cor 15:2-3)
4. The importance of witnesses (1 Cor 15:5-8)
5. By the extrapolation of his comments on grace, the work of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 15:10)

**Message.** The message that Jesus proclaimed was about the kingdom of God or heaven (Matt 4:23; Mark 1:14-15; Acts 1:3).<sup>56</sup> The prophets told of a Messiah – an anointed-one, a Christ – who would, one day, usher in the kingdom (Zech 2:10-11).<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>J. R. Edwards states, "Mark summarizes Jesus' life and teaching with the concept 'the kingdom of God.'" J. R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 45-46.

<sup>57</sup>John Bright states, "The biblical doctrine of the Kingdom of God, which is the unifying theme of the Bible, is still the motivating force of the living Church." John Bright, *The Kingdom of God: The Biblical Concept and Its Meaning for the Church* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1953), 244.

Jesus preached that the time, that day, is here now, the kingdom is at hand (Matt 3:2; Mark 1:15). After his resurrection, the restoration of the kingdom was on the forefront of his followers' mind (Acts 1:6).

Jesus' parables were about the mystery of the kingdom (Mark 4:11) and his miracles were about the power of the kingdom (Matt 12:28). In the parable of the rich man (Mark 10:17-31), one sees the relationship between eternal life (Mark 10:17), the kingdom (Mark 10:23), and salvation (Mark 10:26; compare Rev 12:10). Also, the kingdom is related to the Spirit (Matt 12:28) and the rebirth (John 3:5). Various aspects of the kingdom message can also be seen in the Pentecost narrative: salvation (Acts 2:21), throne (Acts 2:30), the exaltation of Jesus at the right hand of God (Acts 2:33), and the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).

**Meaning.** Therefore, the meaning of the gospel proclamation must be understood in relation to Jesus' life (his life, death and resurrection) and his message (the kingdom).<sup>58</sup> Jesus' life, death, and resurrection can be understood as proclamation (life), forgiveness of sins (death), and salvation (resurrection). In life, Jesus was sent to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom. So now, his followers are to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom of the Christ (the great commission in John 20:21). His death was a

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Bright writes, "While the complexity of the Bible is by no means to be minimized, there nevertheless runs through it a unifying theme which is not artificially imposed. It is a theme of redemption, of salvation; and it is caught up particularly in those concepts which revolve about the idea of a people of God, called to live under his rule, and the concomitant hope of the coming Kingdom of God. This is a note which is present in Israel's faith from earliest times onward, and which is to be found, in one way or another, in virtually every part of the Old Testament. It also unbreakably links Old Testament to New. For both have to do with the Kingdom of God, and the same God speaks in both." Ibid., 10-11.

<sup>58</sup>This understanding is in agreement with the LTEG analysis on the HUP.

propitiation for one's sins (Rom 3:25; Heb 2:17; 1 John 2:2, 4:10). Because of the forgiveness of one's sins, the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38) – the rebirth (John 7:39) – can be received by all who believe. The gift of the Holy Spirit provides both life (John 6:63) and power (Eph 3:16) for living a new life in the Spirit. His resurrection is the promise (Titus 1:2; 1 John 2:25) of eternal life (John 11:25) in the kingdom of God (2 Pet 1:5).<sup>59</sup>

Thus, because of the gospel, the forgiveness of sins and salvation is available (Acts 5:31). By the gospel, Jesus is revealed as Messiah (compare Acts 2:36 with 1 Cor 15:3), ushering in the long awaited kingdom (Luke 17:21), where he serves as Lord (Acts 2:36). By faith in the gospel, Jesus, who is the Christ, saves people by bringing them into the kingdom of God where he serves as Lord (2 Pet 1:11).

### **The Gospel Response**

If the gospel proclamation is the witness to Jesus's life, death, and resurrection which demonstrates that Jesus is the long awaited Messiah who is the Savior by serving as Lord (ruler) over his people (realm), then the question becomes, "What shall we do?" (Acts 2:36-7). The response is to repent and receive (Acts 2:38).

**Repent.** When Peter told the Pentecost audience to "repent" (Acts 2:38), what did he mean? The command to repent came after the audience was "cut to the heart" (Acts 2:37) and thus asked, "What shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). The reason they were cut

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<sup>59</sup>R. T. France writes, "God's kingship is both eternal and eschatological, both fulfilled and awaited, both present and imminent. . . . To declare that God's kingship has come near is to say that God is now fulfilling his age long purpose, rather than to point to a specific time or event which can be defined as

to the heart is because Peter's words, "Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:36). In other words, the sin (how they missed the mark) which needed to be repented of was the sin of rejecting (crucifying) Jesus as the Messiah.

Although the crucifixion of an innocent man is unethical, repentance, in this context, has little to do with "ethical content." Rather, repentance is the turning from rejecting Jesus as the Messiah. It is a repentance of ignorance about the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6) as Paul proclaims at Areopagus to the Athenians:

The *times of ignorance* God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to *repent*, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead. (Acts 17:30–31, emphasis added)

Repentance, in the context of coming to a saving knowledge of Jesus as the Christ, Lord, and Savior is an issue of idolatry (Exod 20:3-6). Paul describes repentance from idolatry to serving the living God to the Gentiles at Thessalonica:

For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you *turned to God from idols* to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come. (1 Thess 1:9–10, emphasis added)

Similarly, repentance is toward God as demonstrated by faith in Jesus (the gospel) as

Paul said at Miletus to the Ephesian elders:

I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of *repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ*. (Acts 20:20–21, emphasis added)

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either already present or still future, but not both." R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2002), 93.

Furthermore, repentance is also a two-sided coin, both turning from something and turning to something.<sup>60</sup> Thus, baptism should not be understood as something “in addition to” repentance, but rather as a public act of repentance that acknowledges the confession, “Jesus is Christ, Lord, and Savior.”<sup>61</sup> Therefore, the call to “repent and be baptized” (Acts 2:38) is parallel in deed to “receiving the word [accept the word or faith in the gospel proclamation] and being baptized” (Acts 2:41).

**Receive.** The second response to the gospel invitation, receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, is actually a promise based upon the act of repentance or acknowledging who Jesus is as Christ, Lord, and Savior (Rom 3:22). As Christ, Jesus ushers in the kingdom (Jer 23:5-6). This kingdom is both a present reality and a future hope. As a present reality, the realm of the kingdom is one’s heart – the gift of the Holy Spirit or the re-birth (2 Pet 1:3-11). As an eschatological hope, the realm of the kingdom is the new heaven and the new earth where believers are completely changed with a new spiritual body (1 Cor 15:50-53). As Lord, even though one stills struggle with sin (1 John 1:8), Jesus rules in the heart of the believer (Col 3:15) – by the gift of the Holy Spirit or the re-birth – in the present age and will completely reign as king in the age to come (Rev 11:15). As

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<sup>60</sup>Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, s.v. “μετανοέω.”

<sup>61</sup> “[Baptism] is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer’s faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, the believer’s death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead.” Baptist Faith and Message Study Committee, “Baptist Faith and Message 2000,” Southern Baptist Convention, <http://www.sbc.net/bfm/bfm2000.asp> (accessed March 28, 2013).

The literal act of baptism is not only symbolic of the believer’s identity in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus (Rom 6:3-11), it is also symbolic in devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching (Acts 2:42) by “fully immersing” people in the name (an understanding ) of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt 28:19). In implementing the HUP in the church, Chap. 5 will discuss discipleship studies as one practical way in immersing people in an understanding of the names of God.

Savior, Jesus justified people through his death on the cross for the forgiveness of sins, regenerates us through the gift of the Holy Spirit, sanctifies people in the present age and will glorify people in the age to come.<sup>62</sup> Paul explains being justified by Jesus' blood and receiving reconciliation through Jesus [by faith]:

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been *justified by his blood*, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life? More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, *through whom* we have now *received reconciliation*. (Rom 5:6–11, emphasis added)

## The Gospel Purposes

In a *koinonia church*, acceptance of the gospel proclamation necessitates obedience through participation in the gospel's purposes.<sup>63</sup> The gospel purposes deal

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<sup>62</sup>There is a relationship with the reign of God both now and in the future (sanctification and glorification): “when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away” (1 Cor 13:10) and “for now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known” (1 Cor 13:12).

<sup>63</sup>This obedience can be understood as the beginning of responsible church membership or fruit-bearing discipleship, which is at the core of the CGM: “the heart of church growth is to see those new Christians develop into fruit-bearing disciples of Jesus Christ.” Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth*, 20. This understanding of evangelism is called persuasion evangelism. “Persuasion evangelism is concerned with results. . . . Persuasion evangelism is intentional preaching with a view of bringing men to Christ and into responsible church membership. . . . Disciples are countable and their number can be expanded. Hence, disciples are the result of evangelism. The term ‘make disciples’ means to bring a person to Christ, but it includes more than getting a person to make a decision for Christ; it implies motivating the person to follow Christ as his disciple.” Elmer L. Towns, “Evangelism: The Why and How,” in *Church Growth: State of the Art*, ed. C. Peter Wagner (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1988), 44-45.

McGavran's understanding of evangelism is similar to persuasion evangelism. “God, who ‘became flesh and dwelt among us,’ is primarily concerned that people be saved, and his mission must also be concerned. Christian outreach in today's responsive world demands a theology of the harvest that the New Testament uniquely offers. Yet at this critical time many Christians are firmly committed to a theology of seed sowing, which might also be called a theology of search.” McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 24.

directly with God's mission of salvation through a *koinonia church*.<sup>64</sup> The object of that salvific mission is both the *koinonia church* itself and the world. In order to fulfill the gospel purposes, a *koinonia church* needs to be obedient – the purpose of faith.<sup>65</sup> Obedience comes from love (John 14:23, note the great commandments). Love comes from the regenerated heart (Rom 5:5, note 1 John 4:19), honoring God (1 Pet 3:15), and growing in love (2 Thess 1:3; cf. John 13:35).

God's salvific mission through the church for the church is discussed as church sanctification.<sup>66</sup> God's salvific mission through the church for the world is discussed as church mandates (defined below). It may be illustrated as seen in Figure 5.

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<sup>64</sup>Van Engen writes, "Although we know that the ideas [of church and mission] are distinct, it is impossible to understand church without mission. Mission activity is supported by the church, carried out by members of the church, and the fruits of mission are received by the church. On the other hand, the church lives out its calling in the world through mission, finds its essential purpose in its participation in God's mission, and engages in a multitude of activities whose purpose is mission." Moreau, *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, s.v. "Church," by Charles Van Engen.

<sup>65</sup>This purpose of faith as obedience can be seen in outline form with Paul's letter to the Romans: as introduction (Rom 1:5) and conclusion (Rom 16:26). Note also disobedience in the fall in contrast to grace and righteousness in Christ (Rom 5:12-21, especially note v. 19, cf. Rom 6:15-23). The application of the purpose of faith or obedience can be seen in Paul's ministry to the Gentiles. (Rom 15:14-21, especially note v.18).

<sup>66</sup>Because sanctification is part of salvation (defined above as "the rescue of humans from the cause and effects of sin." Moreau, *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, s.v. "Salvation," by Edward N. Gross) and salvation is God's mission (defined above as "everything God does for the communication of salvation and, in a narrower sense, everything the church itself is sent to do." Ibid., s.v. "Missio Dei," by John A. McIntosh), this thesis will use the term sanctification as part of God's mission.

Wagner calls sanctification "nurture" and does not consider nurture as mission. "The central concept of holistic mission [explained above] embraces what God sends his redeemed people out from their own congregations to do: principally implement the cultural mandate [explained above] and the evangelistic mandate [explained above]" (Wagner, *Church Growth & the Whole Gospel*, 93). Wagner distinguishes between evangelism and nurture: "Evangelism . . . is . . . making disciples of Jesus Christ. It is presenting Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit in such a way that men and women will believe in him as their savior and serve him as their Lord in the fellowship of his church. The message of evangelism is directed to the unbeliever, not to believers. Its goal is to win souls, to see sinners saved by the grace of God, and enter into the kingdom of God as responsible disciples. *Christian nurture . . . is a ministry directed toward Christians, not unbelievers*. Its objective is helping them develop in their faith. It enables spiritual 'children' who may be 'carried about with every wind of doctrine' to grow into perfect people 'unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ' (Eph. 4:13-14). Helping a Christian pray more

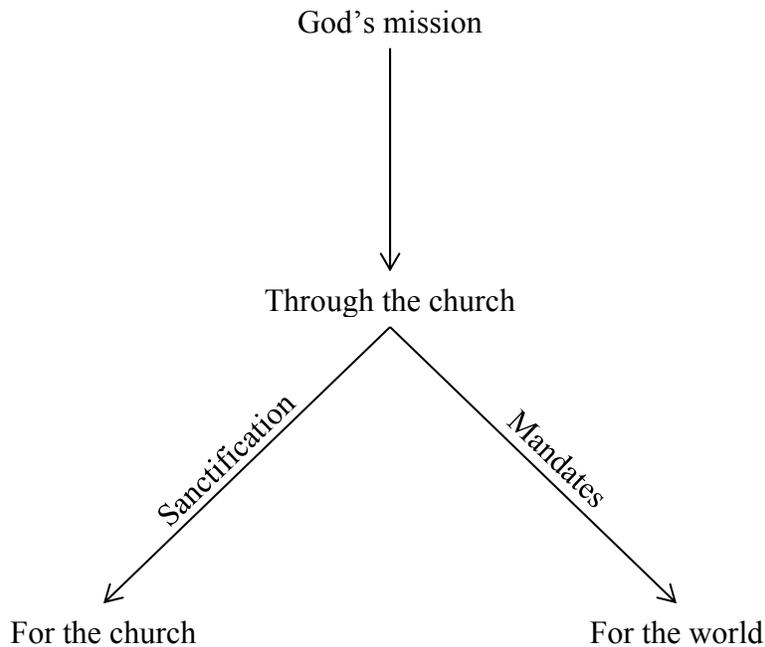


Figure 5. God's mission through the church

In addition to a discussion of church sanctification and church mandates, their respective “issues” must be addressed. Therefore, issues related to sanctification as communication of God’s salvation is discussed as church communication. Other issues

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fervently, read the Bible more intelligently, sing more melodiously, witness more aggressively, or give more generously *is not evangelism. It is nurture*” Ibid., 94, emphasis added.

McGavran will call evangelism “discipling” and sanctification “perfecting.” Discipling for McGavran means “helping a people (a segment of *non-Christian* society) turn from non-Christian faith to Christ.” McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 123. Discipling describes the pre-conversion state. Becoming more like Christ, perfecting, deals with the post-conversion state: “Discipling was to be followed by perfecting, that is, by the whole complex process of growth in grace, ethical improvement, and the conversion of individuals in that first and succeeding generations.” Ibid, 123.

This differentiation between a discipling and perfecting stage is not consistent with the contemporary use of the term “to disciple” or of discipleship. Michael Wilkins explains: “A person becomes a disciple of Jesus when he or she confesses Jesus as Savior and God and is regenerated by the Holy Spirit (cf. John 3:3-8; Titus 3:5). The participles “baptizing” and “teaching” in Matthew 28:18 describe activities through which the new disciple grows in discipleship. Growth includes both identification with Jesus’ death and resurrection (baptism) and obedience to all that Jesus had commanded the disciples in his earthly ministry (teaching).” Moreau, *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, s.v. “Disciple, Discipleship,” by Michael J. Wilkins.

related to sanctification and issues related to the priority of the church's mandates are discussed as church priority.

**Church sanctification.** From the understanding of *ἐκκλησία* (church), one saw that the church belongs to God and that He would make it grow. An example of that growth, in numerical terms, was seen in the Pentecost narrative when three thousand souls repented and received the Holy Spirit (regeneration). When examining the definition of the church as *koinonia*, it was suggested that a reasonable understanding of Acts 2:42 is that the new converts devoted themselves to the church or one another (Rom 12:10). The type of devotion to one another (*ἀλλήλων*) can be seen in a variety of NT verses as follows:

1. Love one another (John 13:34)
2. Instruct one another (Rom 15:14)
3. Care for one another (1 Cor 12:25)
4. Serve one another (Gal 5:13)
5. Submit to one another (Eph 5:21)
6. Encourage one another and build one another up (1 Thess 5:11)
7. Stir one another to love and good works (Heb 10:24)
8. Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another (Jas 5:16)

These *ἀλλήλων* verses can be understood as how the church is involved in God's mission of sanctifying the church or the growth of the church in spiritual terms. Obeying these commands helps to fulfill the calling of the church as "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession" (1 Pet 2:9). This

process of sanctification has a visible effect in the world called “good works” (Titus 2:11-15). Many references discuss the expectation of good works in living a life that is worthy of God’s high calling in following Christ Jesus as Lord:

1. Paul’s teaching to Timothy concerning scripture in living a sanctified life, “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” (2 Tim 3:16–17)
2. Jesus’ analogy of the good tree in relation to one’s heart, “For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.” (Luke 6:43–45)
3. Paul’s words to the Colossians, “And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” (Col 1:9–14, cf. 2 Thess 1:11–12; Heb 13:20-21)
4. James’ teaching on the relationship between faith and works, “What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? [Demonstration of faith by works – Jas 2:18].” (Jas 2:14, cf. Titus 1:16)

Although the concept of sanctification itself is not controversial, the nuances of its application can be seen as problematic. In related excerpts from the LTEG analysis on the HUP, one sees issues surrounding sanctification with words like lordship evangelism, the kingdom, Jesus as Savior, Jesus as Lord, the offense of the gospel, cheap grace, salvation by works, and perfection. These issues are discussed in the section Gospel summary.

**Church mandates.** In the CGM, God’s mission in the world through the church is understood as two mandates: the evangelistic mandate and the cultural mandate.<sup>67</sup> The evangelistic mandate is simply the call of the church to reach and save the lost with the gospel proclamation, as Jesus did (Luke 19:10). The cultural mandate is the call of the church to minister to the needs of society through social service and to reform society through social action.<sup>68</sup> These two mandates together are the mission of the church and are often referred to as holistic mission.<sup>69</sup> For the reasons stated above, this thesis maintains that a holistic view of mission would also include church sanctification.<sup>70</sup>

**Church communication.** God’s mission is to rescue people from the effects of the fall (salvation) and the church’s responsibility in that mission is to communicate salvation (God’s mission). The communication consists of sanctification, the evangelistic mandate, and the cultural mandate. Paul explains it to the church at Corinth as follows:

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<sup>67</sup>Wagner writes, “The term ‘evangelistic mandate’ forms a pair with ‘cultural mandate.’ They are as clear and useful as any expressions I have found to describe the two major areas of human responsibility in carrying out God’s program in the world.” Wagner, *Church Growth & The Whole Gospel*, 51.

<sup>68</sup>Wagner writes, “As the church moves into the world to fulfill the cultural mandate, two general avenues of potential ministry open up. Students of the social concerns of the church have called them by different names. I prefer the terms *social service* [meeting needs] and *social action* [socio-political change].” Ibid., 35, emphasis in original. Social service will be important to the HUP in chap. 5 of this thesis.

<sup>69</sup>Wagner writes, “I now believe that the mission of the church embraces both the cultural and the evangelistic mandates. *I believe in what is now being called ‘holistic mission.’*” Ibid., 91, emphasis in original.

<sup>70</sup>This thesis is sensitive to Wagner’s concern that “if everything is mission, nothing is mission.” Ibid., 93. However, the church, as a tool in God’s hand for the communication of salvation, does have a sanctifying mission (as will be explained in the following part called church communication), an evangelistic mission, and a cultural mission. To identify and distinguish these three aspects of God’s mission through the church should help the church fulfill its holistic mission of communicating salvation.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Cor 5:17–21)

The church's communication of salvation is illustrated in Figure 6.

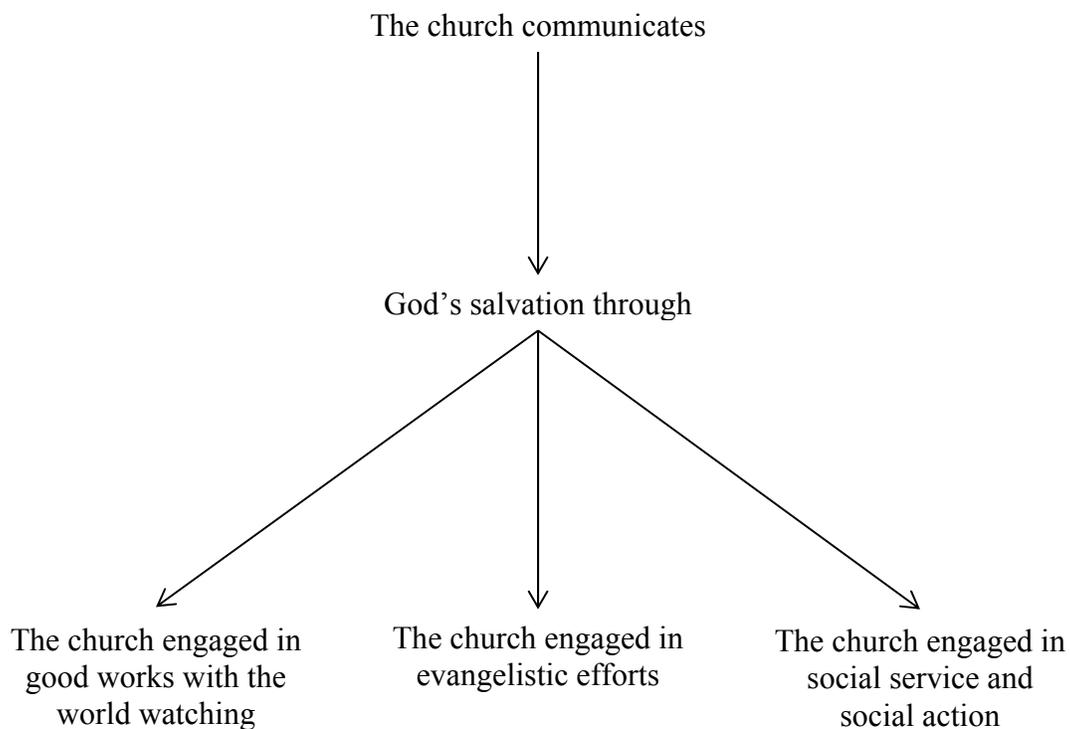


Figure 6. The communication of God's salvation by the church

As discussed above, sanctification is part of salvation and God's mission in the world is one of salvation. The question would be, "Does God use church sanctification to communicate salvation?" Several scriptural examples should suffice as to the validation of sanctification in the communication of God's salvation:

1. Jesus' preaching when he declares, "In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." (Matt 5:16)
2. Paul's confirming witness to Timothy when he writes, "So also good works are conspicuous, and even those that are not cannot remain hidden." (1 Tim 5:25)
3. Peter's confirmation when he writes, "Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation." (1 Pet 2:12)
4. Jesus' prayer for church sanctification, sending into the world, visible unity, and its effect on faith when he prays, "Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth. I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me." (John 17:17-23)
5. The confirmation of Jesus' prayer on the unity of the church and its effect on salvation in the early church when they were "praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved." (Acts 2:47, cf. Acts 5:12-16)

**Church priority.** Sadly, the communication of God's salvation by the church using the HUP is, ironically, at the heart of the disunity (John 17:20-21) among leaders of various churches and denominations.<sup>71</sup> Both the proponents and the opponents of the HUP agree that the use of the HUP is effective in the evangelistic mandates. Also, both the proponents and the opponents of the HUP agree that the sins of the culture (people) should be exposed and demolished and that the needs of the culture (people) met. The

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<sup>71</sup>Rainer, in his history of the CGM, writes, "Many critics have reacted emotionally to the homogeneous unit principle. Neither Wagner nor church growth proponents are racists or segregationists, and the critics who make such charges do not understand them or their message. The homogeneous unit principle is a controversial concept. It is therefore important to cull through the emotional rhetoric to

disunity occurs when there is a conflict, real or perceived, in the application of both the evangelistic and cultural mandates.

The first issue to be addressed is, “Should the mandates be considered one task or separated as two?”<sup>72</sup> The position that the two mandates cannot be separated is referred to as holistic evangelism.<sup>73</sup> Based on the discourse of evangelism as discussed earlier, they should be separate and distinguished because repentance at the time of conversion was explained as turning to faith in the gospel – belief in the truth that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah, Lord, and Savior – and not in turning from individual or cultural sin(s) in a moral or ethical sense.

In addition, the working definition of the HUP is part of a stewardship concern regarding evangelism – a harvest mentality in evangelistic efforts. The stewardship concerns include an understanding of both accountability and responsibility in making disciples – the Great Commission. If there is no distinction between the church mandates, the church could simply practice presence evangelism. Unlike persuasion evangelism, presence evangelism states that as long as Christians are performing “good

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understand fully its implications.” Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth*, 261. Through a review of the opponents of the HUP, one can experience much vitriolic language.

<sup>72</sup>It cannot be overemphasized that the majority of controversy over the HUP comes from McGavran’s focus of the HUP in the discipling stage. As stated, discipling or evangelism includes the turning of one to faith from non-faith and is evidenced by responsible church membership. Perfecting, which is not evangelism, refers to the individual as growing in grace, which would also include the social dimensions of the gospel message. The HUP deals with evangelism, not perfecting. McGavran writes, “Discipling is one thing, perfecting is another. This point gains importance because many a Christian leader confuses perfecting for discipling. Distinguishing these two stages is essential for those who lead peoples [HU’s] to become Christian. The second stage overlaps the first, but it cannot precede it without destroying it.” Donald A. McGavran, *Bridges of God* (New York: Friendship Press, 1981), 16.

<sup>73</sup>Wagner, *Church Growth & The Whole Gospel*, 95. Wagner also reports some of the vitriolic language concerning proponents of holistic evangelism towards those who do not share their view. *Ibid.*, 95-97.

works” (such as building hospitals and schools or feeding the poor) in the presence of unbelievers, the church is doing evangelism. Thus, evangelism is evaluated by ministries performed, and the emphasis is on a social gospel as opposed to a disciple-making emphasis. Therefore, if there is no distinction among the mandates (as well as sanctification), there is no accountability and without accountability, there is no measurement to one’s faithfulness in the stewardship of the gospel (1 Cor 4:1-2).<sup>74</sup>

Therefore, this thesis accepts distinguishing between the mandates. The question now becomes, “How should the cultural sins be exposed and demolished?” There are three options that the church has in relation to cultural sin and evangelistic efforts. One, the church could concentrate on correcting cultural sin. Two, the church could concentrate on evangelism.<sup>75</sup> Or three, the church could place equal emphasis on correcting cultural sin and evangelism.<sup>76</sup> The answer to the question – when should those cultural sins be exposed and demolished – is a question of priority. Perhaps though, it is more helpful to understand the issue as one of effectiveness.

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<sup>74</sup>Wagner writes, “*Service . . . is neither evangelism nor nurture. Its focus is the implementation of the cultural mandate. It helps meet the physical, social or material needs of people. It can be directed toward believers or unbelievers or both. It includes social action and social service. God may use service to open the hearts and minds of men and women to the message of the gospel, or he may not. But service doesn’t save sinners—evangelism does.*” Wagner, *Church Growth & the Whole Gospel*, 94, emphasis added.

<sup>75</sup>As a proponent of the HUP, McGavran explains, “No one should minimize the importance of perfecting. At the same time, all should be certain that undisciplined pagan multitudes must be added to the Lord before they can be perfected. . . . Today’s great vision, which calls the churches to rectify injustices in their neighborhoods and nations, is good; but it must not supplant the vision that calls them to make disciples of all nations. . . . The least perfected church is superior to its non-Christian origins.” McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 123-24.

<sup>76</sup>As an opponent of the HUP, René Padilla writes, “The breaking down of the barriers that separate people in the world was regarded as *an essential aspect of the gospel*, not merely as a result of it. Evangelism would therefore involve a call to be incorporated into a new humanity that included all kinds of people. Conversion was never a merely religious experience; it was also a way of becoming a member of a

While both mandates are by definition mandatory, in church growth theology, the evangelistic mandate is given priority and urgency over the cultural mandate.

Wagner writes,

When I argue that the evangelistic mandate has priority over the cultural mandate, this does not mean that I have any intention of neglecting the cultural mandate. But recognizing the priority of the evangelistic mandate is, in my opinion, the best starting point for the maximum fulfillment of *both* the cultural and the evangelistic mandates.<sup>77</sup>

In other words, if fighting cultural sins like sexism, racism, and classism are mandated, and they are, the best way to destroy them is through kingdom people with kingdom power. Paul explains,

The weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete (2 Cor 10:4–6).

As a reminder, the fall was an act of disobedience in which all are guilty of being sinners (Rom 5:19). In this state, one is spiritually dead (Eph 2:1) – unregenerate – and unable to please God (Rom 8:8). Preaching against the sins of individuals and culture to non-regenerate people who have no hope to be sanctified has the same effect of preaching the law – it is powerless against the power of sin (Rom 8:3-4). However, in Christ, one has the hope of justification (Rom 5:18), if one believes (Rom 1:16) and become spiritually alive (1 Pet 3:18) – regenerate (Titus 3:5) – and thus is free (Acts 13:39) to please God (Col 1:10) through the process of sanctification (1 Thess 5:23).

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community where people would find their dignity and Christ rather than in a race, social status, or sex.” Padilla, “The Unity of the Church and the Homogeneous Unit Principle,” 29, emphasis in original.

<sup>77</sup>Wagner, *Church Growth & The Whole Gospel*, 87, emphasis in original.

Preaching against the sins of individuals and culture to regenerate people who can be sanctified is effective (2 Pet 1:3-8). It is the kingdom of God – God’s reign in His realm, one’s heart – where people have the hope of fulfilling the Great Commandments and preaching against the sins of culture. Therefore, for effectiveness, there is a necessity to prioritize the evangelistic mandate.<sup>78</sup>

Furthermore, from a theological standpoint, there is no justification and regeneration of culture. Cultures are not “born-again.” However, because cultures are a byproduct of people and people can be justified, regenerated, and sanctified, in a technical sense, cultures can be sanctified when an increasing number of people are being saved.<sup>79</sup>

### **The Gospel Summary**

This summary will discuss the Pentecost narrative (Acts 21-42) in relation to a related excerpt from the LTEG analysis. As a reference point, as well as to continue the conversation concerning the HUP, the relevant conclusions from the LTEG analysis on the HUP are as follows:

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<sup>78</sup>Thus, the fall as disobedience and the gospel as obedience (Rom 5:19) is parallel to sin as disobedience and love as obedience (John 14:23). Accordingly, the gospel (obedience) necessitates love (obedience) which is only possible through sanctification of the regenerated heart. Therefore, the more sanctified (holy) a church becomes (1 Pet 2:9) the more effective the gospel purposes for the world (church mandates) are. However, culture will never be “glorified” in this age. That time is coming in a kingdom that is coming (Rev 21:1-2).

<sup>79</sup>The thought of a “sanctified” culture is similar to Richard Niebuhr’s analysis of Christ as the transformer of culture (conversionist, although other elements). Richard Niebuhr states that the conversion of people is “from self-centeredness to Christ-centeredness.” H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1951), 225. “The center is Christ. In him all things were created to live in union with God and each other; he reveals the true nature of life and the law of the created society as well as the sin and rebellion of its members; he redeems men in and for community with one another in God.” Ibid., 221. This “centeredness” motif will be mentioned below in the work of Paul Hiebert.

We agree that to preach the gospel is to proclaim Jesus Christ in the fullness of his person and work; that this is to “preach the Kingdom” which embraces both the total salvation and the total submission implicit in the gracious rule of God; and that it is always wrong to preach Jesus as Saviour without presenting him also as Lord, since it is precisely because he is the supreme Lord exalted to the Father's right hand that he has the authority to bestow salvation and the power to rescue sinners from sin, fear, evil, the thralldom of spirits, and death. We agree that in what has been called “lordship evangelism” we must not isolate from one another the separate parts of Christ's commission namely to “make disciples,” to “baptize,” and to “teach;” that the Christian nurture of converts is indispensable because Christian growth is not automatic; and that daily repentance and daily obedience are necessary parts of Christian discipleship. We agree that the call to repentance must always be faithfully sounded; that there can be no repentance without ethical content; and that the precise ethical issues will vary according to each situation and HU. We also agree that the evangelist must pay attention to a community's or individual's sense of guilt, although, because this is not always a reliable guide, he must also draw attention to sins which the Bible clearly condemns; and that no evangelist has the right to conceal either the offense (skandalon) of the gospel which is Jesus Christ and his cross, or any ethical implication of the gospel which is relevant to the particular situation in which he is preaching it.

At the same time, we recognize the dangers to which any unbalance in these matters would expose us. If we underemphasize repentance, we offer sinners what Bonhoeffer called “cheap grace,” but if we overemphasize it we may be preaching the law rather than the gospel, a code rather than Christ, and salvation by works rather than by grace through faith. Secondly, if we do nothing to identify what is meant by “sin,” we are asking for repentance in a vacuum, which is an impossibility, whereas if we become too specific in naming sins, we either try to do the Holy Spirit's convicting work for him or we may forget the complex cultural factors (e.g., in the case of polygamy) which should make us tentative in our teaching rather than dogmatic. Thirdly, it is possible to imply that conversion involves no radical change, while it is equally possible to expect too much of inquirers and new converts. Perfection is indeed the goal to be set before them, but we must not require maturity of understanding or behavior from a newborn babe in Christ.<sup>80</sup>

As noted in the Appendix 1, in the Pentecost narrative, one finds the evangelistic mandate, the Great Commission, in its purest form. It was discussed above that the εὐαγγέλιον, in accordance to God's plan as revealed in Scripture, consisted of the

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<sup>80</sup>Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, *The Pasadena Consultation on the Homogeneous Unit*, 7-8.

life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The appeal is, “Jesus, who was crucified, is the Messiah. As Messiah, he is ushering in the long-awaited kingdom. The kingdom is not only seen as an eschatological hope, but also as a present reality where Jesus, as Lord, reigns in the regenerated (born-again) heart – his realm. Do you believe?” This understanding of the gospel appeal is what it means to call Jesus, “Lord” and should be considered lordship evangelism.

Furthermore, in Matthew 28:19, exegetically, to “make disciples,” to “baptize,” and to “teach,” are not equal in substance. The imperative verb is to “make disciples.” To “baptize” and to “teach” are subordinate participles describing how to “make disciples.” Thus, disciples were being made when the converts lived by devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching, the fellowship, the breaking of bread, and the prayers. These activities can be loosely correlated to teaching (the apostles’ teaching), nurture (fellowship), repentance (breaking of bread), and obedience (prayer) – all of which are essential for growth (sanctification) and making disciples.

In addition, as previously noted, to “make disciples” is more comprehensive than evangelism because it includes sanctification during the entire lifetime of the believer. Repentance, however, was not in “ethical content,” but in believing (*πιστεύω*) or having faith (*πίστις*) that Jesus was Christ, Savior, and Lord – *τό εὐαγγέλιον*. The *skandalon* (*σκάνδαλον*) was the preaching that the long awaited Messiah was crucified (1 Cor 1:23). The change of the new convert is both real and radical, but it is in thought (repentance of who the Messiah is) and in nature (by the receipt of the Holy Spirit – regeneration). To add to the repentance of allegiance – at the time of conversion – the need to repent of ethical content is to ask for works righteousness.

However, as discussed above, sanctifying grace is not available for the unregenerate person. The repentance of sins with ethical content is for believers (regenerated converts) and part of sanctification. “Cheap grace” then, should be considered as not expecting regenerate people in the process of sanctification to repent of sins in a moral and ethical content – as opposed to the unregenerate person. As sanctification, is a part of salvation, it is also lordship salvation, where Jesus reigns and perfects the regenerated heart of the believer, not the unregenerate person.<sup>81</sup>

### God’s Work

McGavran’s stewardship concern has often been confused with a negative understanding of pragmatism and being anthropocentric. Bruce Fong overstates the pragmatic and anthropocentric implications of the HUP when he equates the HUP as simply “getting the job done.” Fong writes,

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<sup>81</sup>In an understanding of the church, sin, repentance, and cheap grace versus exorbitant grace, Paul Hiebert, similar to Richard Niebuhr, describes Christ as the center and object of faith. Hiebert writes, “The church would be defined by its center, the Jesus Christ of Scripture. It would be the set of the people gathered around Christ to worship, obey, and serve him. Precisely because they follow him, they form a covenant community characterized by righteousness, *koinonia*, and *shalom*.” Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 127. Concerning fellowship and doctrine, Hiebert writes, “Communion with Christ would be the central focus in the life of the church. Instruction in doctrine and behavior would follow.” Ibid. Concerning evangelism and lordship, Hiebert writes, “The church would stress evangelism – calling people to turn and follow Christ. This would not simply mean giving mental assent to the truths of the gospel, or feeling love for Christ. It would be surrendering one’s self to Christ as Lord and becoming obedient to his leading.” Ibid., 129.

McGavran broaches the subject with a question, “Is to be a Christian an ethical achievement – or a redemptive relationship to Jesus Christ?” McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 122. Perhaps the key is found in Jesus’ words when he said, “[Do not be anxious for these things] but seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (Matt 6:33). The “all these things” are needs that people are reasonably and justifiably anxious over – food, drink, and clothing. This theme is discussed later in Matthew when Jesus states, “Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt 10:28). This time, the response is for “Everyone [to] acknowledge [Jesus] before men, [so that he] also will acknowledge [them] before [his] Father who is in heaven” (Matt 10:33). Thus, acceptance of Jesus and the kingdom are more important than life itself. That is the paradox: “Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life

Managing a harmonious community of different kinds of people in separate churches means ‘getting the job done.’ This attitude in church circles is advanced by the school of Church Growth through one of its primary teaching tenets known as the Homogeneous Unit Principle.<sup>82</sup>

However, the HUP deals with the growth of God’s church and the growth of God’s church needs to be understood as God’s work.<sup>83</sup> Thus, at the core of the theological perspective concerning the HUP is the understanding that God is at work.<sup>84</sup> Therefore, to evaluate the working definition of the HUP, God’s work needs to be explored. This section will help to refute the error in Ralph Elliott’s thinking (and others) when he writes, “Church growth people work, however, as though outreach is a human enterprise and the success depends on the right human engineering at precisely the right time.”<sup>85</sup>

When saying that God is at work, one emphasis is on the degree of activity, anywhere from inactive to very active. The theological term that describes the idea that God is active in the created order is theism. The theological term that describes God’s activity is grace. Both of these theological terms will be introduced before an analysis of the working definition of the HUP is presented under the section of God’s tool.

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will keep it” (Luke 17:33). Therefore, Paul declares, “I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord” (Phil 3:8).

<sup>82</sup>Bruce W. Fong, *Racial Equality in the Church: A Critique of the Homogeneous Unit Principle in Light of a Practical Theology Perspective* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1996), xviii-xix.

<sup>83</sup>Paul writes about God working through Peter and himself: “He who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles” (Gal 2:8).

<sup>84</sup>Paul avoids this ethnocentric trap when he states, “I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me” (1 Cor 15:10).

<sup>85</sup>Elliott, *Church Growth That Counts*, 32.

## Theism

Theism is defined as a “belief in the existence of a god or gods, specifically of a creator who intervenes in the universe.”<sup>86</sup> The recognition that God is active in the created order is a biblical understanding of the Christian God. Terence E. Fretheim explains,

God acts in the world. The Bible witnesses to a comprehensive divine working. God’s acting is focused in Israel, Jesus Christ, and the early Christian community, and God’s speaking is especially articulate there, but the divine activity is not limited to them or to historical events (Rom. 3:29). Gen. 1–11, in introducing the canon, provides a universal frame of reference, portraying God as Creator of all (as does the NT: Rom. 11:36; Heb. 2:10), and also witnesses to a God whose *universal* activity includes grieving, judging, saving, electing, promising, blessing, covenant-making, and law-giving. God’s actions in and for the community of faith thus occur *within* God’s more comprehensive actions in the larger world and are shaped by God’s overarching purposes for that world.<sup>87</sup>

On the other hand, deism is “the belief, based solely on reason, in a God [sic] who created the universe and then abandoned it, assuming no control over life, exerting no influence on natural phenomena, and giving no supernatural revelation.”<sup>88</sup> Naturally, biblical Christianity would reject a deistic understanding of God.<sup>89</sup> However, even though one may accept a theistic worldview in theory, in praxis, one may be acting according to a deistic worldview. William Baker explains, “Although the term itself [deism] has fallen into disuse, the fundamental worldview of deism is still very much

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<sup>86</sup>Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson, eds., *Concise Oxford English dictionary*, 11<sup>th</sup> ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), s.v. “theism.”

<sup>87</sup>David Noel Freedman, Allen C. Myers, and Astrid B. Beck, *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2000), s.v. “God,” by Terence E. Fretheim, emphasis in original.

<sup>88</sup>Moreau, *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, s.v. “Deism,” by William H. Baker.

<sup>89</sup>Paul statement to the church at Philippi is a good understanding of a theistic worldview: “for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure” (Phil 2:13).

alive. . . . [There is practical theology that] has little place for special revelation and the miraculous and . . . regards Christianity largely in ethical categories.”<sup>90</sup>

For the purposes of this thesis, practical deism refers to the praxis of deism despite a confession of theism. Understanding practical deism is important in evaluating the HUP because on the surface, the working definition of the HUP may appear too pragmatic or anthropocentric. However, at the core of the theological perspective concerning the HUP is a theistic worldview that acknowledges God is at work and thus one must look for and respond to God at His work. On the other hand, practical deism is failing to accept (an error in thought), to recognize (an error of omission), or to respond to (an error of commission) God’s work and activity.

For McGavran, the theistic understanding that God is active in evangelism and the growth of His church was clearly expressed in his writings:

We have described certain human factors in church growth. We shall go on to describe others. But we are not describing a human enterprise. The redemption of the world is the chief concern of God. This is the central doctrine in the Christian religion. This is what the incarnation was to achieve. This was the purpose of the Cross. The great Commission, comprising the last words of Christ during His earthly ministry, describes what must be done if the purposes of God in Christ are carried out.

The growth of the Church is always brought about by the action of the Holy Spirit. As in the New Testament Church, so today, the Holy Spirit leads, convicts of sin, converts, builds up, selects missionaries and thrusts them out to ripened fields. The concern of Christians today must be to understand the workings of the Holy Spirit and to be open to His leading. We talk of factors producing readiness to accept the Saviour-but who produces the factors? It is largely the Holy Spirit of God. We but describe the way in which He acts. He upbuilds the Church, extends and nurtures it. Men are the channel through which He works.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup>Moreau, *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, s.v. “Deism,” by William H. Baker.

<sup>91</sup>Donald A. McGavran, *How Churches Grow: The New Frontiers of Mission* (New York: Friendship Press, 1959), 55.

## Grace

For the purposes of this thesis, grace will be understood as God’s activity in all that God does in love in sustaining life for His creation.<sup>92</sup> With this understanding, God’s grace is more than God’s mission, although God’s grace encompasses mission. God’s work in both the church and the world that is the same will be referred to as common grace. God’s grace is also differentiated by His work in the church as distinguished from His work in the world. God’s work that is peculiar in the church will be referred to as special grace. God’s work that is peculiar in the world will be referred to as prevenient grace.<sup>93</sup> It may be diagrammed as seen in Figure 7.

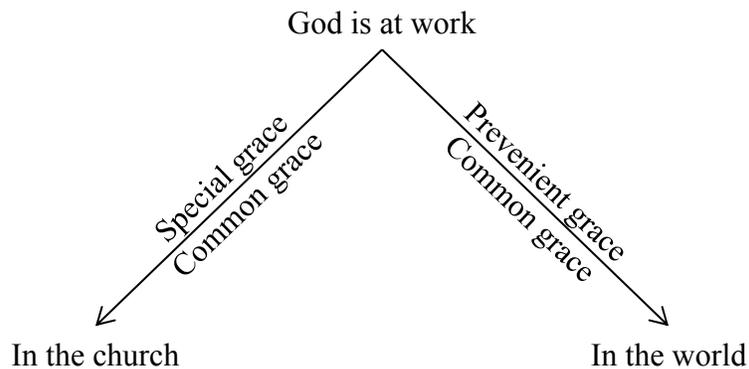


Figure 7. God’s work as grace

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<sup>92</sup>Definition derived from Moreau, *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, s.v. “Grace of God,” by Charles Van Engen.

<sup>93</sup>“Prevenient grace as a soteriological concept refers to the grace that works in the elect to illumine their darkened minds, soften their contrary wills, and incline their affections toward Christ and his offer of salvation.” Bruce A. Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation: The Doctrine of Salvation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1997), 84.

**Common.** Common grace can be seen in his providential care as he upholds the universe that He created (Heb 1:2-3) and provides for the sun to rise and the rain to fall on all (Matt 5:45). Because people have been created in the image of God (Gen1:26-27), God's common grace is innately in us as can be seen in shared, although not necessarily universal, characteristics in morality (Gen 9:6) and ethics (Matt 7:9-10). The Bible also teaches that the civil authorities are instituted by God and part of His governing grace (Rom 13:1-2). By God's care, it is understood that all good gifts, like technology or medicine, come from above and are part of God's common grace (James 1:17). By God's sovereignty, God is seen at times intervening in the affairs of people (Gen 20:6) providing grace to any of God's creation.

**Special.** Special grace is different than common grace in that it is directed towards God's covenant people, and for the purposes of this thesis, to the church in particular (Jer 31:31-34). God's special grace can be seen in the church through salvation. God created the church and allows people to come to Him in relationship through justification. God numerically adds to the church people uniquely related to Him and one another through regeneration. God spiritually grows and matures the church through sanctification. God will give the church eternal life in heaven through glorification. God's special grace can also be seen in the church through His governance of the church. God gives the church godly leaders to equip the saints for service. God gives the church spiritual gifts in order to function together. God commissions the church to make disciples by sending the church into the world. Thus, God numerically grows and builds the church as the cycle continues.

**Prevenient.** Prevenient grace is the grace that God gives to the unregenerate soul in order for the person to respond to His grace in Jesus as Christ, Savior, and Lord (Acts 18:27). Although not a term used in Scripture, prevenient grace attempts to understand the acceptance of the gospel message by the believer in relation to Paul's words, "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Eph 2:8-9).<sup>94</sup> In other words, the act of repentance and faith should not be seen as something the new believer "accomplished" in coming to faith (1 Thess 2:13). J. I. Packer explains it this way:

You would never dream of dividing the credit for your salvation between God and yourself. You have never for one moment supposed that the decisive contribution to your salvation was yours and not God's. You have never told God that, while you are grateful for the means and opportunities of grace that He gave you, you realize that you have to thank, not Him, but yourself for the fact that you responded to His call. Your heart revolts at the very thought of talking to God in such terms. In fact, you thank Him no less sincerely for the gift of faith and repentance than for the gift of Christ to trust and turn to. This is the way in which, since you became a Christian, your heart has always led you. You give God all the glory for all that your salvation involved, and you know that it would be blasphemy if you refused to thank Him for bringing you to faith. Thus, in the way that you think of your conversion and give thanks for your conversion, you acknowledge the sovereignty of divine grace.<sup>95</sup>

Prevenient grace can be considered a specific aspect of divine revelation. In explaining revelation, Wayne Johnson writes,

Apart from revelation, there is neither genuine knowledge of God nor Christian faith. . . . Revelation is the activity of God whereby he 'uncovers' or discloses what

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<sup>94</sup>Note also Paul's letter to the church at Corinth, "And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, 'Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord'" (1 Cor 1:30-31).

<sup>95</sup>J. I. Packer, *Evangelism & the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1961) 13.

was previously not known nor could be known. . . . Special revelation is that divine activity whereby God discloses himself (knowledge, will, and purposes) to specific persons at particular times in history for the purpose of redemption.<sup>96</sup>

An example of this divine revelation can be seen at Peter's confession of Jesus as the Christ at Caesarea Philippi when Jesus states, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven" (Matt 16:17).

Again, although prevenient grace is not a term used in Scripture, there are biblical references that are useful in understanding how this thesis is applying prevenient grace to the HUP.<sup>97</sup> Prevenient grace is present when the gospel is preached. Paul writes, "For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe" (1 Cor 1:21). This grace is not words of eloquent wisdom, but the power of the cross of Christ (1 Cor 1:17). To understand prevenient grace, and its relationship to the HUP, is to see the workings of the Holy Spirit in the salvation process.

The Spirit provides power.<sup>98</sup> Paul writes, "My speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Cor

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<sup>96</sup>Moreau, *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, s.v. "Revelation, General," by Wayne Johnson.

<sup>97</sup>A clear example of God's opening the heart of an unregenerate person is found in Acts 16:14 when one reads that Lydia's heart was opened by the Lord in order to respond to Paul's message. In addition, it is clear that God was involved in Paul's conversion (Acts 9:1-9; 22:6-11; 26:13-18). These are specific examples of what Jesus declared in John 6:44-45, 65 when he states that if someone were to come to him, the Father must draw him or enable him and in John 14:6 where Jesus states that no one can go to the Father except through him. The purpose of these verses is to show that God must be at work "ripening" the harvest fields in the life of the unchurched.

<sup>98</sup>George Peters writes, "*The Holy Spirit is the divine agent to initiate, supervise, energize, and accomplish the purpose of God in the church-building program. He is the Paraclete, the administrator, executor, and realizer of the program. In Him God is immanent in this world in power and executive*

2:4). The Spirit provides confirmation. Jesus states, “But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me” (John 15:26). The Spirit provides conviction. Jesus states, “And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me” (John 16:8-9).<sup>99</sup> Paul summarizes the Spirit’s work in the gospel’s proclamation when he writes, “Our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction” (1 Thess 1:5). Without the grace of God working through the Holy Spirit in the unregenerate heart – prevenient grace – no one can confess “Jesus is Lord” and “believe in their heart” (Rom 10:9). Paul explains, “Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says ‘Jesus is accursed!’ and no one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except in the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor 12:3).

Note however, although the Spirit is necessary to obtain salvation, the Spirit is not always necessarily obtainable.<sup>100</sup> Jesus states, “The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is

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authority. . . . He resides in the church and He operates through the church in a redemptive manner in the world. . . . Accordingly the church becomes the primary agent of the Paraclete to execute and accomplish the purpose of God.” George W. Peters, *A Theology of Church Growth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 17, emphasis in original.

An excellent understanding of McGavran’s view of the role of the Holy Spirit in the growth of the church is found in John Seamands, “The Role of the Holy Spirit in Church Growth,” in *God, Man and Church Growth: A Festschrift in Honor of Donald Anderson McGavran*, ed. A. R. Tippett (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1973), chap. 7.

<sup>99</sup>As previously mentioned, the sin that needs repenting of is the sin of not believing in Jesus as the Christ.

<sup>100</sup>Roy Shearer writes, “McGavran has pointed out in his writing that people are never equally receptive throughout the world nor are they equally receptive across time. People become receptive or resistant to the Gospel in different eras.” Roy E. Shearer, “The Psychology of Receptivity and Church

with everyone who is born of the Spirit” (John 3:8). In addition, prevenient grace is both irresistible and resistible (John 6:36-40).<sup>101</sup> As prevenient grace is at the heart of God working in HUs, it is discussed in the section God’s tool as a God-sized task.<sup>102</sup>

## God’s Tool

The eventual goal of this chapter is to evaluate the working definition of the HUP from a biblical, theological, and missiological perspective. By addressing and discussing certain core values surrounding the controversy and miscommunication of the

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Growth,” in *God, Man and Church Growth: A Festschrift in Honor of Donald Anderson McGavran*, ed. A. R. Tippett (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1973), 161.

<sup>101</sup>Grammatically, John is distinguishing between three groups of people in these verses. In v. 36, there is one group, who has seen (ἐώρακατέ, plural from ὀράω) but do not believe (πιστεύετε, plural, from πιστεύω). In v. 37 are two additional groups. The one (πάν, singular and neuter, from πᾶς), who the Father gives, will come (ἔξει, singular from ἔκω) is different than the one coming (ἐρχόμενον, singular and masculine, from ἔρχομαι). Thus, even though the Father did not give “the one coming,” Jesus promises not to cast “the one coming” out.

After declaring that he has come down to do the Father’s will in v. 38, Jesus explains what the Father’s will is concerning the two groups from v. 37 in vv. 39-40. In v. 39, the one (πάν, singular and neuter, from πᾶς) is parallel to the one in v. 37. Jesus will not lose the one that the Father has given but will raise “it” (αὐτὸ, singular and neuter, from αὐτός) in the last day. In v. 40, the one (πᾶς, singular and masculine, in lemma form) is parallel to the one coming (ἐρχόμενον, singular and masculine, from ἔρχομαι) in v. 37. Jesus will raise “him” (αὐτόν, singular and masculine, from αὐτός) in the last day. In addition, this group from v. 40 is also parallel to the first group in v. 36. However, unlike the ones who have seen (ἐώρακατέ, plural from ὀράω) but do not believe (πιστεύετε, plural, from πιστεύω), the one (πᾶς, singular and masculine, in lemma form) is seeing (θεωρῶν, singular and masculine from θεωρέω) and believing (πιστεύων, singular and masculine, from πιστεύω).

In these verses, one sees election and irresistible grace as well as free-will and resistible grace. Packer writes, “These two truths stand side by side in these verses, and that is where they belong. They go together. They walk hand in hand. Neither throws doubt on the truth of the other. Neither should fill our minds to the exclusion of the other. Christ means what He says, no less when He undertakes to save all who will trust Him than when He undertakes to save all whom the Father has given Him.” Packer, *Evangelism & the Sovereignty of God*, 103.

In addition, the ones who has seen but do not believe are resisting the work of the Holy Spirit in prevenient grace. Thus, they are not saved and have committed the unforgiveable sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (Matt 12:31).

<sup>102</sup>In this respect, the CGM is very pragmatic. Arthur Glasser writes, “Since God alone makes men responsive, we should go where God has begun this prior work.” Arthur F. Glasser, “An Introduction to the Church Growth Perspectives of Donald Anderson McGavran,” in *Theological Perspectives on Church Growth*, ed. Harvie M. Conn (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1976), 38.

HUP, that goal has become easier and to that goal this thesis now turns. In order to accomplish this goal, the evaluation of the working definition will be organized around a God-sized task, a communication tool, and a stewardship strategy. Again, the working definition of the HUP that was formulated is as follows:

A stewardship strategy of evangelism which postulates that when receptive people are identified, the most effective and efficient tool of evangelistic communication occurs when people hear the gospel from their own people and are able to respond to the gospel with limited social dislocation.

### **God-sized Task**

God works through the church for both the church and the world.<sup>103</sup> Thus, the church is a church when it is involved in God's work.<sup>104</sup> McGavran writes, "He upbuilds the Church, extends and nurtures it. Men are the channel through which He works."<sup>105</sup>

Also, God is at work in the world preparing hearts.<sup>106</sup> McGavran writes, "We talk of

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<sup>103</sup>These works of God were explained above as sanctification and church mandates. Figure 5 summarizes these works.

<sup>104</sup>Georg Vicedom writes, "The church can be God's vessel and tool only if she surrenders herself to His purpose. If she dissociates herself from this concern of God, she becomes disobedient and can no longer be church in the divine sense. . . . Hence the church is not called on to decide whether she will carry on the mission or not. She can only decide for herself whether she wants to be church. She cannot determine when, where, and how missions will be carried out, for the mission is always divinely guided, as is shown us above all in Acts. Missions the business of God implies that He lays claim to make use of all His believers exactly as He wishes, in order to impart His love to all men through His believers. God makes this claim clear by first achieving what God has already done and is doing. She can only point to what He will do. Thus mission is based on the activity of God Himself." Vicedom, *The Mission of God*, 6.

McGavran agrees that mission "is not a human activity but *missio Dei*, the mission of God, who himself remains in charge of it." McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 20. For the purposes of this thesis, God's mission, or *missio Dei*, was defined as "everything God does for the communication of salvation and, in a narrower sense, everything the church itself is sent to do." Moreau, *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, s.v. "*Missio Dei*," by John A. McIntosh. McIntosh describes this understanding of *missio Dei* as a comprehensive definition claimed by ecumenicals.

<sup>105</sup>McGavran, *How Churches Grow*, 55.

<sup>106</sup>This work of God was explained above as prevenient grace. Figure 7 summarizes this work.

factors producing readiness to accept the Saviour—but who produces the factors? It is largely the Holy Spirit of God.”<sup>107</sup>

The interaction between God at work through the church for the world and God at work in the world is at the core of a systematic, theological understanding of the HUP.<sup>108</sup> The ripened fields in a theological construct are receptive people – the principle of receptivity.<sup>109</sup> The principle of receptivity is an acknowledgement that God is at work in the world (unchurched).<sup>110</sup>

**Ripened fields.** As noted, in McGavran’s thought, ripened fields are the receptive HU’s. The HUP then would involve the process of identifying those receptive HU’s or ripened fields.<sup>111</sup> McGavran writes, “The concern of Christians today [in regards to the growth of the church] must be to understand the workings of the Holy

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<sup>107</sup>McGavran, *How Churches Grow*, 55.

<sup>108</sup>As previously noted, McGavran writes, “The growth of the Church is always brought about by the action of the Holy Spirit. As in the New Testament Church, so today, the Holy Spirit leads, convicts of sin, converts, builds up, selects missionaries and thrusts them out to ripened fields.” Ibid.

<sup>109</sup>The imagery of the ripened fields that McGavran implores comes from the story of Jesus sending out the seventy-two (Luke 10:1-24, cf. Matt 9:35-10:39). The principle of receptivity “postulates that at a given point in time certain people groups, families, and individuals will be more receptive to the message of the Gospel than others.” Wagner, *Church Growth & the Whole Gospel*, 77. Therefore, the church must be diligent in identifying ripened fields.

<sup>110</sup>With regard to the principle of receptivity or ripened fields, this thesis understands them through the concept of prevenient grace as discussed below. God at work outside of the church for the purposes of salvation is not intended to affirm inclusivism (Christ’s work as ontologically necessary but not epistemologically necessary) or pluralism (Christ’s work as neither ontologically necessary nor epistemologically necessary). Ronald H. Nash, *Is Jesus the Only Savior?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 23.

<sup>111</sup>In a systematic, theological understanding of God is at work, the term added should be “process” as opposed to principle. Walther A. Olsen, “The Homogeneous Unit Principle Revisited: Part One,” *Journal of the American Society for Church Growth* 8 (Spring 1997): 9-10. This thesis uses the word strategy to reflect the church’s possible participation in the process.

Spirit and to be open to His leading.”<sup>112</sup> A simple understanding of God at work as it relates to the Church, HU’s, the principle of receptivity and the HUP is illustrated in Figure 8.

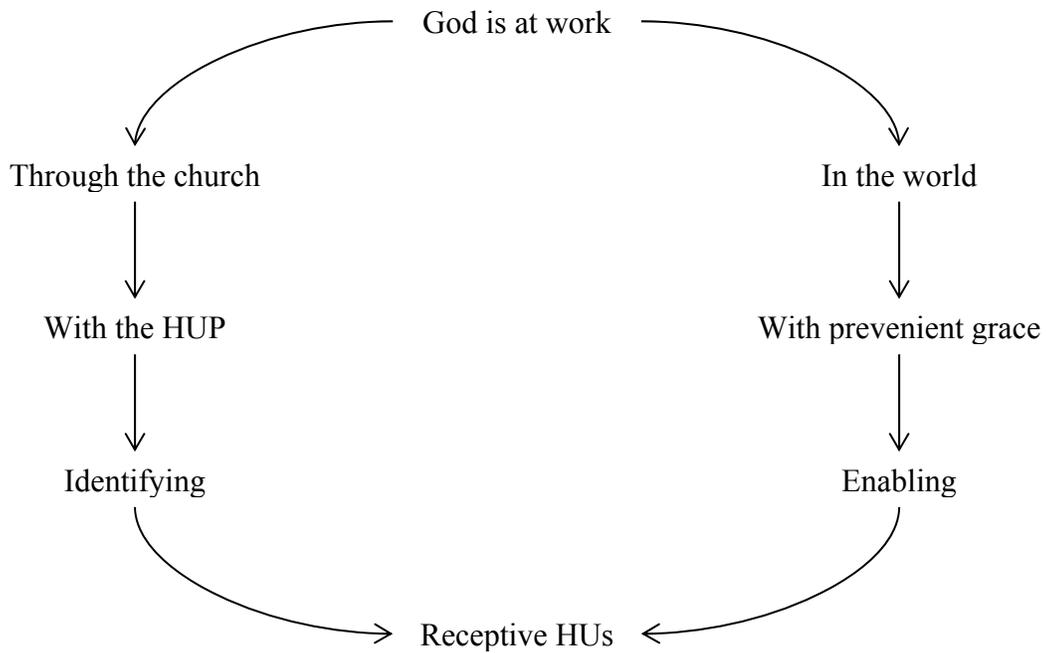


Figure 8. The HUP in God’s work

**Parallel allusion.** As a way of confirmation, there is a parallel allusion, a sort of foreshadowing, of the HUP in the Gospel of John. When Jesus healed an invalid on the Sabbath at the pool near the Sheep Gate (John 5:1-15), it gave the Jews a chance to persecute him because Jesus did these type of things on the Sabbath (John 5:16). The Sabbath was a day of rest (Ex 20:8-11) and because Jesus healed someone on the Sabbath, Jesus was in violation of the Sabbath law. In response, Jesus answered, “My

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<sup>112</sup>McGavran, *How Churches Grow*, 55.

Father is working until now, and I am working” (John 5:17). Jesus went on to say, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise” (John 5:19). Furthermore, Jesus states that the reason the Father shows the Son what he is doing is out of love (John 5:20a). In other words, the reason why Jesus was able to heal the invalid at Bethesda was because of the “Father-Son” love relationship, by which God [Father] revealed to Jesus [Son], God’s work – the healing of an invalid. The story is illustrated in Figure 9.

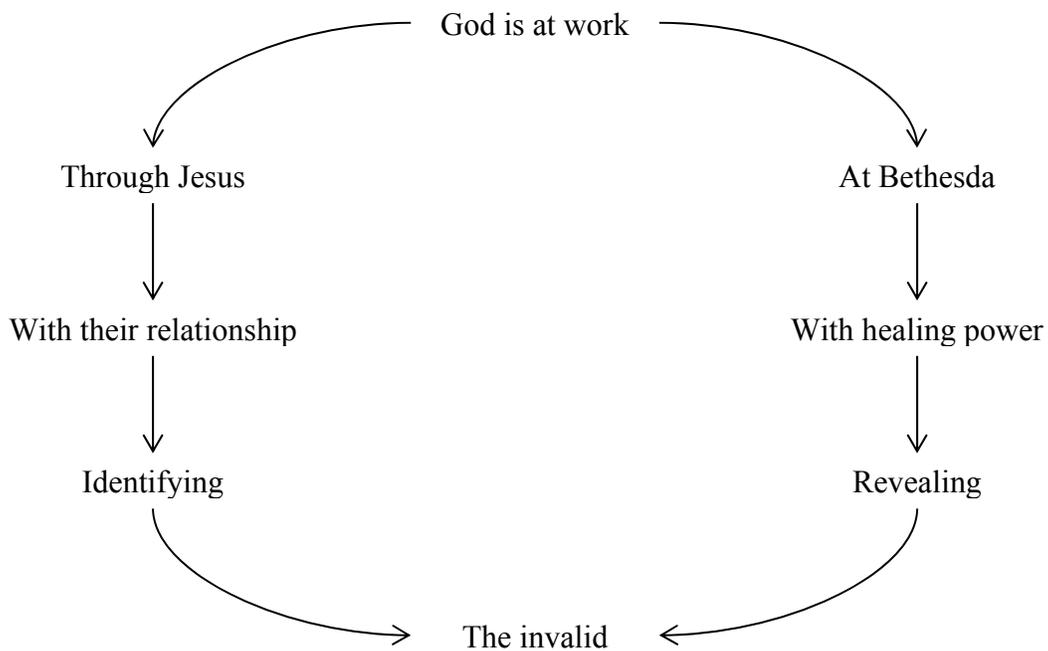


Figure 9. The healing of the invalid in God’s work

The parallel allusion of the HUP in these verses is clear when comparing Figure 9 with Figure 8. However, the similarity is more apparent with further reading. Jesus went on to say, “Greater works than these will he [Father] show him [Son], so that

you may marvel” (John 5:20b). Then, Jesus, somewhat cryptically, explains the gospel of faith in the Son and the gift of eternal life (John 5:21-29). Later when queried, “What must one do to be doing the works of God?” Jesus responded that the work of God was for people “to believe in him [Jesus] whom he [God] has sent” (John 6:28-29).

Furthermore, Jesus promises that those who believe in him “will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do” (John 14:12). The power and possibility of these greater works are explained by Jesus as the Holy Spirit and prayer: “Because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it” (John 14:13-14).<sup>113</sup>

Therefore, the HUP can be illustrated as a process of prayer (Figure 10), the “sending” or “going” part in the evangelistic mandate (Figure 11), or simply as evangelism – preaching the gospel (Figure 12).<sup>114</sup> The constant themes in these illustrations are “God is at work” and “receptive HUs” (the principle of receptivity).<sup>115</sup> If a HUC is the result of the HUP, then to God be the glory (Phil 2:11). Every church should take heed to Paul’s words in the book of Romans:

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<sup>113</sup>Jesus explains the purpose and advantage of him going to the Father: “I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged” (John 16:7-11).

<sup>114</sup>In chap. 5, some practical applications of the HUP will be discussed. Because of its controversial nature, one suggestion is to avoid the controversy by changing the name. As illustrated, you can refer to the HUP without calling it by name. “Receptive HUs” could be changed to “the principle of receptivity,” “receptive people groups,” or simply “receptive people.”

<sup>115</sup>George Hunter writes, “The Church Growth movement’s greatest contribution to this generation’s world evangelization will be its stress upon *receptivity*.” George G. Hunter, III, *The Contagious Congregation: Frontiers in Evangelism and Church Growth* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979), 104, emphasis in original.

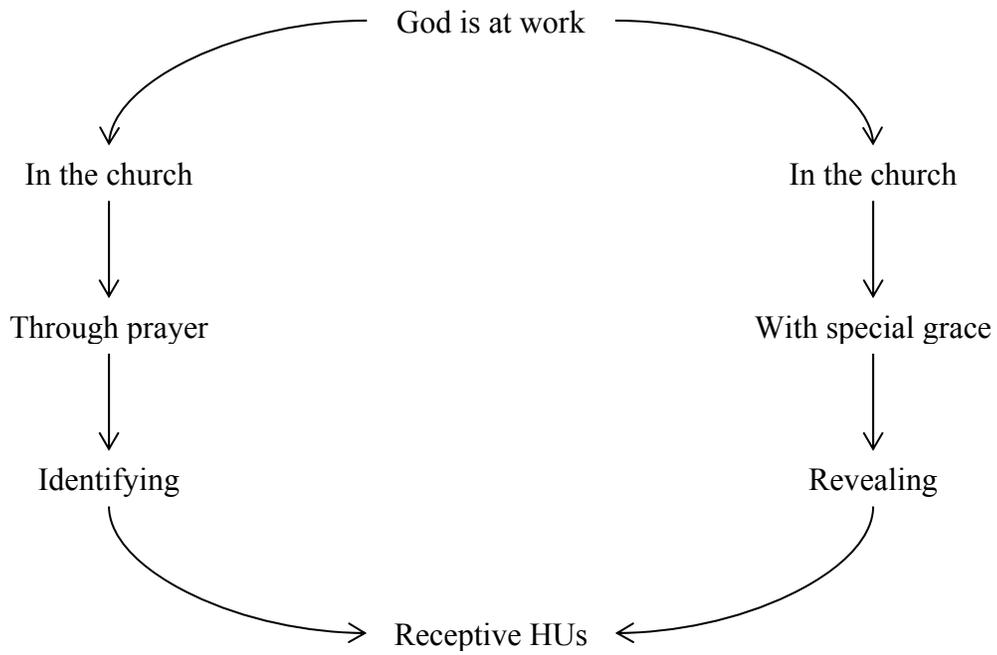


Figure 10. The role of prayer in the HUP

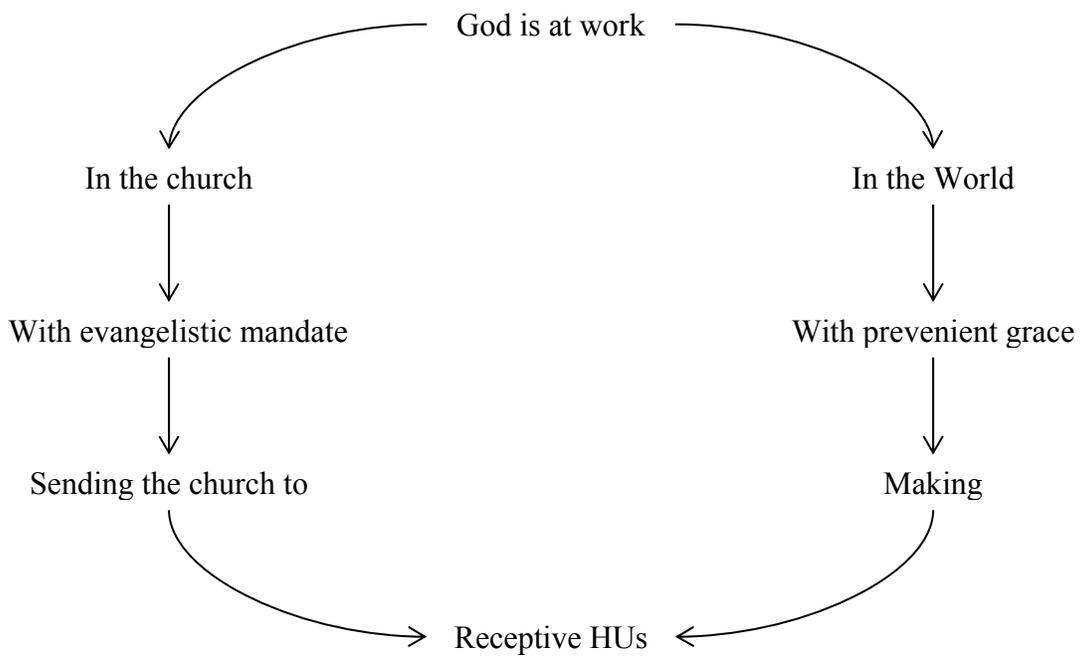


Figure 11. The HUP as the evangelistic mandate

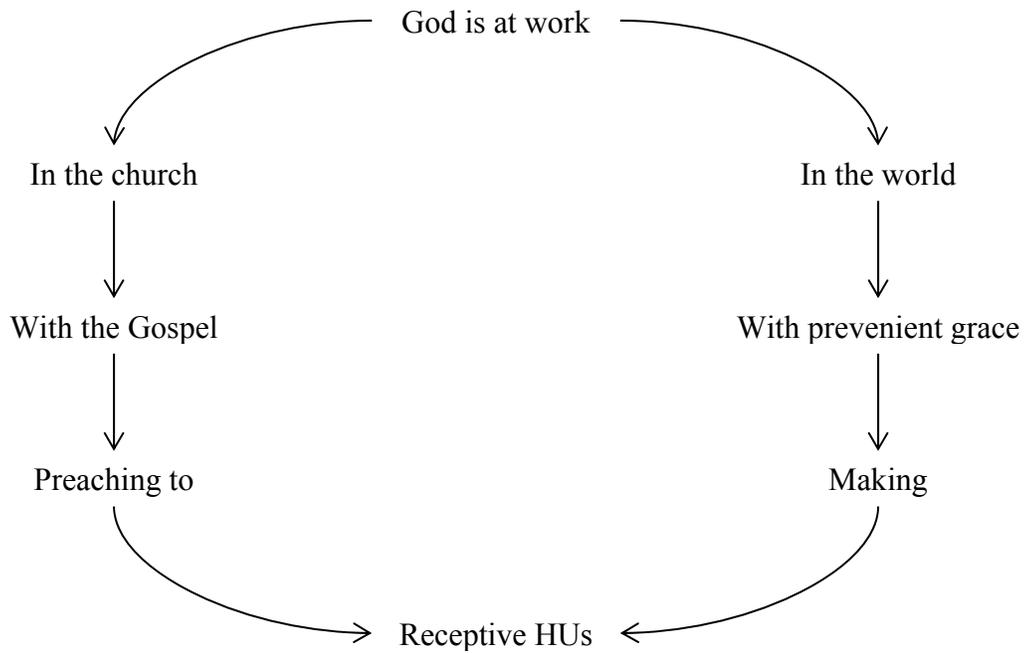


Figure 12. The gospel proclamation in the HUP

May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. (Rom 15:5–7)

### Communication Tool

The HUP is a communication tool in two regards: from God to people and from people to people.<sup>116</sup> From the broadest perspective, God can be understood communicating to people with His grace. For the purposes of this thesis, the communication between God and His church through prayer are discussed first. Then, the relevance of communication between people will be discussed.

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<sup>116</sup>“If it is found to be a useful tool for a given time and place, it should be used to the glory of God.” Wagner, *Church Growth & The Whole Gospel*, 167.

**Prayer.** The discussion on prayer begins in an understanding of the church as spiritual people and slaves of Christ.<sup>117</sup> As spiritual people, the church has wisdom from God's Spirit or the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:6-16). As slaves of Christ, the church is expected to offer its body as a living sacrifice as an act of spiritual worship so that it may discern what is the will of God (Rom 12:1-2). Therefore, prayer is the communication relationship that people have with God in the Spirit to know and to do God's will:

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. (Rom 8:26-27)

The direction of communication is from God to His church. Therefore, prayer is God communicating God's will and work (revelation) to the church.<sup>118</sup> God's communication to the church could be concerning any of the gospel purposes: sanctification, evangelism, or social service and action.<sup>119</sup> In relationship to the principle of receptivity, as well as substantiating a theistic worldview of God's active involvement,

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<sup>117</sup>It is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss a full-blown doctrine on prayer. Therefore, this discussion on prayer will be limited to the concepts surrounding prayer and the HUP that have been previously investigated.

As discussed above, the church was "obtained with his [Jesus'] own blood" (Acts 20:28), it is not its "own," for it has been "bought with a price" (1 Cor 7:19-20). As slaves of Christ (δούλοι Χριστοῦ), the church does God's will from the heart (Eph 6:6). Furthermore, with regards to a *koinonia* church, the church's relationship with God as well as with one another is in Christ (ἐν Χριστῷ) – the church is "born-again" (ἀναγεννήσας) or "born from above" (γεννηθῆναι ἄνωθεν). Thus, the church is a spiritual people (πνευματικὸς, person).

<sup>118</sup>In the broadest sense, God's will is in the Messiah (Eph 1:9). Thus, God's will can be found in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and in his message of the kingdom of God – the gospel message proclaiming Jesus as the Christ, Savior, and Lord. Jesus was sent to do the will of God and to accomplish God's work (John 4:4). God's work is for people to believe in Jesus as the Messiah (John 6:29) and God's will is eternal life for all who believe (John 6:40). That is why Jesus declares, "For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother" (Mark 3:35).

<sup>119</sup>Figure 6, above, summarizes this communication.

Philip's encounter with the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-40) will be discussed.<sup>120</sup> In the account, Philip is given a message (an angel instructs him) from the Lord to go (as in the Great Commission). Philip obeys (a byproduct of love and in opposition to the sin of disobedience). Philip sees a chariot and was told by the Spirit to go and stay near it, which he does. In the chariot, there is an Ethiopian eunuch, returning from worship at Jerusalem, who Philip hears reading the book of Isaiah. By the grace of God, Philip was able to start a relationship (with a receptive person), tell him the good news about Jesus, and baptize him.<sup>121</sup>

In addition, prayer, as a communicative relationship with God in the Spirit, has other important implications with the HUP which will be briefly highlighted. As the church is to make disciples (Great Commission) and grow up into Christ (Eph 4:12-16), it is only fitting that the church emulates the master, who often prayed (Luke 5:16), sometimes all night (Luke 6:12), and with passion and reverence (Heb 5:7). The master also taught his disciples to pray for the kingdom to come and for God's will to be done (the Lord's Prayer). When cleansing the temple, Jesus quoted Isaiah saying, "My house shall be a house of prayer" (Matt 21:13), which now, the household of God is the church (1 Tim 3:15). Therefore, it is not surprising that in Acts 2:42, prayers were one of the activities that the new converts continually devoted themselves to doing, which Paul also

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<sup>120</sup>In Scripture, God is seen as guiding and directing in a variety of situations. In Matt 10:5-6, Jesus tells his apostles not to go among the Gentiles, but go to the house of Israel. Yet, God gives Paul a ministry to the Gentiles (Rom 15:17). In Acts 10, one sees God directing the paths of Cornelius and Peter. This guidance and direction from God should be understood as effectiveness, not exclusiveness.

<sup>121</sup>Although the details of their conversation are not recorded, it is interesting that repentance is not mentioned – especially the repentance of ethical sins. However, as noted from the discussion on Acts 2:42, baptism should be understood as a public act of repentance that acknowledges (turning to) the confession, "Jesus is Christ, Lord, and Savior."

commends the church to do (Eph 6:18). Prayers are also important in witnessing. Jesus told his disciples to pray earnestly for laborers to work in his plentiful harvest (Matt 9:37-38; cf. Rom 10:14-17 and Acts 8:30-31). In fear, the early church prayed for boldness in witnessing (Acts 4:23-31). Paul describes the role of prayer and witnessing:

Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak. Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person (Col 4:2-6).

**Homophily.** As a communication tool, the HUP deals not only with communication between God and people, but also with communication between people. In particular, how best to communicate the gospel to a HU.<sup>122</sup> As a HU, there is a cultural phenomenon that is often called “homophily” or literally, “love of the same.”<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>122</sup>The LTEG analysis states, “We are agreed that everybody belongs to at least one such homogeneous unit. This is an observable fact which all of us recognize.” Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, *The Pasadena Consultation on the Homogeneous Unit*, 3.

<sup>123</sup>“ There is no one single definition of homophily. However, there are common characteristics which remain salient throughout. First, homophily constitutes similarity or likeness between entities. The similarities are in characteristics such as location, origin, language or race. Second, homophily generally is used when describing the communicative relationship between people. That is, people who are similar in sociodemographic backgrounds are more likely to communicate because they are homophilous (Cook, McPherson, & Smith-Lovin, 2001). The common saying, ‘birds of a feather flock together,’ represents the elementary definition of homophily (McPherson and Rotolo, 2001). Conversely, the opposite of homophily would be heterophily or dissimilarity in persons (Bloch, Cameron, & Yin, 2001).” Mike Donnelly et al., “Embedded Journalism: How War is Viewed Differently from the Frontlines versus the Sidelines,” Department of Defense, <http://www.ou.edu/deptcomm/dodjcc/groups/03D1/INDEX.htm> (accessed March 28, 2013).

There are brief mentions of homophily in the volumes of data which discuss the HUP. For example, A. Scott Moreau refers to the homophily principle in discussing sociological and anthropological considerations of the HUP when he writes, “The HUP is similar to the homophily principle in communication (*Dynamics*, pp. 229-39), which is that we tend to share information with similar persons. One interesting aspect of this is that, ‘As a result of similarity, information is received more readily and persuasion occurs more frequently’ (Ibid., p. 232).” A. Scott Moreau, “The Homogeneous Unit Principle,” Docstoc, <http://www.docstoc.com/docs/2235726/The-Homogeneous-Unit-Principle-A-Scott-Moreau-1-What-is-the-H> (accessed March 28, 2013).

It is the people-consciousness of any HU.<sup>124</sup> The HUP is not only a process that attempts to identify receptive HUs, it also is an attempt to respect those HUs.<sup>125</sup> McGavran explains, “It takes no great acumen to see that . . . . *unbelievers* understand the Gospel better when expounded by their own kind of people.”<sup>126</sup> Dan Crawford writes, “The theory has biblical base. When Andrew became a believer, he brought his brother, Peter, to Jesus (John 1:40-42). The possessed man in chains was released by Jesus and told to go home and tell his friends (Mark 5:19). Numerous other examples serve as illustrations of this biblical principle.”<sup>127</sup> The idea that people “like to hear” the gospel expounded upon by their own people is a phenomenological issue, not a theological issue that people “ought to hear” the gospel expounded upon by their own people.<sup>128</sup> Thus, the theory is

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<sup>124</sup>The LTEG analysis states, “We are unanimous in celebrating the colorful mosaic of the human race that God has created. This rich variety should be preserved, not destroyed, by the gospel. The attempt to impose another culture on people who have their own is cultural imperialism. The attempt to level all cultures into a colorless uniformity is a denial of the Creator and an affront to his creation. The preservation of cultural diversity honors God, respects man, enriches life, and promotes evangelization. Each church, if it is to be truly indigenous, should be rooted in the soil of its local culture.” Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, *The Pasadena Consultation on the Homogeneous Unit*, 3.

<sup>125</sup>The LTEG analysis states, “Therefore, in order to reach them, not only should the evangelist be able to identify with them, and they with the evangelist; not only must the gospel be contextualized in such a way that it communicates with them; but the church into which they are invited must itself belong to their culture sufficiently for them to feel at home in it. It is when these conditions are fulfilled that men and women are won to Jesus Christ, and subsequently that churches grow.” Ibid.

<sup>126</sup>McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 167, emphasis added. As explained further by McGavran and Hunter, “If there are no Christians in a particular social unit or subculture, a movement to Christ can begin among them only when a cross-cultural communicator of the Gospel reaches across from his or her subculture, communicates the great news in a form that is indigenous to the receiving people, and wins one or several converts from among the most receptive members. These then proceed to evangelize members of their own social unit and their own subculture. The *most* contagion takes place within the existing social networks of credible Christians as they reach out to friends, relatives, fellow workers, and neighbors.” Donald A McGavran and George G. Hunter III, *Church Growth: Strategies That Work* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980), 31, emphasis in original.

<sup>127</sup>Dan R. Crawford, *Church Growth Words from the Risen Lord* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1990), 37.

<sup>128</sup>Wagner, *Church Growth & the Whole Gospel*, 167.

that the difficulty of evangelistic communication increases in proportion to the differences in people's culture.<sup>129</sup> In fact, George Hunter writes, "Some communication theorists contend that identification is the key to persuasion and that there is not persuasion without it."<sup>130</sup>

As discussed, much of the conversation and controversy surrounding the HUP comes from a church planting ministry context where the HUP might be used to establish or maintain HUCs in a cultural context that is built on racism, sexism, or classism. The LTEG analysis states,

Further, in some groups the common trait of homogeneity which binds them together is itself evil. This might, for example, be cannibalism, racism or (if we may cite opposite ends of the social scale) crime and prostitution in the slums or oppressive wealth in the suburbs. In such cases, what constitutes the homogeneous unit must be opposed rather than affirmed. The church should not be planted in it without making its opposition plain, nor without seeking to overcome the evil principle and/or uncover and change its underlying causes. The church should never avoid this prophetic and social ministry. Belonging to Jesus Christ involves enmity with the world.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>129</sup>In the CGM, evangelism may be divided up into four categories: E-0, E-1, E-2 and E-3. E-0 evangelism is evangelizing existing church members. E-1 evangelism is evangelizing non-church members within the churches' cultural, linguistic, and ethnic unit. E-2 evangelism is evangelizing non-church members outside the church's cultural, linguistic, and ethnic unit, but in a unit that is similar. E-3 evangelism is evangelizing non-church members outside the church's cultural, linguistic, and ethnic unit with that unit being unfamiliar. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 47-48. Credit to this typology in the missiological and church growth vocabulary belongs to Ralph D. Winter. This typology is stating the same idea as the relationship between evangelism and the people consciousness of an HU. The greater the cultural differences are between the evangelist and the HU, the harder the persuasion becomes between the evangelist and the HU. Thus, when the evangelist is communicating the gospel outside of his HU, there must be, at a minimum, a knowledge and respect of the differences between the two HUs.

<sup>130</sup>George G. Hunter III, *The Contagious Congregation: Frontiers in Evangelism and Church Growth* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979), 77. Kenneth Burke has an excellent discussion describing the importance of communication and rhetoric in connecting with your audience with power and persuasion. Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California, 1969), 19-23, 55-59.

<sup>131</sup>Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, *The Pasadena Consultation on the Homogeneous Unit*, 5-6.

However, as previously discussed, cultural barriers are normative and descriptive of the culture, not prescriptive of the church.<sup>132</sup> For McGavran, cultural barriers during the discipling stage are not as important as the greater importance of reaching people for Christ.<sup>133</sup> Barriers can be broken down during the perfecting stage:

No one should minimize the importance of perfecting. At the same time, all should be certain that undiscipled pagan multitudes must be added to the Lord before they can be perfected. . . . Today's great vision, which calls the churches to rectify injustices in their neighborhoods and nations, is good; but it must not supplant the vision that calls them to make disciples of all nations. . . . The least perfected church is superior to its non-Christian origins.<sup>134</sup>

Some problematic cultural barriers that may be present in the application of the HUP in a local church setting will be discussed in chapter 5 of this thesis. But for now, the HUP as a stewardship strategy is discussed.

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<sup>132</sup>Skip Bell writes, "To observe how a church is growing is not to say that is how a church should grow, or to suggest that such a correlate is even within God's will. It is mere observation. Since early church growth researchers were for the most part missiologists, they were distinctly sensitive to implications of separation or prejudice the homogeneous unit principle presented as they observed it in diverse world cultures. They applied careful research to the question of church growth, and their finding may be received in one perspective as objective observation and not *prescriptive*. Skip Bell, "What is Wrong with the Homogeneous Unit Principle? The HUP in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Church," *Journal of the American Society for Church Growth* 14 (Fall 2003): 4, emphasis added.

<sup>133</sup>"Discipling" for McGavran means "helping a people (a segment of *non-Christian* society) turn from non-Christian faith to Christ." McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 123. Discipling describes the pre-conversion state. For McGavran, discipling does not include the process of becoming more like Christ. McGavran calls this process "perfecting," and perfecting deals with the post-conversion state: "Discipling was to be followed by perfecting, that is, by the whole complex process of growth in grace, ethical improvement, and the conversion of individuals in that first and succeeding generations." *Ibid.*, 123.

This differentiation between a discipling and perfecting stage is not consistent with the contemporary use of the term "to disciple" or of discipleship. "A person becomes a disciple of Jesus when he or she confesses Jesus as Savior and God and is regenerated by the Holy Spirit (cf. John 3:3-8; Titus 3:5). The participles "baptizing" and "teaching" in Matthew 28:18 describe activities through which the new disciple grows in discipleship. Growth includes both identification with Jesus' death and resurrection (baptism) and obedience to all that Jesus had commanded the disciples in his earthly ministry (teaching)." Moreau, *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, s.v. "Disciple, Discipleship," by Michael J. Wilkins.

<sup>134</sup>McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 123-24.

## Stewardship Strategy

The HUP as a stewardship strategy is discussed in two ways. The first way discusses God's expectations of stewardship with the gospel message. The second way discusses why the HUP is a stewardship strategy.

**Expectation of stewardship.** The church's stewardship responsibility for the gospel can be demonstrated through several scriptural references, the first of which is found in Paul's letter to the church at Corinth:

This is how one [ἄνθρωπος] should regard [λογιζέσθω] us [for this thesis purpose, the *koinonia church*], as servants [ὑπηρέτας] of Christ and stewards [οἰκονόμους] of the mysteries [μυστηρίων] of God. Moreover, it is required [ζητεῖται] of stewards that they be found [εὐρεθῆ] faithful [πιστός]. (1 Cor 4:1-2)

The interesting construction with these verses is that anyone [ἄνθρωπος] should regard the church in this way, which brings to mind Jesus' words, "Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matt 5:16). Furthermore, the "should regard" [λογιζέσθω] is also consistent with the early church "having favor with all the people" (Acts 2:47). In other words, "as servants [ὑπηρέτας] of Christ and stewards [οἰκονόμους] of the mysteries [μυστηρίων] of God", that servanthood and stewardship should be plainly seen or clearly evident: "But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God" (John 3:21). Thus "it is required [ζητεῖται] of stewards that they be found [εὐρεθῆ] faithful [πιστός]." This requirement presumes preparation and judgment in time: "Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (Matt 24:44). Though it is grace, sanctifying grace is resistible.

Thus, Jesus asks the question, “When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth” (Luke 18:8)?

Likewise, the parable of the talents (Matt 25:14-30) is understood as a parable of stewardship and production as well as preparation and judgment. The servants have talents (money) which, for this thesis’ purposes, can parallel the mysteries of God (the gospel) from 1 Corinthians 4:1. Symbolically, the talents and the gospel should be considered valuable (Matt 13:44) and are to be handled with care (2 Cor 4:7). Good stewardship and production are judged as being good and faithful. Poor stewardship and no production are judged as wickedness and slothfulness. The servants of God are expected to “produce” (1 Thess 4:1). This lack of production was Israel’s condemnation (Matt 21:43) and is understood as a lack of faith (Matt 13:58).

In addition to faithfulness, stewardship of the gospel message should also be understood as an act of wisdom. Jesus states, “Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes” (Matthew 24:45–46). Thus, in the parable of the dishonest steward (Luke 16:1-8), Jesus concludes, “The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light” (Luke 16:8). As an act of wisdom, the verse suggests that the church can learn from the world in dealing with the world. This dealing with the world may be considered as either cultural relevancy or cultural sensitivity. In any case, wisdom is expected, “Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves” (Matt 10:16). Therefore, the church needs to act both faithfully and prudently

with the gospel as the world would do with worldly things. Paul summarizes this stewardship expectation, “Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel” (Phil 1:27).

**HUP as stewardship.** The HUP is a stewardship strategy in a variety of ways as the definition states or implies. All of these ways have been discussed previously in this thesis and thus will only be summarized now. The terms effective and efficient are used to describe this tool of evangelistic communication because even the opponents of the HUP do not deny its pragmatic results in evangelism.<sup>135</sup> Therefore, it is axiomatic to suggest that it would be wise to use such an effective and efficient tool. With regard to the identification of receptive people, it is a God-sized task requiring prayer and grace which will be discussed in chapter 5. Thus, to rely on God for guidance and power in the evangelistic task is both wise and faithful. The HUP understands the cultural mosaic that is found in human relationships and the importance of a common language for effective and efficient communication. Furthermore, this thesis understands that God allows

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<sup>135</sup>The LTEG analysis states, “In our commitment to evangelism, we all understand the reasons why homogeneous unit churches usually grow faster than heterogeneous or multicultural ones.” Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, *The Pasadena Consultation on the Homogeneous Unit*, 5.

However, note what George Peters writes, “*A church grows best by people units of society*. The emphasis is on *people units*, often spoken of as homogeneous units. We do not find scriptural support that there were churches formed along homogeneous line in apostolic times. This may have happened. However, this seems more unlikely than probable. It would be difficult to establish such a fact and practice from biblical and historical sources. *Biblical idealism* and *apostolic practices* do not support it. In fact, biblical idealism seems to cut across this social and cultural practice and rule it out, at least consider it sub-ideal (1 Cor. 3:4; Col. 3:10-11). The unity and equality of all believers in Christ were dogmatically defended in the letters to the Ephesians and Colossians. Divisions, divisiveness, partyism, and social distinctions were practically condemned (1 Cor. 11:1-22; James 2:1-13).” Peters, *A Theology of Church Growth*, 229-30, emphasis in original.

prevenient grace to be resisted.<sup>136</sup> So there is no attempt at the point of evangelistic communication to impose sanctifying grace on an unregenerate person thus be found guilty of poor stewardship of the gospel proclamation. There is a cost of discipleship in the gospel. As in any investment, there are start-up costs and continuing operation costs. The initial cost starts as the cost of allegiance which requires faith. The cost continues in sanctification as one matures. This sanctification cost can be called the following cost. The cost of allegiance and the following cost are both lordship costs, but they are distinct. Accept Jesus as Lord is the cost of allegiance. Follow Jesus as Lord is the cost of sanctification. One cost is known and the other cost is continually being revealed. Paul words, written to the church about believers, are applicable, “Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand” (Rom 14:4) and “Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother” (Rom 14:13).

In summary, the HUP is both culturally relevant and sensitive with the expectation that kingdom people are the best people to affect cultural change to the glory of God. In addition, on the surface, the working definition of the HUP may appear too pragmatic or anthropocentric. However, as explained and illustrated, at its systematic, theological core, the HUP is a theistic worldview that acknowledges that God is at work and strives to be wise and faithful to the presence and activity of God. Failing to accept and respond to God’s work or activity is practical deism and poor stewardship.

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<sup>136</sup>Obviously, the elect will not resist God’s grace. But prevenient grace is also available to those who are not elected. This chap. offers an explanation in n. 101.

## **Biblical Paradigm**

Luke comments that the Bereans had a noble character, one of open mindedness, when they received the word and with great eagerness, they examined the Scriptures daily to see if what they were being told was true (Acts 17:11). It was the attempt of this thesis to examine the Scriptures thoroughly in the analysis of the HUP to test its validity or not. Therefore, this thesis provides many parenthetical scripture citations for the reader to also investigate.

This thesis considers the HUP to be biblically defensible. In particular, this thesis considers the HUP to be much like a pair of glasses for one with poor eyesight. It helps to bring clarity in seeing where God is at work so as to go and join God in his work of salvation. This pair of glasses is understood as the role of prayer – God’s tool of communication – as illustrated above in Figure 10.

Despite being biblically defensible, this thesis is concerned with the controversial nature of the HUP. Any attempt to reference the HUP in a productive theological conversation would most likely lead to disappointment and failure. In the minds of many, the HUP appears to be guilty until proven innocent. Thus, because chapter 5 of this thesis would like to apply the HUP in practical ways for the benefit and growth of God’s church, it is necessary to use the analysis but provide another way to define the HUP without the baggage of the current term.

The working definition of the HUP with its corresponding analysis parenthetically referenced is as follows:

A stewardship strategy of evangelism [we are accountable and responsible to God for the gospel] which postulates that when receptive people are identified [through prayer identify people], the most effective and efficient tool of evangelistic communication [the best way to present the gospel] occurs when people hear the

gospel from their own people [culturally relevant] and are able to respond to the gospel with limited social dislocation [culturally sensitive].

From the parenthetical references, a new definition can be identified and formulated as follows:

Because we are accountable and responsible to God for the gospel, the best way to present the gospel is to allow God to identify people through prayer and then present the gospel with cultural relevancy and sensitivity.

Furthermore, instead of the HUP, another acronym could be used to stimulate conversation without the necessity of constantly defending the old one. For example, this thesis postulates that A.G.A.P.E. – which would stand for the “Asking God and Approaching People Evangelistically” – could be used. Also, the stewardship concern is both a reason and a result of A.G.A.P.E. and does not need to be included in the definition. Thus, A.G.A.P.E. could be modified as simply “asking God to identify people that you can present the gospel to with cultural relevancy and sensitivity.”

In addition, defining the word directly from the Bible would create less controversy in the use and definition of terms. Through a review of the HUP analysis, the following scripture verses were found to be the most representative of the new definition and A.G.A.P.E.:

Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak. Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person. (Col 4:2-6)

In conclusion, an illustration of A.G.A.P.E. is presented in Figure 13 as follows:

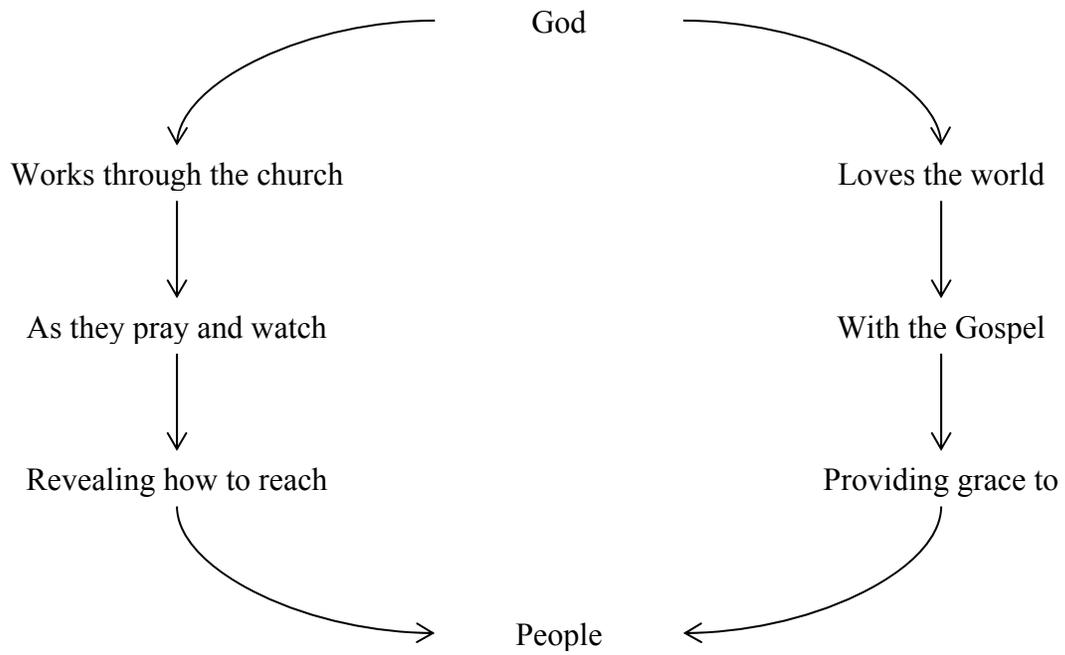


Figure 13. Asking God and approaching people, evangelistically (A.G.A.P.E.)

## CHAPTER 4

### SURVEY RESULTS

This chapter summarizes the results of a written response survey that was mailed to selected churches on May 7, 2009.<sup>1</sup> Presented first are the design, purposes, and hypotheses of the survey. Then the survey questions and the numerical results are reported under the title of instrumentation. Finally, a comprehensive analysis of the survey results is presented.

#### **Design**

The survey pool was drawn from a population of established churches of the Baptist General Association of Virginia.<sup>2</sup> Subjects for inclusion in this research were selected by the use of a computer-generated random sample from the total population. Using basic statistics, it was determined that a sample size of 303 was needed for a confidence level of 95 percent with an error level of 5 percent. Initially, the survey instrumentation was mailed to the sample size of 303 plus a computer-generated random replacement sample of 47. In the event that some of the 303 sample size did not respond,

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<sup>1</sup>The churches selected are in the design section below. The actual survey is found in Appendix 2.

<sup>2</sup>The churches belonging to the Baptist General Association of Virginia are ones in my current ministry setting. In addition, they are established churches as opposed to church starts. Therefore, references to the church in this chap., unless otherwise noted, are intended to reflect that ministry setting. Thus, any conclusions drawn do not necessarily reflect churches of other ministry settings.

a follow up phone call was used to verify their receipt of the survey instrumentation and their willingness to participate. If the recipient chose not to participate, the replacement sample size of forty-seven was utilized. The number of churches that responded was 130, or an 8.2 percent error level at a 95 percent confidence level.

### **Purposes**

The purposes of this survey were three-fold. First, this survey ascertained what knowledge of the HUP and related concepts existed among the respondents. Second, this survey asked some general and specific questions dealing with evangelistic outreach efforts among the responding churches. These questions provided insight into the potential use of HUs in those efforts. Third, this survey attempted to discover if there is any relationship between the first two purposes and outcomes as analyzed through the number and type of baptisms in the responding churches.

### **Hypotheses**

The hypotheses of this ministry research thesis were three-fold. First, the local, established churches in my ministry setting have at their disposal a potentially great tool for evangelism and church growth in the HUP. Second, this potentially great tool may be underutilized or not utilized at all by the local established church in reaching a lost world for Christ and in the growth of His church. Third, the failure to recognize and utilize the HUP as a tool in evangelism may actually lead to homogeneous churches, which may adversely affect those churches in reaching different people groups.

The third hypothesis contradicts the criticism of the HUP as an evangelism tool because critics argue that by using the HUP it would lead to homogeneous churches.

However, the challenge and opportunity of using the HUP in evangelism is in understanding people consciousness, or when members of a HU “think of themselves as separate.”<sup>3</sup> The challenge of people consciousness in evangelism comes in the degree of people consciousness in any one particular HU. The opportunity of people consciousness in evangelism is to understand how the “barrier” of people consciousness can best be overcome. The failure to understand that there are HUs and that they have varying degrees of people consciousness, or using the HUP as an evangelism tool, may result in the church reaching people groups only like themselves. Thus, not using the HUP highly correlates to the probability that there are HUs that are not being effectively evangelized because of their people consciousness.

### **Instrumentation**

The instrumentation in the survey had three basic components. One component deals with the grouping of data. Another component dealt with knowledge of the HUP. The final component dealt with the outreach approach and practices of the responding churches. Evaluated together, these three components helped to form a comprehensive analysis.

### **Grouping Component**

The grouping of the statistical data is in three categories. They are the church setting, weekly attendance, and average baptisms.

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<sup>3</sup>Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, rev. and ed. C. Peter Wagner, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1990), 155.

**Church setting.** In the church setting question, the respondent identified the locale of the church as rural, suburban, or urban. In addition to grouping, the response to this question would allow one to see whether or not the setting of the church had any correlation to the church respondent’s knowledge or the application of the HUP. The results are found in Table 2.

Table 2. Church setting

	Numerical response	Percentage response
Rural	67	51.54
Suburban	38	29.23
Urban	23	17.69
No response	1	0.77
Multiple responses	1	0.77
Total	130	100.00

**Weekly attendance.** The weekly attendance question allowed the respondent to identify the church’s average attendance during Sunday school and worship services. In addition to grouping, the response to this question helped to determine if the size of the church as measured by attendance had any correlation to the church’s knowledge or the application of the HUP. In addition, the number of baptisms could be compared to the average attendance to suggest the evangelistic effectiveness of any evangelistic methodology that the church employs. The results are found in Table 3.

Table 3. Average attendance

	Worship Services (129 Respondents)	Sunday School (124 Respondents)
Range	15 - 1725	5 - 700
Mean	162.26	98.75
Median	100	72.5
Mode	100	30

**Average baptisms.** The respondents were asked to provide information concerning baptisms.<sup>4</sup> The purpose of this question was to determine if there is any correlation between evangelistic methodology (the knowledge and application of the HUP) and evangelistic effectiveness (baptisms).<sup>5</sup> The results are found in Table 4.

### **Knowledge Component**

The knowledge component of the statistical data has two aspects. One aspect is the understanding of the HUP. The other aspect is an understanding of the local church or community setting and its similarity with the church.

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<sup>4</sup>The information requested was threefold. First, the number of baptisms over the past five years was requested. Second, the respondents were asked to distinguish the number of baptisms between adults and children. Third, they were asked to distinguish between the number of baptisms for relatives of church members and for those who were not related to church members. There was no evidenced correlation between the HUP and the 2nd or 3rd part of the baptism information requested. Therefore, only the total baptisms were used in analysis.

<sup>5</sup>Baptisms are used because they are an easily identifiable number by the respondents. Ideally, evangelistic effectiveness would be determined by responsible church membership of the baptized individual. However, baptisms do provide a starting point in the relationship of methodology and application.

Table 4. Baptisms over a five-year period

Range	0-322
Mean	35.20
Median	20
Mode	25
Children %	55.26
Adults %	44.74
Relatives %	58.53
Not relatives %	41.47

**HUP understanding.** To get a general idea of knowledge and acquaintance with the HUP, respondents were asked about their familiarity with five subject matters relative to this D.Min. research thesis. Participants were to respond with either “not familiar,” “somewhat familiar,” or “very familiar.” The results are found in Table 5.

The results are interesting and often incongruent when combined with one another. For example, in chapter 2, the critical relationship between the HUP and the principle of receptivity was explained. Of the 25.38 percent who responded that they were “very familiar” with the HUP, 21.21 percent of those respondents said that they had “no familiarity” with the principle of receptivity. In addition, only 10.77 percent of the total population responded to being “very familiar” with both.

Table 5. Familiarity with key concepts

	Total responses	Percentage not familiar	Percentage somewhat familiar	Percentage very familiar
HUP	130	49.24	25.38	25.38
The principle of receptivity	129	53.49	33.33	13.18
<i>Understanding Church Growth</i> by Donald A. McGavran	129	42.64	34.88	22.48
People approach to evangelism	130	40.77	42.31	16.92
CGM	129	20.16	44.96	34.88

Also, of the 25.38 percent who responded that they were “very familiar” with the HUP, only 51.52 percent were also “very familiar” with *Understanding Church Growth* by Donald A. McGavran. Thus, only 13.07 percent of the total population are “very familiar” with both concepts. Furthermore, of the 25.38 percent who responded that they were “very familiar” with the HUP, 18.18 percent of them said that they had “no familiarity” with *Understanding Church Growth* by Donald A. McGavran. This result begs the question, “Are the respondents very familiar with the HUP based upon opponents or proponents of the HUP?”

Closely tied to the HUP is a more innocuous terminology referred to as the “people group approach” to evangelism. If one is not familiar with the HUP, perhaps they would be familiar with the people group approach to evangelism. Of the 25.38 percent who responded that they were “very familiar” with the HUP, only 24.24 percent were also “very familiar” with the people group approach to evangelism which is only

6.15 percent of the total population being “very familiar” with both concepts. There were also 30.30 percent of the 25.38 percent who responded that they were “very familiar” with the HUP who said that they had “no familiarity” with the people group approach to evangelism.

Similar to the relationship of the HUP with other topics, other interesting inconsistencies occur when comparing the knowledge of one topic with another. For example, of the 22.48 percent who said that they were “very familiar” with McGavran’s book, *Understanding Church Growth*, 17.86 percent of those respondents had “no familiarity” with either the HUP or the principle of receptivity – two important concepts from the book.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, Donald McGavran is considered the father of the CGM and his main treatise on the subject is his book, *Understanding Church Growth*. Of the 34.88 percent who responded that they were “very familiar” with the CGM, 20.00 percent of them said that they had “no familiarity” with *Understanding Church Growth*. The total population that reported being “very familiar” with both the CGM and *Understanding Church Growth* was only 17.05 percent.<sup>7</sup>

**Community understanding.** The respondents were first told that “The community that the church is located in can be broken down in a variety of demographic ways like racial makeup, household income, age distribution, etc.” Based upon that

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<sup>6</sup>According to the index in *Understanding Church Growth*, receptivity is listed as being discussed on 22 pages and homogeneous unit principle on 50 pages of a 292-page book.

<sup>7</sup>Table A1 in Appendix 2 has the familiarity of the various topics based on the church’s setting. Table A2 in Appendix 2 has a summary of the “very familiar” responses among the various topics. Only 3.85 percent responded to being “very familiar” with all five topics.

statement, they were then asked to choose among three choices what would best describe their church in relation to their community. The results are found in Table 6.<sup>8</sup>

Table 6. Community similarity

	Numerical response	Percentage response
We are a mirror image of our community in our demographic makeup	26	20.00
We are very much like the majority of our community in our demographic makeup – although there are people groups in the community that are not represented in our church	86	66.15
We are not very much like the majority of our community in our demographic makeup	17	13.08
No response	1	0.77
Total	130	100.00

### **Application Component**

The application component has two categories of statistical data. One aspect deals with a general evangelistic methodology. The other aspect involves specific outreach activities. Although not definitive, these two aspects together should allow a certain degree of insight with regard to the use of the HUP in evangelistic efforts of the church.

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<sup>8</sup>The results and importance of community similarity will be examined in more detail in chap. 5 when the practical application of the HUP is discussed.

**Evangelistic methodology.** The respondents were given a choice to best describe their evangelistic methodology. The choices were either “We try to reach everybody we can in the community” or “We target specific groups of people in the community.” The intent behind this inquiry was to identify the church’s approach towards evangelism. Although not definitive, targeting specific people groups is considered indicative of identifying HUs and thus more likely in using the HUP in evangelism. Likewise, trying to reach everybody is considered indicative of an approach that does not use HUs and thus probably not utilizing the HUP in evangelism. The results are found in Table 7.

Table 7. Evangelistic methodology

	Numerical response	Percentage response
We try to reach everybody we can in the community	110	84.62
We target specific groups of people in the community	17	13.08
No response	3	2.30
Total	130	100.00

It should be noted that a response of targeting specific people groups is not necessarily exclusive of trying to reach everybody because one can try to reach everybody by targeting specific people groups. Likewise, a response of trying to reach everybody does not preclude that specific people groups are not being targeted. Thus, as

previously stated, examining evangelistic methodology together with specific outreach activities should allow a conclusion to be formulated concerning the use of the HUP in evangelistic efforts of the church.

In addition, it should be remembered, as stated in chapter 2 of this D.Min. thesis, the HUP is a stewardship strategy. In general, churches struggle with limited financial resources and the stewardship issue of how best to spend those monies. Either an unfocused or egalitarian approach to outreach spending, irrespective of any difference in evangelistic effectiveness, is not good stewardship and thus, by definition, is not using the HUP.

**Outreach activities.** Evangelistic attitudes may not always be consistent with actual evangelistic practices. Therefore, it is important to examine specific outreach activities so that, with evangelistic methodology, a conclusion can be formulated concerning the use of the HUP in the evangelistic efforts of the church.

Respondents were given some outreach options and asked to reply to what extent the church was involved in the various activities. Their options were “little or none,” “sometimes,” and “often.” The results of the respondents who answered the inquiry are found in Table 8.

The activities that targeted specific people groups were considered to be reflective of using the HUP in outreach. In three demographic areas, the majority of respondents stated they used “little or none” in outreach efforts to specific groups of people as follows:

1. Of the respondents, 91.34 percent stated that they used “little or none” in “outreach to specific groups of people based on language or ethnicity.”

Table 8. Outreach options

	Percentage little or none	Percentage sometimes	Percentage often
Outreach through mass mailings to the community for upcoming church events	71.09	22.66	6.25
Outreach through advertisements in local newspaper for general church services	48.84	31.78	19.38
Outreach through advertisements in local newspaper for special church services	25.78	44.53	29.69
Outreach through advertisements in local newspaper for events like VBS	34.88	31.78	33.33
Outreach to specific groups of people based on language or ethnicity	91.34	4.72	3.94
Outreach to specific groups of people based on age or sex	63.78	31.50	4.72
Outreach to specific groups of people based on common characteristics or needs	51.18	39.37	9.45
Automatic letters or phone calls to first-time visitors	21.88	14.84	63.28
Automatic visits to first-time visitors	27.91	39.53	32.56

2. Of the respondents, 63.78 percent stated that they used “little or none” in “outreach to specific groups of people based on age or sex.”
3. Of the respondents, 51.18 percent stated that they used “little or none” in “outreach to specific groups of people based on common characteristics or needs.”

Likewise, less than ten percent of the responding churches identified any of these three activities as being used “often” in outreach activities. These results are consistent with the evangelistic methodology results displayed in Table 6.

Furthermore, of the options available, the most common evangelistic effort employed by respondents, and the only one used “often” by the majority of respondents, was “automatic letters or phone calls to first-time visitors” – a truly reactive approach to evangelism.<sup>9</sup> The next two activities with the greatest number of “often” or “sometimes” responses were “outreach through advertisements in local newspaper for special church services” (74.22 percent) and “automatic visits to first-time visitors” (72.09 percent). From a stewardship perspective, it would be beneficial for churches to quantify the effectiveness of each of their outreach activities in order to evaluate their continued use.

**Evangelistic practices.** Examining both evangelistic methodology and outreach activities leads to the formulated conclusion that the use of the HUP in evangelistic efforts of the church is underutilized or not utilized at all by the local, established church in my ministry setting in reaching a lost world for Christ and in the growth of His church.<sup>10</sup> This conclusion is consistent and not surprising when considering the knowledge component of the HUP discussed earlier.

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<sup>9</sup>This critique of the outreach activities should not be conveyed as a criticism of any outreach activity. Evangelism is a communication process dependent upon the specific time and setting of the local church. Rather, the emphasis of this thesis is to ponder the effectiveness and efficiency of evangelistic practices through the prism of stewardship.

<sup>10</sup>It is also possible that other outreach activities not queried would lead to a different conclusion. Further research is needed to validate this conclusion. In chap. 5, when the practical application of the HUP is discussed, age or gender based activities like Sunday school and youth groups will be examples of how the HUP is used in the local church. Therefore, it is possible that there is more targeted evangelism happening than the research results indicate.

## Comprehensive Analysis

The survey instrumentation had three basic components: grouping of data, knowledge of HUP and related concepts, and evangelistic methodology and application. Examined in relationship with one another, these three components will help form a comprehensive analysis of the survey results. However, a review of the working definition of the HUP and limitations of the survey analysis are first warranted.

### Review

In this section, a review of the working definition of the HUP will be presented. Then, key words from the definition that affect an understanding of the comprehensive analysis will be discussed. The working definition of the HUP which has been formulated in this thesis is as follows:

A stewardship strategy of evangelism which postulates that when receptive people are identified, the most effective and efficient tool of evangelistic communication occurs when people hear the gospel from their own people and are able to respond to the gospel with limited social dislocation.

**Strategy.** As a strategy, the HUP implies a focused approach towards evangelism. This focused approach towards evangelism is one reason why the HUP is defined as a stewardship strategy.<sup>11</sup> Another reason why it is a stewardship strategy is the effective and efficient nature of the tool. It is a tool of communication which postulates that people from a particular HU will be more responsive to the gospel when they hear it

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<sup>11</sup>As a missionary, McGavran struggled with limited financial resources and the stewardship issue of how best to spend those missionary monies. Two major concerns of stewardship are accountability and responsibility with the desired outcome that monies should flow where results are seen. Similarly, the local church is also constrained with limited financial resources.

from someone from their HU.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, the HUP theorizes that people from a particular HU will respond to the gospel when there is limited social dislocation from their HU.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, as a focused, stewardship approach to evangelism, the HUP seeks to identify receptive HUs.

**Evangelism.** Evangelism is a multifaceted word. The root of the word evangelism is εὐαγγέλιον which simply means good news.<sup>14</sup> The verb form, εὐαγγελίζω, means announcing the good news.<sup>15</sup> Proclamation evangelism, or verbally proclaiming the gospel, is consistent with the Greek meaning of the word. However, the CGM

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<sup>12</sup>As a tool of evangelistic communication, the HUP's purpose is to clearly proclaim the gospel and help people respond to it. Clarity is best achieved when the Gospel is expounded by and to people who use a language in common. (A language in common is best understood from a cultural context.)

HUs were understood within a sociological and anthropological framework, or a tool of cultural consciousness and sensitivity. The idea that people "like to hear" the gospel expounded upon by their own people is a phenomenological issue. It is not a theological issue that people "ought to hear" the gospel expounded upon by their own people.

This communication aspect is consistent with the understanding of evangelism as presented in chap. 3. Evangelism may be divided up into four categories: E-0, E-1, E-2 and E-3. E-0 evangelism is evangelizing existing church members. E-1 evangelism is evangelizing non-church members within the churches' cultural, linguistic, and ethnic unit. E-2 evangelism is evangelizing non-church members outside the church's cultural, linguistic, and ethnic unit, but in a unit that is similar. E-3 evangelism is evangelizing non-church members outside the church's cultural, linguistic, and ethnic unit with that unit being unfamiliar. It is obvious then that the difficulty of the evangelistic endeavor increases as one's cultural, linguistic, and ethnic unit differences increase.

According to McGavran, credit to this typology in the missiological and church growth vocabulary belongs to Ralph D. Winter. This typology is stating the same idea as the relationship between evangelism and the people consciousness of an HU as was discussed above. Again, note that the reference is descriptive of the culture and how it relates to evangelizing different cultural groups. See McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 47-48.

<sup>13</sup>McGavran writes, "It takes no great acumen to see that when marked differences of color, stature, income, cleanliness, and education are present, unbelievers understand the Gospel better when expounded by their own kind of people." *Ibid.*, 167.

<sup>14</sup>Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, ed. and trans. William F. Arndt, F. Wilber Gingrich, and Frederick W. Danker, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1979), s.v. "εὐαγγέλιον."

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, s.v. "εὐαγγελίζω."

considers evangelism incomplete until any decision made for Christ is evidenced by responsible church membership. This understanding of evangelism is called “persuasion evangelism” and is consistent with the biblical intent of the word. Elmer Towns explains:

Persuasion evangelism is concerned with results. . . . Persuasion evangelism is intentional preaching with a view of bringing men to Christ and into responsible church membership. . . . Disciples are countable and their number can be expanded. Hence, disciples are the result of evangelism. The term “make disciples” means to bring a person to Christ, but it includes more than getting a person to make a decision for Christ; it implies motivating the person to follow Christ as his disciple.<sup>16</sup>

**Tool.** From the working definition of the HUP, the use of HUs is properly understood as a tool and not as a principle.<sup>17</sup> As a tool, it is one of many tools that can be

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<sup>16</sup>Elmer L. Towns, “Evangelism: The Why and How,” in *Church Growth: State of the Art*, ed. C. Peter Wagner (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale house Publishers, 1988), 44-45. This understanding of evangelism is also consistent with the CGM and the goal of responsible church members or fruit bearing disciples. Thom S. Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth: History, Theology, and Principles* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 20, 35.

<sup>17</sup>The word “tool” implies a resource that can be used in helping to accomplish one’s task. The word “principle” implies a rule or conduct that must be followed in order to accomplish one’s task. As discussed previously, adding the term “principle” to “homogeneous unit” was done by Peter Wagner. Chuck Van Engen, “Is the Church for Everyone? Planting Multi-Ethnic Congregations in North America,” *Global Missiology*, <http://ojs.globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/article/viewFile/122/353> (accessed March 28, 2013).

As stated in chap. 1, the controversy surrounding the HUP can be characterized in some degree as miscommunication. One area of confusion and miscommunication is the term itself. In the term HUP, the word “principle” should be understood as descriptive of the culture, not descriptive of the church. When the word “principle” is incorrectly applied toward the church, then it is understood as an ecclesiastical necessity. That is, because the culture has placed on itself certain barriers, the church also needs to have those barriers. However, when the word “principle” is correctly applied toward the culture, then the term can be understood as a tool of social analysis. That is, what are the barriers that this culture has placed on itself, and what impact will those barriers have on the evangelistic mandate?

Therefore, in chap. 5, one practical application in using the HUP will be to rename the HUP as this thesis postulated in chap. 3 to A.G.A.P.E., which would stand for “Asking God and Approaching People Evangelistically.” By using a different name and also by using a biblical verse to teach it (Col 4:2-6), it would help to portray that the HUP is a tool to be used and not a principle to be followed and thereby also helping to alleviate some of the miscommunication surrounding the HUP.

used in an evangelistic strategy. A key to utilizing this tool is recognizing and responding to receptive people groups.<sup>18</sup>

## **Limitations**

When analyzing the survey results, it is important to note the limitations in such an analysis. Based upon the review discussion of the working definition of the HUP, this thesis is not stating that the HUP must be used. Rather, it is a tool that should be considered when an evangelistic strategy is formulated. Understanding HUs and their receptiveness provides evangelistic opportunities. Therefore, this thesis' comprehensive analysis should not be construed as unduly criticizing the responding churches. There are many evangelistic tools that are available.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, evaluating "persuasion" evangelism is difficult to quantify and beyond the scope of explanation in the survey instrumentation. Ideally, evangelistic effectiveness would be determined by responsible church membership of the baptized individual. Instead of trying to measure responsible church membership, baptisms were surveyed because it is an easily identifiable number for the respondents. Baptisms do provide a starting point in the relationship between methodology, application, and effectiveness.

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<sup>18</sup>McGavran's writings show that keeping track of HUs was a task to be done rather than just a principle to follow. The analysis of the growth of HUs was a fairly simple task to meet one's responsibility of "doing one's part" in one's accountability to God.

Using numerical statistics, it is fairly easy to identify when and where a church is growing. However, the significant question is "Why is it growing?" One reason why a church grows is that there are people who are receptive to the gospel. The question progresses to, "Do these receptive people have some characteristic in common?" If these receptive people have some characteristic in common, then one can likely identify a HU. As detailed in chap. 4, for McGavran, receptive people were God's work – part of His sovereignty. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 67-71.

<sup>19</sup>Practical application of the HUP will be discussed in chap. 5.

In addition, what is an acceptable, quantifiable number of baptisms that demonstrates evangelistic effectiveness? For cross evaluation purposes, what should baptisms be compared to: worship attendance or Sunday school attendance? What baptismal ratio is an acceptable, quantifiable number that shows evangelistic effectiveness?

Moreover, the local, contextual setting of the church is important to understanding evangelistic effectiveness. For example, a church in a community where the population is 95 percent churched and has a baptism ratio of 1 baptism to every 15 responsible church members might be more evangelistically effective than a church in a community where the population is 40 percent churched and has a baptism ratio of 1 baptism to every 10 responsible church members. Or, a church in a community where the population is declining with a 10 percent baptism rate to responsible church membership might be more evangelistically effective than a church in a community where the population has doubled with a 15 percent baptism rate to responsible church membership. Also, there are other factors – like pastoral leadership, clear purposes and strategic plans – affecting evangelistic effectiveness that are beyond the scope of this thesis.

Finally, there are many variables in evangelistic endeavors that are hard to quantify and some that are impossible. For example, if many evangelistic approaches are used, how does one identify the specific evangelistic activity that has led to responsible church membership? (More than likely, it is a combination of evangelistic work that leads to responsible church membership.) The work of the Spirit is an example of something impossible to quantify. McGavran writes, “The Holy Spirit is sovereign, and

he is not subject to contextual or institutional factors. He frequently acts in surprising, nontraditional ways, and it is up to those Christian leaders who want to be effective in growth to have an ear to hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.”<sup>20</sup> Therefore, considering the limitations above, the inference of whether the responding churches are effective in evangelism is tenuous at best without further analysis. Thus, this thesis only reports the statistical data.

## **Analysis**

Although not the ideal standard when examining evangelistic effectiveness, baptisms are easily quantified. Thus, baptisms provide a starting point in comparing the relationship of evangelistic methodology and application to evangelistic effectiveness.<sup>21</sup> The following statistical data concerns the relationship between total baptisms and other survey results.

**Church setting.** Table 9 provides the first analysis which will be the ratio between the average baptisms per year to both worship attendance and Sunday school attendance.<sup>22</sup> In addition, this same analysis is broken down for each church setting.

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<sup>20</sup>McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 19.

<sup>21</sup>While there are a myriad of reasons for baptized individuals to no longer be a part of the baptizing church, some reported results raise questions as to where are the baptized individuals in the life of the church. For example, one church reported 120 baptisms over a five year period but only 45 and 35 average in weekly attendance in worship service and Sunday school respectively. Another church reported 125 baptisms over a five-year period but only a weekly average attendance of 135 and 75 in worship service and Sunday school respectively.

<sup>22</sup>These results only include respondents who answered both items to be compared. Therefore numbers do not necessarily match up to totals given in previous tables. Of the 130 total respondents, 7 respondents did not respond to the baptism question and 3 respondents used a range for baptisms. Therefore, the total respondent pool for this analysis is 120.

Table 9. Baptisms to worship attendance percentage based on church setting

		Average worship attendance	Average baptisms per year	Baptism to worship percentage
Total population				
	Worship attendance (119 responding churches)	158.88	7.06	4.44
	Sunday school attendance (114 responding churches)	96.97	6.56	6.76
Rural church setting				
	Worship attendance (61 responding churches)	95.15	4.43	4.66
	Sunday School Attendance (59 responding churches)	63.14	4.39	6.95
Suburban church setting				
	Worship Attendance (36 responding churches)	259.75	11.94	4.60
	Sunday school attendance (33 responding churches)	151.58	10.60	6.99
Urban church setting				
	Worship attendance (21 responding churches)	172.48	6.40	3.71
	Sunday school attendance (21 responding churches)	107.76	6.40	5.94

The following three items are some statistical data concerning baptisms from the responding churches.

1. The average worship attendance (158.88) and Sunday school attendance (96.97) “produced” an average 7.06 and 6.56 baptisms respectively over a five year period.
2. Of the responding churches, 60.00 percent averaged five or fewer baptisms per year which represented 19.25 percent of the total reported baptisms; 23.33 percent averaged between five and ten baptisms per year which represented 24.75 percent of the total reported baptisms; and 16.67 percent reported averaging ten or more baptisms per year which represented 56.00 percent of the total reported baptisms.
3. Respondents in a rural church setting had the lowest worship attendance but the highest baptism to worship attendance ratio.

From Table 8, the Sunday school attendance to baptism ratio is consistently at least two points lower than the worship attendance to baptism ratio in all church settings. The difference lies in a range from a low of 2.23 percent lower (5.94-3.71) from the urban church setting to a high of 2.39 percent lower (6.99-4.60) from the suburban church setting. Thus, in order to cut down on superfluous data results, only the worship attendance to baptism ratio will be used in further analysis.

Also, the respondents identifying themselves in an urban church setting have the lowest baptism ratio, while the respondents identifying themselves as either rural or suburban have almost similar baptism ratios (4.66 percent to 4.60 percent). Therefore, the urban church setting was monitored to see if it disproportionately affected the baptism ratio in other analyses. The effect was not found to be statistically significant.

**HUP understanding.** Table 10 shows the relationship between the knowledge of the HUP and related concepts with a baptism ratio based on worship attendance. From Table 4, it was reported that the vast majority of respondents disclosed that they were not “very familiar” with the HUP and the related concepts. Therefore, it is not surprising that the baptism to worship attendance ratio with the total population is similar to the “not familiar” and “somewhat familiar” baptism to worship attendance ratio.

Table 10. Baptisms to worship attendance percentage based on a knowledge of the HUP and related concepts

		Average worship attendance	Average baptisms per year	Baptism to worship percentage
Total population				
	Worship attendance (119 responding churches)	158.88	7.06	4.44
HUP (worship attendance)				
	Not familiar (58 responding churches)	144.90	6.48	4.47
	Somewhat familiar (32 responding churches)	135.88	6.75	4.97
	Very familiar (29 responding churches)	212.24	8.54	4.02
The principle of receptivity (Worship Attendance)				
	Not familiar (63 responding churches)	138.56	6.18	4.46
	Somewhat familiar (40 responding churches)	150.58	7.04	4.68
	Very familiar (15 responding churches)	266.00	10.57	3.97

Table 10, continued

		Average worship attendance	Average baptisms per year	Baptisms to worship percentage
<i>Understanding Church Growth</i> by Donald A. McGavran (worship attendance)				
	Not familiar (48 responding churches)	137.73	6.30	4.57
	Somewhat familiar (44 responding churches)	143.59	7.00	4.87
	Very familiar (26 responding churches)	218.39	8.45	3.87
People approach to evangelism (worship attendance)				
	Not familiar (48 responding churches)	205.08	9.26	4.52
	Somewhat familiar (52 responding churches)	117.60	5.15	4.38
	Very familiar (19 responding churches)	155.16	6.71	4.32
CGM (worship attendance)				
	Not familiar (23 responding churches)	143.13	7.00	4.89
	Somewhat familiar (54 responding churches)	108.13	4.98	4.61
	Very familiar (41 responding churches)	234.41	9.76	4.16

It was previously stated that knowledge of the HUP does not mean application of the HUP. However, it is of peculiar interest that, in all cases, the respondents who stated that they were “very familiar” with any given concept had the lowest baptisms to worship attendance ratios. On the flip side, those who responded that they were “somewhat familiar” with either the HUP, the principle of receptivity or McGavran’s book *Understanding Church Growth* had the highest baptisms to worship attendance ratios. Another result of interest is those who reported “no familiarity” with the CGM had higher baptism to worship attendance ratios than those who were “somewhat” or “very familiar” with the CGM.<sup>23</sup>

**Community understanding.** Table 11 shows the relationship between the respondents’ understanding of the church’s similarity with their community with a baptism ratio based on worship attendance. The more the respondents felt that they were similar to their community, the higher their baptism ratio was. Also note that the average worship attendance is higher the more the respondents felt that they were similar to their community.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Because one has “no familiarity” with the CGM does not mean that one has no familiarity with the concepts of the CGM or the abundance of the literature by church growth proponents.

<sup>24</sup>When compared to Table 9 and Table 10, the only other time when both the average worship attendance and the baptism ratio are the highest is when the respondents expressed “no familiarity” with the people group approach to evangelism. As stated in footnote six, the results and importance of community similarity will be examined in more detail in chap. 5 when the practical application of the HUP is discussed. For now, it should be noted that in Table 13, discussed below, the response “outreach to specific groups of people based on common characteristics or needs” is another instance when the average worship attendance and the baptism ratio are the highest. Therefore, although responding churches may have no familiarity with the people group approach to evangelism, they are using the approach in evangelistic activities and the baptism ratio suggests that the activity is effective.

Table 11. Baptisms to worship attendance percentage based on community understanding

	Average worship attendance	Average baptisms per year	Baptisms to worship percentage
Total population			
Worship attendance (119 responding churches)	158.88	7.06	4.44
Community similarity (worship attendance)			
We are a mirror image of our community in our demographic makeup (23 responding churches)	225.87	10.81	4.79
We are very much like the majority of our community in our demographic makeup – although there are people groups in the community that are not represented in our church (81 responding churches)	147.95	6.44	4.35
We are not very much like the majority of our community in our demographic makeup (14 responding churches)	117.00	4.86	4.15

**Evangelistic methodology.** Table 12 shows the relationship between the respondents’ evangelistic methodology with a baptism ratio based on worship attendance. However, of particular interest is when respondents did state that their primary evangelistic methodology was “to target specific groups of people in their community,” their baptism ratio was less than those who try to reach everybody.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>As discussed earlier, it should be noted again that a response of targeting specific people groups is not necessarily exclusive of trying to reach everybody because one can try to reach everybody by

Table 12. Baptisms to worship attendance percentage based on evangelistic methodology

	Average worship attendance	Average baptisms per year	Baptisms to worship percentage
Total population			
Worship attendance (119 responding churches)	158.88	7.06	4.44
Evangelistic methodology (worship attendance)			
We try to reach everybody we can in the community (100 responding churches)	146.65	6.68	4.56
We target specific groups of people in the community (16 responding churches)	233.88	9.78	4.18

**Outreach activities.** Table 13 shows the relationship between the respondents' outreach activities with a baptism ratio based on worship attendance. Of the nine outreach activities listed, only the response "outreach to specific groups of people based on common characteristics or needs" showed an increase in both the average worship attendance and the baptism ratio when moving from "little or none" to "sometimes" to "often." In other words, there is a direct correlation between the outreach activity and both the worship attendance and the baptism ratio of the church – the more

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targeting specific people groups. Likewise, a response of trying to reach everybody does not preclude that specific people groups are not being targeted. Somewhat interesting is that the churches who responded with "we target specific groups of people in the community" had the higher average worship total.

Table 13. Baptisms to worship attendance percentage based on outreach activities

	Average worship attendance	Average baptisms per year	Baptisms to worship percentage
Total population			
Worship attendance (119 responding churches)	158.88	7.06	4.44
Outreach through mass mailings to the community for upcoming church events			
Little or none (80 responding churches)	121.89	5.66	4.64
Sometimes (29 responding churches)	270.79	11.72	4.33
Often (8 responding churches)	142.25	5.60	3.94
Outreach through advertisements in local newspaper for general church services			
Little or none (56 responding churches)	162.30	6.16	3.80
Sometimes (38 responding churches)	139.00	7.12	5.12
Often (24 responding churches)	189.00	9.56	5.06

Table 13, continued

		Average worship attendance	Average baptisms per year	Baptisms to worship percentage
Outreach through advertisements in local newspaper for special church services				
	Little or none (29 responding churches)	255.14	10.25	4.02
	Sometimes (53 responding churches)	117.85	5.41	4.59
	Often (35 responding churches)	145.63	7.23	4.96
Outreach through advertisements in local newspaper for events like VBS				
	Little or none (43 responding churches)	180.72	7.76	4.29
	Sometimes (37 responding churches)	147.49	7.21	4.89
	Often (38 responding churches)	146.16	6.26	4.28
Outreach to specific groups of people based on language or ethnicity				
	Little or none (106 responding churches)	138.42	6.43	4.65
	Sometimes (5 responding churches)	240.00	9.04	3.77
	Often (5 responding churches)	563.00	21.64	3.84

Table 13, continued

	Average worship attendance	Average baptisms per year	Baptisms to worship percentage
Outreach to specific groups of people based on age or sex			
Little or none (74 responding churches)	115.64	5.48	4.74
Sometimes (37 responding churches)	205.81	9.03	4.39
Often (5 responding churches)	503.00	19.08	3.79
Outreach to specific groups of people based on common characteristics or needs			
Little or none (58 responding churches)	103.64	3.99	3.85
Sometimes (47 responding churches)	207.68	9.83	4.73
Often (11 responding churches)	265.00	12.87	4.86
Automatic letters or phone calls to first-time visitors			
Little or none (26 responding churches)	85.54	3.85	4.50
Sometimes (18 responding churches)	79.89	3.03	3.79
Often (73 responding churches)	206.58	9.35	4.53

Table 13, continued

	Average worship attendance	Average baptisms per year	Baptisms to worship percentage
Automatic visits to first-time visitors			
Little or none (32 responding churches)	121.50	5.52	4.54
Sometimes (48 responding churches)	162.96	6.43	3.95
Often (39 responding churches)	186.11	9.29	4.99

churches engaged in outreach to specific groups of people based on common needs or characteristics, the greater their worship attendance and their baptism ratio increased.

This result is significant when recalling McGavran’s definition of a HU as “simply a section of society in which all the members have some *characteristic* in common.”<sup>26</sup> The elastic nature of a HU does include a characteristic of needs. Therefore, a practical application of the HUP in the local church setting is to identify and to relate to a HU’s people-consciousness at a common characteristic or at a level of need.<sup>27</sup> Again, the survey results indicate that churches engaging in such outreach

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<sup>26</sup>McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 81, see also 69, emphasis added. By this definition, one can see how broad and elastic the term HU is as McGavran writes: “The homogenous unit is an *elastic* concept, its meaning depending on the context in which it is used.” *Ibid.*, 70, emphasis added.

<sup>27</sup>There is a practical example of this application from McGavran’s writing referencing the work of Lyle E. Schaller as found on pp. 42-43 of this thesis.

activities have higher worship attendance averages and higher baptism ratios than those who do not engage in those outreach activities.<sup>28</sup>

### **Concluding Thoughts**

This thesis hypothesizes that the local established church in my ministry setting has at her disposal a potentially great tool for evangelism and church growth in the HUP and that this potentially great tool is being underutilized or not utilized at all by my ministry setting in reaching a lost world for Christ and in the growth of His church. Furthermore, it also hypothesizes that the failure to recognize and utilize the HUP as a tool in evangelism can actually lead to homogeneous churches, which may adversely affect those churches in reaching different people groups. This chapter focused on the utilization aspect of the hypotheses by summarizing the results of a written response survey that was mailed to randomly selected, established churches of the Baptist General Association of Virginia on May 7, 2009.

The survey results showed that respondents were not “very familiar” with an understanding of the HUP and related concepts, especially when a “very familiar” comparison was prepared for two or more of the concepts.<sup>29</sup> Examining both evangelistic methodology and outreach activities leads to the formulated conclusion that the use of the HUP in evangelistic efforts of the church is underutilized or not utilized at all by the local, established churches in my ministry setting in reaching a lost world for Christ and

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<sup>28</sup>For further analysis, Table A3 in Appendix 3 trisects the baptisms to worship attendance percentages into a top tier, middle tier, and bottom tier.

<sup>29</sup>As found in Table 5 and Table A2 in Appendix 3 respectively.

in the growth of His church.<sup>30</sup> This conclusion is consistent and not surprising given that the majority of respondents reported that they were not “very familiar” with the HUP and other related concepts.

Furthermore, at first glance, the survey results appeared to show that a “very familiar” knowledge of the HUP and related concepts as well as an evangelistic methodology of “targeting specific people groups” was detrimental to the baptisms to worship attendance ratio and therefore not a potentially great tool for evangelism.<sup>31</sup> However, when actual outreach activities were examined, one outreach activity relevant to the HUP – “outreach to specific groups of people based on common characteristics or needs” – resulted in a different conclusion.<sup>32</sup> It was the only outreach activity that was consistent and showed an increase in both the average worship attendance and the baptism ratio when moving from “little or none” to “sometimes” to “often.”

By identifying and relating to a HU’s people-consciousness at a common characteristic or at a level of need, chapter 5 will discuss the practical application of the HUP in the local church setting in an attempt to demonstrate how the HUP is a potentially great tool for evangelism and church growth that the local, established church has at her disposal. In addition, chapter 5 will also attempt to demonstrate how failing to recognize and utilize the HUP as a tool in evangelism can actually lead to homogeneous churches.

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<sup>30</sup>As seen in Table 7 and Table 8 respectively.

<sup>31</sup>As seen in Table 10 and Table 12 respectively.

<sup>32</sup>As seen in Table 13.

## CHAPTER 5

### PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF THE HUP FOR THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH SETTING

The goal of this chapter is to present some practical ways in which to implement the HUP in the established church setting. In order to accomplish this goal, this chapter will be divided into three sections: divine sovereignty, human responsibility, and love strategy.<sup>1</sup> A concluding section entitled name identity will summarize this chapter and the thesis in general.

Divine sovereignty and human responsibility in evangelism are two biblical truths. Timothy Beougher writes, “There are two basic principles in evangelism: first, *God does it* and second, *He uses people*.”<sup>2</sup> Thus, while God is sovereign in evangelism, God chooses to use people and gives people responsibility and opportunity to glorify Him

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<sup>1</sup>Obviously, one cannot “implement” divine sovereignty. Implementation in this regard would be an attempt to understand and recognize God’s work in evangelism. This understanding and recognition then would fall under a teaching ministry of the church. Thus, one practical way in teaching divine sovereignty is to take advantage of currently available related resources. In my Southern Baptist Convention tradition, that would include discipleship training resources in the “Christian Growth Study Plan” which are available from LifeWay resources. Therefore, this thesis will reference these resources throughout this chap.

Furthermore, through discipleship training, many of the concepts surrounding the HUP are infiltrating the church, albeit incognito. Thus, although the HUP may not be the center of conversation in the local church, it is alive and well. The problem is that it is disjointed. Therefore, based on the conclusion from chap. 3 and as discussed below in this chap. under name identity, it is the hope that a new, systematic discipleship study can be developed from this thesis which would be entitled A.G.A.P.E. – Asking God & Approaching People Evangelistically – which would guide the church to implement various aspects of the HUP in the local church setting.

<sup>2</sup>Timothy Beougher, *Overcoming Walls to Witnessing* (Minneapolis: Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, 1993), 40, emphasis in original.

in how people participate in evangelism.<sup>3</sup> For the purpose of this thesis and in order to grasp these two concepts in relation to the HUP, divine sovereignty and human responsibility will be understood from the perspective of love.<sup>4</sup> Specifically, the perspective of love in divine sovereignty will be understood as God's love for people in the gift of salvation (John 3:16), God's love as the force behind the revealing of where God is at work (John 5:20), and God's love as the source and power to do God's work (Gal 5:6 and 2 Cor 5:14 – cf. Acts 1:8 and Rom 5:5). Similarly, the perspective of love in human responsibility will be understood as the great commandments or the love of God and the love of neighbor (Mark 12:29-31).<sup>5</sup>

In addition, in chapter 3, it was shown that at the core of the theological perspective concerning the HUP is the understanding that God is at work.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, for the purposes of this thesis, responsive evangelism will be defined as how the church responds to God's work in evangelism. Proactive evangelism will be defined as how the church engages the world or the culture in preparation to respond to God's work in evangelism. In order to relate the HUP, divine sovereignty, and human responsibility

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<sup>3</sup>From a Reformed Protestant perspective, in either the shorter or larger Westminster Catechisms, question 1 states that the glory of God is the chief end of people. There are other relevant teachings from the Westminster Catechism that pertain to chaps. 3 and 5.

<sup>4</sup>Love, as *agape* from the Greek, will then tie directly into the name of the new, systematic discipleship study which would help the church in implementing the various aspects of the HUP in the local church setting: entitled A.G.A.P.E. – Asking God & Approaching People Evangelistically.

<sup>5</sup>There is a direct relationship between the great commandments and the kingdom of God as found in Mark 12:34 (cf. Luke 10:28).

<sup>6</sup>On the surface, the HUP may appear too pragmatic or anthropocentric. However, as explained in chap. 3, at its systematic, theological core, the HUP is a theistic worldview. The HUP acknowledges that God is at work and strives to be wise and faithful to the presence and activity of God. Failing to accept and respond to God's work or activity is practical deism and poor stewardship.

with responsive evangelism and proactive evangelism, an allegory of surfing will be borrowed and expanded upon. In a popular book on church growth, Rick Warren writes,

If you take a class on surfing, you'll be taught everything you need to know about surfing: how to choose the right equipment; how to use it properly; how to recognize a "surfable" wave; how to catch a wave and ride it as long as possible; and, most important of all, how to get off a wave without wiping out. But you'll never find a course that teaches "How to Build a Wave."

Surfing is the art of riding waves that God builds. God makes the waves; surfers just ride them. No surfer tries to create waves. If the waves aren't there, you just don't surf that day. On the other hand, when surfers see a good wave, they make the most of it, even if that means surfing in the middle of a storm.<sup>7</sup>

In this allegory, the class on surfing can be understood as the teaching responsibility of the church as found in the Great Commission (Matt 28:20) and as seen in the devotion of the early church to the apostle's teaching (Acts 2:42).<sup>8</sup> From the perspective of this thesis, this teaching responsibility encompasses educating and training Christian disciples in a biblical worldview.<sup>9</sup> Because it is a class on surfing, the specific biblical teaching responsibility in this allegory is evangelism – proclaiming the gospel message concerning Jesus and the kingdom of God as explained in chapter 3.

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<sup>7</sup>Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth without Compromising Your Message & Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 13.

<sup>8</sup>By using this allegory, it should be noted that Warren did not necessarily intend it to apply to the HUP as he makes no mention of the HUP in his book. Rather, regardless of Warren's intent, this thesis sees the allegory as a helpful one in understanding the HUP. Warren does mention that he was influenced by McGavran's writings. *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>9</sup>Charles Colson and Nancy Pearcey explain a biblical worldview: "God exists. He has spoken. He is revealed in Christ, the Alpha and the Omega. He is sovereign over all creation, but if Christians are going to carry this life-giving message to the world, we must first understand that God's revelation is the source of all truth, a comprehensive framework for all of reality.

"The church's singular failure in recent decades has been the failure to see Christianity as a life system, or worldview, that governs every area of existence and speaks to both the moral and the physical order of the universe." Charles Colson and Nancy Pearcey, *How Now Shall We Live?* (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 1999), 7.

The surfer then would be the church as an evangelist. The waves are receptive people that God is creating with prevenient grace.<sup>10</sup> How to recognize a surfable wave corresponds to God communicating to the church receptive people through a watchful prayer relationship – which will be explained below as responsive evangelism. One piece of the right equipment in this analogy is the surf board which will correspond to the HUP. How to use the surf board properly will be understood as both cultural relevancy and cultural sensitivity. To actually catch the wave and ride it as long as possible involves the implementation of the HUP through effectual grace.<sup>11</sup> However, to ride a wave one has to be in the ocean, which will parallel being in the world or surfing in a particular culture for the purposes of this thesis.

Additionally, being in the ocean involves understanding the environment (culture) which will include a process that will be explained above as numerical analysis – a function of proactive evangelism. In other words, one cannot be involved in surfing (evangelism) on the shore. Furthermore, one cannot simply swim in the ocean, one has to try and catch a wave in order to surf – a product of effectual grace (divine sovereignty) and faithful obedience (human responsibility). How to get off a wave without wiping out will parallel to good stewardship of time and resources in the evangelism process.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>As defined in chap. 3, prevenient grace is the grace that God gives to the unregenerate soul in order for the person to respond to His grace in Jesus as Christ, Savior, and Lord (Acts 18:27) which was at the theological core of the HUP that God is at work

<sup>11</sup>Effectual grace as defined below is God’s filling of the Holy Spirit’s power in the life of the believer to accomplish God’s work.

<sup>12</sup>As discussed in chap. 3, good stewardship is understood as both a reason for the application of the HUP and a result of the application of the HUP. Other than in the chap. conclusion entitled name identity, the stewardship aspect of the HUP is not discussed any further in this chap.

Finally, surfing in the middle of a storm will parallel to cultural relevancy with respect to meeting needs.<sup>13</sup> Warren explains,

Today, God is creating wave after wave of people receptive to the Gospel. Due to a plethora of problems in your world, more people seem to be open to the Good News of Christ than at any other time this century. Unfortunately, because our churches haven't been taught the needed skills, we are missing the spiritual waves that could bring revival, health, and explosive growth to our churches.<sup>14</sup>

### **Divine Sovereignty**

The movement of God's spirit is a mystery (John 3:8). As Warren laments, the key to surfing is riding the waves that God creates, not trying to manufacture waves:

A lot of books and conferences on church growth fall into the "How to Build a Wave" category. They try to manufacture the wave of God's Spirit, using gimmicks, programs, or marketing techniques to create growth. But growth cannot be produced by man! Only God makes the church grow. Only God can breathe new life into a valley of dry bones. Only God can create waves – waves of revival, waves of growth, and waves of spiritual receptivity.<sup>15</sup>

Thus, the key to the church's involvement in evangelism is to be able to recognize God's work in evangelism and to join in God's work and cooperate with Him – a process which this thesis calls responsive evangelism. Therefore, an understanding of the sovereignty of God, as a part of the church's teaching ministry, is imperative in implementing the HUP in the local church.

The Bible teaches that because God's thoughts and ways are not the thoughts and ways of people (Isa 55:8-9), people have to be well acquainted with Him through

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<sup>13</sup>Numerical analysis and cultural relevancy – both under the section of human responsibility – will contain the majority of discussion concerning practical ways in which to implement the HUP in the established church setting.

<sup>14</sup>Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 14.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 13-14.

how God reveals Himself. This acquaintance and revelation, through a love relationship, are part of a biblical worldview which is a responsibility of the church to teach and elucidate. Thus, there is teaching responsibility of the church to explain a biblical worldview in which God reveals His work through a love relationship with His people which, in a circular fashion, people in their love relationship with God can see where God is revealing Himself at work. Henry Blackaby and Claude King explain this love relationship and the effectiveness of the church in its work with Jesus' analogy of the vine and branches in John 15:1-17.<sup>16</sup> Specifically, the church, as branches, must stay connected with God, the vine, in order to bear fruit (John 15:5):

[God] wants to develop a growing, deepening love relationship with you. He wants to involve you in His Kingdom purposes. He wants to accomplish His will through you.

Do you want to be a servant of God? Find out what is on the Master's heart. Discover where the Master is working; that is where you need to be. Find out what the Master is doing; that is what you need to do. Jesus said, "Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me (John 12:26)."<sup>17</sup>

This love relationship and servant relationship can also be understood as fellowship through prayer. T. W. Hunt and Catherine Walker explain,

God does not need us or our prayers, but He wants to have fellowship with us. Fellowship comes through our prayers. The level of the fellowship that exists in true prayer is so awesome that it is difficult to comprehend. Prayer is fellowship between the highest Being in the universe and the highest and noblest of His creation. Prayer is a joint work . . . a divine work. Prayer is the divine use of

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<sup>16</sup>In this analogy, Jesus ties together the following: fruitfulness (effectiveness), abiding in Jesus with abiding in love, prayer, God's glory, discipleship, obedience and love, the commandment to love God and one another, the knowledge of knowing where God is at work, and the commandment to go and bear fruit.

<sup>17</sup>Henry Blackaby, Richard Blackaby, and Claude King, *Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God*, rev. and exp. (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 2007), 20.

human faculties and the human use of divine faculties. The tradeoff is marvelously unequal, and yet that is exactly what God wants—the fellowship of those He does not need but desires.<sup>18</sup>

Consequently, prayer is essential in one’s love relationship (fellowship) with God and one’s servant relationship as an evangelist in being able to respond to God’s work in evangelism. John Mark Terry confirms these two truths when summarizing the biblical witness of Jesus’ work as an evangelist, “Most importantly, Jesus demonstrated the necessity of prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit in evangelism.”<sup>19</sup> Therefore, this section concerning divine sovereignty in evangelism is discussed not only from the perspective of love (love in salvation, love in revelation, and love in implementation), but also from the perspective of grace and prayer.<sup>20</sup>

### **Love in Salvation**

One outcome of love in divine sovereignty and evangelism is God’s love for people through the gift of salvation (John 3:16). This salvation love, where God makes for Himself kingdom people, will be referenced as *hesed* grace in this thesis.<sup>21</sup> Thus, a

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<sup>18</sup>T. W. Hunt and Catherine Walker, *Disciple’s Prayer Life: Walking in Fellowship with God* (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 1997), 25.

<sup>19</sup>John Mark Terry, *Evangelism: A Concise History* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 14.

<sup>20</sup>Grace was defined in chap. 3 as a theological term that describes God’s activity. Also in chap. 3, fellowship from the perspective of the church and evangelism was defined as the born-again relationship among believers that expresses itself in participation with one another in the gospel.

<sup>21</sup>*Hesed* is from the Hebrew (חֶסֶד), often translated as “lovingkindness” as seen in Ps. 40:10, “I have not hidden Your righteousness within my heart; I have spoken of Your faithfulness and Your salvation; I have not concealed Your lovingkindness and your truth from the great congregation.” God’s greatest act of lovingkindness is found in His grace of the gift of His Son, Jesus. Thus, this thesis will use *hesed* grace to describe God’s love in salvation.

major teaching responsibility of the church would be the kingdom of God.<sup>22</sup> A related evangelistic prayer and teaching opportunity could be the Lord's Prayer (Matt 6:9-13). Furthermore, in becoming kingdom people who reach people for the kingdom, a relative evangelistic methodology could be lifestyle evangelism.

***Hesed* grace.** Love, as part of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22) and the essence of God (1 John 4:8, 16), is the dynamic behind *hesed* grace. *Hesed* grace is the love in God sending the Son (John 3:16; 1 John 4:9-10). *Hesed* grace is the active force in Jesus's love of "His own" (John 13:1). *Hesed* grace is behind Jesus' willingness to die for them (John 15:13). *Hesed* grace is the motivating force behind one's love, both for God and others (1 John 4:19-21). T. W. Hunt and Claude King explain,

Jesus proceeded to the most monumental expression of love of all ages—the cross on which He died. Paul tells us that nothing in all creation “shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 5:39). No superlative can capture the essence of Christ's love. Paul says that this love “surpasses knowledge” (Eph. 3:19, NASB). Small wonder that Christ's love controls us (2 Cor. 5:14, NASB). Christ's love is the motivating factor in the Christian life.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>As discussed in chaps. 1 and 3, much of the conversation and controversy surrounding the HUP comes from a church planting ministry context where the HUP might be used to establish or maintain HUCs in a cultural context that is built on racism, sexism, or classism. This thesis would not only be concerned but also against the HUP if the HUP was used to establish or maintain HUCs that were built for racist, sexist, or classist purposes. For this reason, it is imperative that kingdom of God be emphasized in the teaching responsibility of the church.

In other words, if fighting cultural sins like sexism, racism, and classism are mandated, and they are, the best way to destroy them is through kingdom people with kingdom power. Paul explains: “The weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete” (2 Cor 10:4–6).

Preaching against the sins of individuals and culture to regenerate people who can be sanctified is effective (2 Peter 1:3-8). It is the kingdom of God – his reign in his realm, our heart – where we have the hope of fulfilling the Great Commandments and preaching against the sins of culture. Therefore, for effectiveness, there is a necessity to prioritize the evangelistic mandate.

<sup>23</sup>T. W. Hunt and Claude V. King, *The Mind of Christ* (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 1994), 80-81.

God's activity (grace) in this salvation love is making for Himself a kingdom people (chosen, royal, holy, and purchased) that proclaim God's mercy and their salvation to others:

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy." (1 Pet 2:9–10)

As Gene Mims explains, there is a practical relationship between the kingdom of God, God at work, prayer, and the teaching responsibility of the church:

Because we are unaware of the kingdom of God, we encounter the followings struggles:

1. We have difficulty seeing God at work around us. When He is at work, we often do not understand what or why He does what He does.
2. We have no confidence in what Christ has done, is doing, and will do, so we attempt to implement our agendas rather than His.
3. We do not pray effectively, go as we are commanded, give support to believers around the world, or endure suffering and hardships as we should.

We must study the kingdom of God from Scripture until a revival occurs within us and we again see God at work and have confidence that Jesus Christ is ruling over all our circumstances. We can make life-adjustments to meet the demands of the kingdom and begin to:

1. Set our live on a course as fully committed disciples as we seek the kingdom first and foremost.
2. Pursue an intimate relationship with the Father which results in righteousness and Christlikeness.
3. See God at work in our world and adjust every part of our lives to join Him.
4. Develop a biblical view of the world.
5. Begin to understand evil, suffering, persecution, and injustice in our world, and adjust our lives to deal with them.
6. Change the way we look at the local church and its work. We can focus our churches as kingdom agencies to fulfill the Great Commission.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Gene Mims, *Thine is the Kingdom: The Reign of God in Today's World*" (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 1997), 11-12, original lists were bulleted, not numbered.

**Lord's prayer.** As the church seeks to teach about salvation love and the kingdom of God, a related evangelistic prayer and teaching tool could be the Lord's prayer (Matt 6:9-1; Luke 11:1-4, 13). It instructs people to make holy (to sanctify) God's name (in their lifestyle), to pray for the kingdom come (the reign and rule of God in the realm of the believer's heart), to acknowledge and forgive sins, resist temptation, and deliver people from evil. This prayer seeks to fight the evil of racism, sexism, and classism and fulfill the cultural mandate by expanding God's kingdom – both numerically and spiritually.<sup>25</sup>

As discussed in chapter 3, God's work of sanctification is not only part of salvation but also one way by which God communicates His gift of salvation to the world. This evangelistic communication of sanctification is referred to as lifestyle evangelism. As Mark Mittelberg, Lee Strobel, and Bill Hybels explain, there is a practical relationship between effective evangelism, a relationship with Christ, a motivation of love, and lifestyle evangelism:

Effective evangelism flows out of a genuine, living relationship with Christ where his love for lost people passes through us to others. Christianity's truthfulness is demonstrated by a life that has been noticeably marked by God's love and leadership. Jesus said that as we "abide in him" we will "bear much fruit" (John 15:5). Joe Aldrich said in his book, *Lifestyle Evangelism*, that "Christians are to *be* good news before they *share* the good news."<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>T. W. Hunt writes, "Prayer in our lives today is a significant way God shapes us for His use now and through eternity. As a believer you have the privilege of entering His presence and allowing Him to change your heart and bring you into conformity to the likeness of His Son. You also have the thrilling responsibility to join God's purposes as you pray for his will to be done and for His kingdom to come on earth." T. W. Hunt, *The Life-Changing Power of Prayer* (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 2002), 119.

<sup>26</sup>Mark Mittelberg, Lee Strobel, and Bill Hybels, *Becoming a Contagious Christian Leader's Guide: Communicating Your Faith in a Style that Fits You* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 28, emphasis in original.

## Love in Revelation

Another perspective of love in divine sovereignty and evangelism is God's love as the force behind the revealing of where God is at work (John 5:20). In the context of evangelism, this revelation love is how God reveals those whom God makes receptive through prevenient grace. Thus, a major teaching responsibility of the church would concern God's guidance (John 16:13). A related evangelistic prayer and teaching opportunity could be what this thesis calls watchful prayer (Col 4:2). The relative evangelistic methodology would be responsive evangelism.

**Guiding grace.** Chapter 3 explained prevenient grace as the grace that God gives to the unregenerate soul in order for the person to respond to His grace in Jesus as Christ, Savior, and Lord. Note however, although prevenient grace is necessary to obtain salvation, prevenient grace is not always necessarily obtainable.<sup>27</sup> Henry T. Blackaby and Roy T. Edgemon explain,

Isaiah 55:6 tells us that we cannot seek the Lord just any time we choose. You might say, *God is always available!* Well, let the Scripture correct you. There were times when Israel sought the Lord, but God said that it was too late (see Jer. 11:14; Isa. 63:17), and he would not hear their prayers.

Throughout the New Testament this statement also holds true. One example was when Jesus wept over the failure of Jerusalem to receive Him as the Messiah . . . (Luke 19:42, 44). Do not presume upon God. His ways are not according to our way of thinking. It is crucial to know His ways and what the Scriptures say about them. It is our life!

Seeking God while He may be found also implies that there are times when it might not be possible to find God. Does it mean that God is not there? No, it

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<sup>27</sup>Roy Shearer writes, "McGavran has pointed out in his writing that people are never equally receptive throughout the world nor are they equally receptive across time. People become receptive or resistant to the Gospel in different eras." Roy E. Shearer, "The Psychology of Receptivity and Church Growth," in *God, Man and Church Growth: A Festschrift in Honor of Donald Anderson McGavran*, ed. A. R. Tippett (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1973), 161.

means that there are some things that God says must be in place if He is to hear us and respond.<sup>28</sup>

Therefore, effectiveness in evangelism is not dependent on the right techniques or methods but in a relationship with God in which God guides and directs the evangelist to reap the ripened harvest. Furthermore, as J. I. Packer explains, God's guiding grace gives us the expectation of evangelistic success:

So far from making evangelism pointless, the sovereignty of God in grace is the one thing that prevents evangelism from being pointless. For it creates the possibility—indeed, the certainty—that evangelism will be fruitful. Apart from it, there is not even a possibility of evangelism being fruitful. Were it not for the sovereign grace of God, evangelism would be the most futile and useless enterprise that the world has ever seen, and there would be not more complete waste of time under the sun than to preach the Christian gospel.<sup>29</sup>

**Watchful prayer.** A related evangelistic prayer and teaching opportunity for God's revealing love would be the watchful prayers of the church as an evangelist. Because prayer has been explained above as fellowship with God, it stands to reason that the church devoted themselves to prayer (Acts 2:42) and that Scripture would teach the necessity to continue steadfastly in prayer (Col 4:2). Furthermore, because prayer was also explained as communication with God, it stands to reason that Scripture would also teach the necessity to be watchful in prayer (Col 4:2). Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby explain the importance of watchful prayer as spiritual concentration:

Your spiritual concentration is essential if you are to recognize all that God is doing around you. I sensed the need to visit someone in the hospital who was not a Christian but postponed doing so until the next day. The person died suddenly

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<sup>28</sup>Henry T. Blackaby and Roy T. Edgemon, *The Ways of God: How God Reveals Himself before a Watching World* (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 2001), 10, emphasis in original.

<sup>29</sup>J. I. Packer, *Evangelism & the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1961), 106.

during the night. Spiritual concentration when God speaks is critical. When you pray for God to give you an opportunity to share your faith, are you sensitive to the conversation you have with another parent at your child's sporting event, or to the neighbor who "just stopped by," or to a phone call you received that morning? . . . Could you pray for opportunities to minister to someone and then pass by person after person without ever recognizing they were filled with needs that you could meet?

If you are not careful, you can leave your place of prayer and never make the connection between your prayer and the events of your day.<sup>30</sup>

Thus, this thesis defines responsive evangelism as the church responding to God's work in evangelism – both His prevenient grace and the revealing of those receptive people to God's church. Beth Moore describes God's work and one's obedient response in participation as a spirit of cooperation:

In 2 Samuel 7:10-11, God had promised David that He would give the nation of Israel rest from her enemies. David did not sit on the throne and simply wait for God to fulfill His promise. He obeyed God's beckoning to the battlefield to participate in the victory! When God assures us of a promise, He desires for us to respond by assuming a posture of cooperation in the fulfillment of that promise. At other times God directs us to sit still and wait. Wisdom involves learning to know the difference. Whether God tells us to sit, stand, or move, he calls us to respond with a spirit of cooperation.<sup>31</sup>

### **Love in Implementation**

Another perspective of love in divine sovereignty and evangelism is God's love as the source of power to do God's work (Gal 5:6 and 2 Cor 5:14). This implementation love is about God's power at work in the life of the church and believer both in the desire and the ability to cooperate in God's work of salvation (Phil 2:13).

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<sup>30</sup>Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *When God Speaks: How to Recognize God's Voice and Respond in Obedience* (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 1995), 62-63.

<sup>31</sup>Beth Moore, *A Heart Like His: Seeking the Heart of God through a Study of David* (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 1996), 118.

This thesis refers to this aspect of God’s work as effectual grace. The gift of implementation love is the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8 and Rom 5:5). Thus, a major teaching emphasis of the church would focus on the continual filling of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer (Eph 5:18). The related evangelistic prayer will be referred to as petition prayer (Phil 4:6). An evangelistic methodology concerns lordship evangelism.<sup>32</sup>

**Effectual grace.** There is an old adage which states, “Wherever God guides, He provides.” Thus, when God calls an unbeliever to salvation, He provides prevenient grace. When God teaches His children to grow in love, He provides sanctifying grace. When God directs His church to a receptive person, God provides guiding grace. Whenever God guides His servants to obedience, He provides effectual grace. Effectual grace is God’s filling of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer to accomplish God’s work. Avery Willis and Kay Moore explain,

I realized that the Holy Spirit is a person who possesses us instead of a power, an influence, or an attitude we possess. I learned that the Holy Spirit, who lives in me, wants to fill me for service. . . . Then I presented my body, will, emotions, mind, and spirit to be used by God in any way. I accepted by faith the filling of the Holy Spirit without an outward sign or manifestation. . . .

. . . In the years since that experience the Holy Spirit has taught me that the secret is to be filled for each task of service. . . . The filling of the Spirit energizes

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<sup>32</sup>As explained in chap. 3, lordship evangelism is both the proclamation by the evangelist that “Jesus is Lord” and the acceptance of that proclamation through confession by the new believer. The initial cost of that confession is known and was explained as a repentance of allegiance and is the result of prevenient grace. The subsequent cost of that confession (following Jesus as Lord) is not fully known but is continually being revealed by the Holy Spirit in the regenerated heart of the believer over one’s lifetime and is the result of sanctifying grace. Sanctifying grace is one aspect of God’s work in salvation and in the view of this thesis is best understood within the framework of the kingdom of God – God’s reign in God’s realm. Accordingly, sanctification is the reign of the Holy Spirit in perfecting the regenerated heart of the believer in both love and obedience. Therefore, this thesis considers sanctification as lordship salvation. Consequently, lordship salvation can be understood as *hesed* grace. *Hesed* grace can be seen in salvation love (perfecting grace in lifestyle evangelism), revelation love (guiding grace in responsive evangelism), and implementation love (effectual grace and prevenient grace in lordship evangelism).

and empowers different gifts in different persons, but in every case the result brings glory to Christ and attracts others to Him.<sup>33</sup>

The importance of understanding effectual grace is to give the church a hopeful confidence and a trusting assurance that based on the evangelist's relationship – being in Christ – God will guide the evangelist in effectiveness. That is the reason why Paul states that watchful prayer is done with thanksgiving (Col 4:2) – one is thankful because there is an expectation the answered prayer will be one of fruitfulness (John 15:1-17).

**Petition prayer.** A related evangelistic prayer and teaching opportunity would be the prayers of petition by the church. Those prayers of petition could include a variety of needs including boldness (Acts 4:29, 31), perseverance (Eph 6:18), strength (Matt 26:41), harvesters (Luke 10:2), opportunity (Col 4:3), and clarity (Col 4:4). Robertson McQuilkin explains the relationship between prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit:

Holy Spirit power flows through prayer. Prayer forms the human conduit for divine energy. Since the spirit acts in response to the believing prayer of an obedient people, prayer is the most important part of evangelism. As E.M. Bounds said, “much prayer, much power, little prayer, little power, no prayer, no power.”<sup>34</sup>

In a prayer to the church in Ephesus, Paul relates the unity of humanity in Christ, the power of the Holy Spirit in the heart, the foundation of love, and the promise of abundance by God's effectual grace:

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and

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<sup>33</sup>Avery T. Willis, Jr. and Kay Moore *MasterLife: The Disciple's Personality*, bk. 2 (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 1996), 93-94.

<sup>34</sup>Robertson McQuilkin, *Life in the Spirit* (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 1997), 200.

length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (Eph 3:14–21)

Chapter 3 defined the church and *koinonia* in the same way – the born-again relationship among believers that expresses itself in participation with one another in the gospel – and referred to this understanding of the church as a *koinonia* church. Petition prayer (knowledge of God’s will and requests to do God’s will), effectual grace (power to do God’s will), and lordship evangelism (being obedient and doing God’s will) are seen in the definition of a *koinonia* church. Lordship evangelism can best be understood as simply the *koinonia* church being a *koinonia* church. In a *koinonia* church, acceptance of the gospel proclamation necessitates obedience through participation in the gospel’s purposes which deal directly with God’s mission of salvation through a *koinonia* church. In order to fulfill the gospel purposes, a *koinonia* church needs to be obedient – the purpose of faith and the essence of lordship evangelism. Georg Vicedom explains that surrender and obedience are the mark of a *koinonia* church:

The church can be God’s vessel and tool only if she surrenders herself to His purpose. If she dissociates herself from this concern of God, she becomes disobedient and can no longer be church in the divine sense. . . . Hence the church is not called on to decide whether she will carry on the mission or not. She can only decide for herself whether she wants to be church. She cannot determine when, where, and how missions will be carried out, for the mission is always divinely guided, as is shown us above all in Acts. Missions the business of God implies that He lays claim to make use of all His believers exactly as He wishes, in order to impart His love to all men through His believers. God makes this claim clear by first achieving what God has already done and is doing. She can only point to what He will do. Thus mission is based on the activity of God Himself.”<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>Georg F. Vicedom, *The Mission of God: An Introduction to a Theology of Mission*, trans. Gilbert A. Thiele and Dennis Hilgendorf (St. Louis: Concordia, 1965), 6.

## Human Responsibility

In addition to divine sovereignty, the other biblical truth concerning evangelism is human responsibility.<sup>36</sup> A discussion on human responsibility in evangelism must begin within a framework of God's effectual grace: God's power at work in the life of the church and believer both in desire and performance to cooperate in God's work of salvation (Phil 2:13).<sup>37</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 3, this power in one's inner being (Eph 3:16) is a result of regeneration (Titus 3:5) as promised by God in the new covenant (Jer 31:33-34). Thus, God's effectual grace provides confidence and strength in doing all things (Phil 4:13). Of particular interest to this thesis, doing all things would include fulfilling both the Great Commission and the great commandments. In addition, human responsibility in evangelism must also be understood in relation to God's will: God's guiding will, God's permissive will, and God's sovereign will. These three aspects of God's will can be elucidated by recalling the narrative of the fall in Genesis 3.

God's guiding will to Adam and Eve was not to eat of the fruit of a particular tree. God's permissive will was to allow Adam and Eve to eat of the fruit of that tree. God's sovereign will was the assurance of their death if they ate of the fruit of that tree. In evangelism, God's sovereign will is the eschatological promise of God's kingdom

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<sup>36</sup>As previously noted, numerical analysis and cultural relevancy – both under the part of human responsibility entitled love of others – will contain the majority of discussion concerning practical ways in which to implement the HUP in the established church setting.

<sup>37</sup>The HUP deals with the growth of God's church and the growth of God's church needs to be understood as God's work (Gal 2:8). Thus, at the core of the theological perspective concerning the HUP is the understanding that God is at work. Paul avoids this ethnocentric trap when he states, "I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is within me" (1 Cor 15:10).

which will be filled with His kingdom people.<sup>38</sup> God’s guiding will includes both His prevenient grace to unregenerate people and His guiding grace to the regenerate people. God’s permissive will is allowing unregenerate people as well as His regenerate people to resist His grace, which is an act of disobedience.<sup>39</sup> Thus, people are responsible and without excuse (Rom 1:20) in fulfilling both the Great Commission and the great commandments. Therefore, through the working of effectual grace, the church has both the hope and promise to fulfill the Great Commandments and the great commission. On the other hand, in accordance with God’s permissive will, the church also has the

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<sup>38</sup>Evangelism can be understood as the recruitment of additional kingdom people by kingdom people under the guidance of God and with His power.

<sup>39</sup>While it is not the purpose of this thesis to engage in a debate concerning election and irresistible grace as well as free-will and resistible grace, the issue is present in this analysis. This footnote repeats a reference concerning this debate in chap. 3.

Grammatically, John is distinguishing between three groups of people in these verses. In v. 36, there is one group, who has seen (ἐώρακατέ, plural from ὄραω) but do not believe (πιστεύετε, plural, from πιστεύω). In v. 37 are two additional groups. The one (πᾶν, singular and neuter, from πᾶς), who the Father gives, will come (ἔξει, singular from ἔκω) is different than the one coming (ἐρχόμενον, singular and masculine, from ἔρχομαι). Thus, even though the Father did not give “the one coming,” Jesus promises not to cast “the one coming” out.

After declaring that he has come down to do the Father’s will in v. 38, Jesus explains what the Father’s will is concerning the two groups from v. 37 in vv. 39-40. In v. 39, the one (πᾶν, singular and neuter, from πᾶς) is parallel to the one in v. 37. Jesus will not lose the one that the Father has given but will raise “it” (αὐτὸ, singular and neuter, from αὐτός) in the last day. In v. 40, the one (πᾶς, singular and masculine, in lemma form) is parallel to the one coming (ἐρχόμενον, singular and masculine, from ἔρχομαι) in v. 37. Jesus will raise “him” (αὐτόν, singular and masculine, from αὐτός) in the last day. In addition, this group from v. 40 is also parallel to the first group in v. 36. However, unlike the ones who have seen (ἐώρακατέ, plural from ὄραω) but do not believe (πιστεύετε, plural, from πιστεύω), the one (πᾶς, singular and masculine, in lemma form) is seeing (θεωρῶν, singular and masculine from θεωρέω) and believing (πιστεύων, singular and masculine, from πιστεύω).

In these verses, one sees election and irresistible grace as well as free-will and resistible grace. Packer writes, “These two truths stand side by side in these verses, and that is where they belong. They go together. They walk hand in hand. Neither throws doubt on the truth of the other. Neither should fill our minds to the exclusion of the other. Christ means what He says, no less when He undertakes to save all who will trust Him than when He undertakes to save all whom the Father has given Him.” Packer, *Evangelism & the Sovereignty of God*, 103.

In addition, the ones who have seen but do not believe are resisting the work of the Holy Spirit in prevenient grace. Thus, they are not saved and have committed the unforgiveable sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (Matt 12:31).

possibility of disobedience and of failing to fulfill the great commandments and the Great Commission.

The hope of fulfillment and the possibility of failure in evangelism are at the very essence of the gospel message itself concerning Jesus as the Messiah, Savior, and Lord and in the proclamation of the kingdom of God as a present reality. As a reminder, in chapter 3, the prophets told of a Messiah – an anointed-one, a Christ – who would, one day, usher in the kingdom (Zech 2:10-11). Jesus preached that the time, that day, is here now, the kingdom is at hand (Matt 3:2; Mark 1:15). Jesus’ death was a propitiation for one’s sins (Rom 3:25; Heb 2:17; 1 John 2:2, 4:10) and because of the forgiveness of one’s sins, the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38) – the rebirth (John 7:39, 2 Peter 1:3-11) – can be received by all who believe.<sup>40</sup> The gift of the Holy Spirit provides both life (John 6:63) and power (Eph 3:16) for living a new life in the Spirit. This new life in the Spirit is the present reality of the kingdom of God – the reign of God (Jesus as Lord) in His realm (the heart of the regenerate believer).

Because the hope of fulfillment and the possibility of failure in evangelism are at the very essence of the gospel message concerning the present reality of the kingdom of God where one follows Jesus as Lord, one is to seek as of first priority, God’s reign (Jesus’ lordship) in God’s realm (the regenerate heart): “But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (Matt 6:33). Furthermore, once again, the importance of prayer cannot be over emphasized in overcoming failure or in the ability to persevere. Jesus cautions, “Watch and pray that

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<sup>40</sup>Note the relationship in the Greek words between faith and believes which is lost in the English: one is saved by faith [πίστις] when one believes [πιστεύω].

you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Mark 14:38). Additionally, to emphasize one’s responsibility, James comments, “. . . You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly . . .” (James 4:2-3).

As previously stated, like divine sovereignty, this section on human responsibility will also be from the perspective of love. Specifically it will be divided into two parts, which are found in the great commandments: the love of God and the love of others (Mark 12:29-31).<sup>41</sup>

### **Love of God**

There are three disciplines of the regenerated believer which will directly affect one’s love of God and the related human responsibility in evangelism relative to the kingdom of God and lordship of Christ. They are humble submission, faithful obedience, and a gratitude attitude.

**Humble submission.** One necessary discipline in loving God and overcoming failure in evangelism is that of humble submission. As one follows Jesus as lord, one imitates Christ’s example and humbly submits oneself as a servant and becomes obedient (Phil 2:5-9). As Beth Moore explains, humble submission is part of the fruit of the Holy Spirit:

In layman’s terms, *praotes* [from Gal 5:23, *πραΰτης*, translated as gentleness] describes the complete surrender to God’s will and way in your life. The term basically means to stop fighting God. It is quite the opposite of weakness.

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<sup>41</sup>There is a relationship between the great commandments and the kingdom of God (Mark 12:34, cf. Luke 10:28).

Meekness or gentleness is the power and strength created from submitting to God's will. Gentleness is responsibility with power.

. . . *Praotes* describes the resting of resistance to God. It begins with that word we love to hate—submission. I think of the submissive spirit of *praotes* this way: when the wind of God's will blows, *praotes* prevails when I let go of every object of security, resist grabbing on to anything that would hold me back, and ride the wind wherever or however it takes me. *Praotes* is riding the wind of God's will and setting sail toward the remote island of intimacy.<sup>42</sup>

**Faithful obedience.** Another necessary discipline in loving God and overcoming failure in evangelism is that of faithful obedience. Obedience comes from love (John 14:23). Love comes from the regenerated heart (Rom 5:5, cf. 1 John 4:19), honoring God (1 Pet 3:15), and growing in love (2 Thes 1:3). Therefore, obedience is a direct result of the faith or love relationship where Jesus is lord. Thus, obedience to the Great Commission is a by-product of the great commandment to love God. Henry Blackaby and Melvin Blackaby explain faithful obedience,

Did you know that the keys of the kingdom of heaven have been given to His churches? It's an affront to the Holy God that in many churches the keys are hanging on the key rack and not being used. God looks for a people and a church who understand that they have the keys and are ready to use them so people will be set free.

The key to the kingdom is the Word of God being shared by the people of God. When God's Word is shared, the Holy Spirit takes that Word and sets people free with its truth.<sup>43</sup>

**Gratitude attitude.** Another necessary discipline in loving God and overcoming failure in evangelism is that of a gratitude attitude, discussed below as prayer. That is the reason why Paul states that watchful prayer is done with thanksgiving

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<sup>42</sup>Beth Moore, *Living Beyond Yourself* (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 1998), 168-69.

<sup>43</sup>Henry T. Blackaby and Melvin D. Blackaby, *Your Church Experiencing God Together* (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 2003), 144.

(Col 4:2) – one is thankful because there is an expectation, based upon the faith or love relationship where Jesus is lord, prayers will be answered with fruitfulness (John 15:1-17). In other words, the church has a hopeful confidence and a trusting assurance that based on the church’s relationship – being in Christ – God will guide the church in evangelistic effectiveness. As one follows Jesus as Lord, there is a prayer attitude of thanking God that His will is being done in accordance with His word (Isa 55:10-11). T. W. Hunt and Catherine Walker explain,

Both the prayers of children and the prayers of servants are important to God. When we pray as His children, our prayers most likely emphasize our spiritual growth. We call Him Father as we talk to Him. We are likely to pray for resemblance to Him and for a life that represents Him well. On His behalf we emphasize our Father’s reputation and things that maintain the honor of the family name.

When we pray as servants, our prayers emphasize work. On our behalf we are likely to pray for guidance and help in our work. We call Him Master as we talk to Him. On the Lord’s behalf we must pray for the spread of His kingdom and for correlation with other servants. We should pray that His blessings will demonstrate in all of His various enterprises how right His way is.

Being God’s children and being His servants secure His interest in our work. Both demonstrate the richness of our relationship with Him and the many things He wants to accomplish through the power of the prayers He leads us to pray. It all begins in God and ends in God.<sup>44</sup>

## **Love of Others**

Jesus said, “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35). There is one discipline of the regenerated believer which will directly affect one’s love of people and related responsibility in evangelism. It is humble submission. The discipline of humble submission will necessitate cultural

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<sup>44</sup>Hunt and Walker, *Disciple’s Prayer Life*, 20.

awareness and sensitivity which this thesis will refer to as cultural relevancy – a principle of evangelistic effectiveness.

**Humble submission.** The necessary discipline in loving others and overcoming failure in evangelism is that of humble submission. The Bible teaches that believers are to submit “to one another out of reverence for Christ” (Eph 5:21, cf. Phil 2:1-11). In the Bible, humility and submission are acts of leadership. Gene Wilkes defines kingdom leaders under the lordship of Christ as servant leaders:

Leadership in the kingdom of God is different from leadership in the world. It is still leadership, but those who lead in the kingdom of God look very different from those who lead by the world’s standards. Life under the lordship of Christ has different values than life under the lordship of self. Therefore, kingdom leaders are people who lead like Jesus. They act differently than leaders trained by the world. Kingdom leaders are servant leaders because they follow Jesus, who “did not come to be served, but to serve (Mark 10:45).<sup>45</sup>

**Cultural relevancy.** Understanding the diversity and complexity of one’s cultural context is a critical step in trying to minister to that culture. As Donald McGavran and Winfield Arn point out, “Churches grow as they rightly discern the community.”<sup>46</sup> In order for the HUP to be effectively and efficiently used as a tool of evangelism, it is incumbent on the user of the HUP to know the “*sitz im leben*” where one ministers.<sup>47</sup> The phrase *sitz im leben* is used in biblical interpretation to ask the question,

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<sup>45</sup>C. Gene Wilkes, *Jesus on Leadership: Becoming a Servant Leader* (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 1996), 8.

<sup>46</sup>Donald A. McGavran and Winfield C. Arn, *Ten Steps for Church Growth* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 74.

<sup>47</sup>*Sitz im leben* is a German phrase that is roughly translated “setting (or situation) in life.” Stephen D. Moore, *Literary Criticism and the Gospels: The Theoretical Challenge* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 183.

“What was the situation in time when the author wrote?” By asking that question, one is attempting to better understand the author’s historical context so as to gain insight into the interpretation of the biblical witness.

In some respects, the HUP is a complement to *sitz im leben*. Whereas the *sitz im leben* in biblical criticism looks backward in time to understand the cultural context when the author ministered, the HUP looks into the present (and even the future) to understand the cultural context where one ministers now. Also, whereas the *sitz im leben* deals with the contextual interpretation of the biblical witness, the HUP deals with the contextual application of the biblical witness.

Thus, Paul asks for prayers concerning evangelistic opportunities, clarity in proclamation, wisdom in walking with outsiders, and graciousness in speech, albeit seasoned with salt (Col 2:3-6). This conduct can clearly be understood as God’s guidance and sanctification: “but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect” (1 Pet 3:15).

### **Love Strategy**

Love in relation to divine sovereignty and evangelism was discussed earlier as God’s love for people in the gift of salvation, God’s love as the force behind the revealing of where God is at work, and God’s love as the source and power to do God’s work. Also, love in relation to human responsibility and evangelism was discussed as one’s love of God and one’s love of neighbor. Thus, it is natural to explain the HUP as a strategy of love which flows directly from an understanding of divine sovereignty and human responsibility in evangelism. To further expound upon the practical

implementation of this strategy of love in a local church setting, this part of this chapter will first discuss numerical analysis and then return to a previous discussion on cultural relevancy.

This discussion on the HUP as a love strategy is set with a backdrop of Jesus as savior who sanctifies His church in the present age. Thus, the church is not perfect and is subject to the stain of sin. In addition, as a reminder, in a *koinonia* church, acceptance of the gospel proclamation necessitates obedience through participation in the gospel's purposes – one of which is evangelism.

### **Numerical analysis**

To effectively engage the culture (cultural relevancy), the church, as evangelist, must understand the culture through numerical analysis – a process of proactive evangelism which has been defined below as how the church engages the world or the culture in preparation to respond to God's work in evangelism. Numerical analysis is simply an attempt to expose facts for the purposes of objectivity. Tetsunao Yamamori and E. LeRoy Lawson explain, "Church growth's emphasis upon scientific methods is an insistence upon objectivity, a determination to study every mission situation without prejudice."<sup>48</sup> As McGavran writes, there is an importance concerning numerical analysis:

The numerical approach is used in all worthwhile human endeavors. Industry, commerce, finance, research, government, invention, and a thousand other lines of enterprise derive great profit and much of their stability in development from continual measurement. Without it they would feel helpless and blindfolded. The vast programs of education, to which advances in every country owe so much, employ numerical procedures at every turn. The counting of pupils by sex and

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<sup>48</sup>Tetsunao Yamamori and E. LeRoy Lawson, *Introducing Church Growth: Textbook in Missions* (Cincinnati: New Life Books, 1975), 51.

grade, place of residence and intellectual ability, and degree of learning and rates of progress is never questioned.<sup>49</sup>

The discussion on numerical analysis to engage the culture (proactive evangelism) in preparation to respond to God's work in evangelism (responsive evangelism) will involve four steps: (1) get the facts, (2) raise the questions, (3) continue the analysis, and (4) strategize with HUP.

**Get the facts.** Numerical analysis for the purpose of this thesis will deal with demographics and are ministry characteristics of the *sitz im leben* where one evangelizes. Some broad and basic demographics like race, gender, and age are readily available from census data collected by the United States government. By using these broad and basic demographics as an example, one can begin to appreciate how any population can be broken down and analyzed in an attempt to understand certain characteristics of the population. Furthermore, if more intricate demographic data – like the needs of the community – are obtained, it will help to underscore the complexity and diversity of any given culture.<sup>50</sup>

As an example of analyzing the broad and basic demographics, the United States of America, the Commonwealth of Virginia, Hanover County, Virginia, and King

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<sup>49</sup>Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., rev. and ed. C. Peter Wagner (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1990), 67.

<sup>50</sup>While this part on numerical analysis will discuss the broad characteristics of a ministry setting, the greater value is in knowing the local setting in life where one ministers. The greater knowledge a church has of its community through surveys and other analyses, the better the church will be able to discern an effective strategy of evangelism. One purpose of this part on numerical analysis is to underscore the diversity and the resulting inherent complexity of North American culture and to demonstrate how the HUP is an excellent, and perhaps even necessary, tool for understanding and reaching that culture for Christ. Furthermore, this thesis theorizes that the failure to recognize and utilize the HUP as a tool in evangelism can actually lead to the homogeneous churches that HUP opponents are so quick to criticize.

George County, Virginia will be used for discussion purposes.<sup>51</sup> The broadest and most basic information in starting to understand a community is to know the number of people who live in the community. Table 14 provides the total population based upon the 2000 and 2010 census data.<sup>52</sup>

Table 14. Total population

Year	United States of America	Commonwealth of Virginia	Hanover, Virginia	King George, Virginia
2000	281,421,906	7,078,515	86,320	16,803
2010	308,745,538	8,001,024	99,863	23,584

Even these few, macro-oriented numbers reveal some interesting facts. Table 15 shows these interesting facts in a clearer way by calculating the population change from the data in Table 14.

Table 15. Population change

Years in Comparison	United States of America	Commonwealth of Virginia	Hanover, Virginia	King George, Virginia
2000-2010 # Change	27,323,632	922,509	13,543	6,781
2000-2010 % Change	9.71	13.03	15.69	40.36

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<sup>51</sup>Hanover County and King George County, Virginia were selected as these counties were both former places of pastoral ministry. As a broad and basic demographic analysis will reveal, these two places are different and a “cookie-cutter” approach to ministry is not warranted.

<sup>52</sup>Census data for the years 2000 and 2010 as found in Tables 14, 15, and 16 are from information generated from a federal government website based upon user defined criterion. U.S. Bureau of the Census, “Census Interactive Population Search,” U.S. Bureau of the Census, <http://www.census.gov> (accessed February 3, 2012).

The rate of growth for Virginia and Hanover County are higher than the national average. However, the growth in King George County is significantly greater than the growth in Virginia and Hanover County. Thus, a word of caution is in order – one cannot simply look at national or even state-wide trends and adequately translate that to a particular locality like Hanover County or King George County in this example. In other words, the more one can contextualize numbers at the local level, the more meaningful those numbers become. These numbers or statistics are at the foundation of understanding the community and how the church may grow in the community.

McGavran writes,

To be sure, no one was ever saved by statistics; but then, no patient was ever cured by the thermometer to which the physician pays such close attention. X-ray pictures never knit a single broken bone, yet they are of considerable value to physicians in telling them how to put the two ends of a fractured bone together. Similarly, the facts of growth will not in themselves lead anyone to Christ. But they can be of marked value to any church that desires to know where, when, and how to carry on its work so that maximum increase of soundly Christian churches will result.<sup>53</sup>

**Raise the questions.** While looking at numbers and exposing facts is important, it is the analysis of those numbers and the questions that one begins to ask concerning the numbers that become important in eventually formulating an effective HUP strategy. For example, one interesting question related to church growth in King George County is “What was the percentage change in church attendance from 2000 to 2010?” If it was 40.36 percent or less, then the church did not grow in relation to the population. Thus, while a local church may feel good about a 10 percent growth rate

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<sup>53</sup>McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 67.

over a decade, if the community around them grew at a 40 percent rate, then the 10 percent growth rate seems less than adequate.

Another question that one may ask is “What is the source of the rapid growth in King George County?” Or, “How much was biological growth versus how much of it was from people outside of the community moving into the community?” Furthermore, if the “outsiders” were from a different cultural identity, like urban versus rural, another question to ask would be “How much people consciousness is there in the various cultural identities?”<sup>54</sup> Subsequently, if there are different people consciousness’s present, “How does that people consciousness affect the growth of the local church?”

Counting people and keeping statistics are important. McGavran writes, “The numerical approach is essential to understanding church growth. The church [also the community] is made up of countable people and there is nothing particularly spiritual in not counting them.”<sup>55</sup> Again note, the numbers themselves are not important, but what they reveal and the questions they may trigger and how they are answered are what is important.

**Continue the analysis.** After facts are exposed and questions are raised, additional analysis is warranted. While there is a danger in over analyzing and complicating the data, there is an equal danger in under analyzing and being too simplistic in one’s analysis. There is a balance to be achieved.

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<sup>54</sup>People consciousness occurs when members of a HU “think of themselves as separate.” Ibid., 155.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 67.

Through additional demographics and demographic trends, the diversity and complexity of the American culture becomes more evident. There are other demographic details that could be explored from the census data alone. Those demographic statistics include gender, age, race, economic, housing, household makeup, educational background, and marital situation. For example, in Table 16, the population breakdown of King George County is given in regard to just three demographic breakdowns: race, gender, and age.

Table 16. King George population breakdown: race, gender, and age

Population breakdown	2000		2010	
	Total	% of Total	Total	% of Total
<i>Race</i>				
White	13,055	77.69	18,089	76.70
Black	3,148	18.73	4,214	17.87
Other	600	3.57	1,281	5.43
<b>Total</b>	<b>16,803</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>23,584</b>	<b>23,584</b>
<i>Gender</i>				
Male	8,443	50.25	11,851	50.25
Female	8,360	49.75	11,733	49.75
<b>Total</b>	<b>16,803</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>23,584</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<i>Age</i>				
<18	4,671	27.80	6,540	27.73
18-64	10,522	62.62	14,647	62.11
>64	1,610	9.58	2,397	10.16
<b>Total</b>	<b>16,803</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>23,584</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Imagine the intricacies if one were to combine the three population breakdowns so it revealed information like white males, less than five years of age or white females, age 85 and older. More than twenty-five years ago, Peter Wagner wrote, “The complexity arises in the changing face of the American population. While modern America has been a nation of immigrants, only in the past 20 years has its diversity been taken seriously enough to recognize publicly that ethnicity is here to stay.”<sup>56</sup> Numerical analysis attempts to quantify, classify, and analyze various subsets of the population to determine if a HU exists and ponder the possible effect on evangelistic efforts.

**Strategize with HUP.** The goal of exposing facts, raising questions, and analyzing further is building an effective strategy for evangelism. McGavran and Winfield Arn explain,

As you try to make your evangelism more effective, compare the composition of church and community. The comparison will suggest many opportunities for evangelism. Fact gathering and interpretation of the community can be of great importance in developing effective strategy.<sup>57</sup>

The demographic information may be interesting and helpful in identifying a HU, but none of this information may be particularly relevant to the church using the HUP. The relevance to the church using the HUP with any HU comes only in the degree of people consciousness of the HU and to the extent that people consciousness creates a barrier in responding to the gospel and consequently how that barrier can best be overcome.

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<sup>56</sup>C. Peter Wagner, *Strategies for Church Growth: Tools for Effective Mission and Evangelism* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1987), 177.

<sup>57</sup>McGavran and Arn, *Ten Steps for Church Growth*, 110.

Anthropomorphizing, the HUP “does not care” what the race, gender, and age population breakdown is in King George county. The HUP “cares” about evangelism and whether or not HUs are coming to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ as demonstrated by responsible church membership. Numerical analysis helps to identify HUs.<sup>58</sup> If a given HU is not represented by responsible church membership, then one may have a HU with a strong people consciousness and a potential barrier or a HU without a Christian witness. If that HU did have a strong people consciousness, the HUP would say that “the most effective and efficient tool of evangelistic communication occurs when that HU hears the gospel from their own people and are able to respond to the gospel with limited social dislocation.”<sup>59</sup>

The HUP becomes a stewardship strategy when it can identify if a HU is receptive or not. There are two ways to determine receptivity. The first way is responsive evangelism. Though numerical analysis of the church, simply analyze who is responding and then pour resources into that HU to evangelize it to its fringes. For example, if retired couples are moving into the area and responding to the gospel message, then pour resources into evangelizing retired couples to the fringes. This might include a strategy such as hiring a full-time minister to senior adults.

The second way is proactive evangelism which engages the culture to determine the potential responsiveness of any HU. Through numerical analysis, analyze

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<sup>58</sup>Numerical analysis using statistical information from census reports is helpful and provides a good starting point in identifying HU’s. However, the needs and preferences of people affect people consciousness in ways that are not easily identifiable.

<sup>59</sup>Thesis working definition of the HUP from chap. 2.

who is not responding and invest limited resources to see if there is any potential receptivity. For example, if retired couples are moving into the area and not responding to the gospel message, then consider investing limited resources into a senior's fellowship group. If one sees some receptivity, then one is now by definition engaging in responsive evangelism. In other words, proactive evangelism (human responsibility) may lead to responsive evangelism (divine sovereignty). If one does not see receptivity, one may continue to engage the culture with proactive evangelism, but with limited resources.<sup>60</sup>

To anthropomorphize again, the HUP “does not care” whether the church is more homogeneous or more heterogeneous. The HUP “cares” about evangelism and whether or not HUs are coming to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ as demonstrated by responsible church membership. However, by engaging in proactive evangelism, it may lead to different HUs becoming part of the church and thus the church would become more heterogeneous. Otherwise, the church may not realize that its evangelism efforts are all targeted to similar HUs and it would thus stay more homogeneous.

In any case, one can begin to appreciate the HUP as an important tool in evangelism. As a tool of evangelism, the HUP uses numerical analysis by seeking to identify various HUs in the total population with the hope of evangelizing all of them.

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<sup>60</sup>George Hunter explains McGavran's thinking: “Donald McGavran and his colleagues . . . counsel against writing resistant people off, badgering them, or abandoning them. . . . Basically, McGavran teaches that receptivity and resistance ebb and flow in personas and peoples. People who are receptive now may be resistant later, and vice versa. The grand strategy . . . is to reach out to receptive people while they are receptive – that is the supreme way forward in church growth. But for resistant people, the policy is to hand in there with them in a mission of ‘presence,’ serving them as they will let us, saying what we can, with the long-haul policy of building bridges, plowing and planting for a later harvest, and making sure we are present for them and credible to them when they do turn more receptive.” George G. Hunter III, *The Contagious Congregation: Frontiers in Evangelism and Church Growth* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979), 99.

As a stewardship strategy, it seeks to reach people when they are reachable.

Furthermore, by evangelizing in a proactive way, the church has the potential to reach HUs from the population that are not currently churched. Thus, the church may become more diverse and representative of the total population if the HUP is used as a tool of evangelism.<sup>61</sup>

### **Cultural Relevancy**

Up to this point, there has been an intentional effort in this thesis to interweave the HUP and the principle of receptivity. The reason for this effort was not only to emphasize the biblical nature of the HUP and for its use in reaching the unchurched but also to avoid potential problems and pitfalls in using the HUP as an evangelistic tool. To state that there are potential problems and pitfalls is to take seriously the consequences of the fall. Sin can corrupt and infect most anything and thus cause misuse and disease – including in the application of the HUP. Therefore, in order to avoid misuse and disease, the discussion on cultural relevancy will involve five topics: (1) cultural phenomenon, (2) church diseases, (3) evangelistic zeal, (4) cultural awareness, and (5) cultural needs.

**Cultural phenomenon.** To understand the potential of church diseases, this thesis will return to the original starting definition of the HUP from chapter 1 and follow up on a discussion from chapter 3 concerning the cultural phenomenon of homophily. The HUP “states an undeniable fact. Human beings do build barriers around their own societies” and that “people like to *become* Christians without crossing ... [those]

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<sup>61</sup>Note that when the church becomes more heterogeneous in makeup, it also becomes unified when it is a *koinonia* church.

barriers.”<sup>62</sup> Without crossing barriers describes a cultural phenomenon that is often referred to as “homophily” or literally, “love of the same.”<sup>63</sup> The idea that people “like to hear” the gospel expounded upon by their own people is a phenomenological issue, not a theological issue that people “ought to hear” the gospel expounded upon by their own people.<sup>64</sup> McGavran explains, “It takes no great acumen to see that . . . *unbelievers* understand the Gospel better when expounded by their own kind of people.”<sup>65</sup> Thus, the theory is that the difficulty of evangelistic communication increases in proportion to the

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<sup>62</sup>McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 163, emphasis added.

<sup>63</sup>“There is no one single definition of homophily. However, there are common characteristics which remain salient throughout. First, homophily constitutes similarity or likeness between entities. The similarities are in characteristics such as location, origin, language or race. Second, homophily generally is used when describing the communicative relationship between people. That is, people who are similar in sociodemographic backgrounds are more likely to communicate because they are homophilous (Cook, Mcpherson, & Smith-Lovin, 2001). The common saying, ‘birds of a feather flock together,’ represents the elementary definition of homophily (McPherson and Rotolo, 2001). Conversely, the opposite of homophily would be heterophily or dissimilarity in persons (Bloch, Cameron, & Yin, 2001).” Mike Donnelly et al., “Embedded Journalism: How War is Viewed Differently from the Frontlines versus the Sidelines,” Department of Defense, <http://www.ou.edu/deptcomm/dodjcc/groups/03D1/INDEX.htm> (accessed March 28, 2013).

There are brief mentions of homophily in the volumes of data which discuss the HUP. For example, A. Scott Moreau refers to the homophily principle in discussing sociological and anthropological considerations of the HUP when he writes, “The HUP is similar to the homophily principle in communication (*Dynamics*, pp. 229-39), which is that we tend to share information with similar persons. One interesting aspect of this is that, ‘As a result of similarity, information is received more readily and persuasion occurs more frequently’ (Ibid., p. 232).” A. Scott Moreau, “The Homogeneous Unit Principle,” Doestoc, <http://www.doestoc.com/docs/2235726/The-Homogeneous-Unit-Principle-A-Scott-Moreau-1-What-is-the-H> (accessed March 28, 2013).

<sup>64</sup>Wagner, *Church Growth & the Whole Gospel*, 167.

<sup>65</sup>McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 167, emphasis added. As explained further by McGavran and Hunter, “If there are no Christians in a particular social unit or subculture, a movement to Christ can begin among them only when a cross-cultural communicator of the Gospel reaches across from his or her subculture, communicates the great news in a form that is indigenous to the receiving people, and wins one or several converts from among the most receptive members. These then proceed to evangelize members of their own social unit and their own subculture. The *most* contagion takes place within the existing social networks of credible Christians as they reach out to friends, relatives, fellow workers, and neighbors.” Donald A McGavran and George G. Hunter III, *Church Growth: Strategies That Work* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980), 31, emphasis in original.

differences in people's culture.<sup>66</sup> The church intuitively understands this phenomenon when it engages in age-based Sunday school classes, youth groups, worship styles, or vacation Bible school as examples.

**Church diseases.** This cultural phenomenon of homophily can lead to church diseases. Peter Wagner cites two diseases (people blindness and ethnikitis) and this thesis will offer a third (complacency). People blindness is “the malady that prevents us from seeing the important cultural differences that exist between groups of people living in geographical proximity to one another—differences that tend to create barriers to the acceptance of our message.”<sup>67</sup> Ethnikitis, described as a terminal disease, occurs when the church is “virtually an island of one kind of people, in the midst of a community of another kind of people, and very little communication between the two.”<sup>68</sup> Complacency will be defined by this thesis as satisfaction in whom one is and not striving to become who God wants one to be. George Peters describes complacency:

Larger group accessions can constitute a real danger to change the New Testament believer's church of personal voluntarism into a *folk church* that belongs to the people. This is a most serious peril. From a practical standpoint in converts the church into a religious club of the community that everyone ought to and is expected to join. It is also a fact that in large group and community movements many individuals either drift along with others or because of social pressure are

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<sup>66</sup>In the CGM, evangelism may be divided up into four categories: E-0, E-1, E-2 and E-3. E-0 evangelism is evangelizing existing church members. E-1 evangelism is evangelizing non-church members within the churches' cultural, linguistic, and ethnic unit. E-2 evangelism is evangelizing non-church members outside the church's cultural, linguistic, and ethnic unit, but in a unit that is similar. E-3 evangelism is evangelizing non-church members outside the church's cultural, linguistic, and ethnic unit with that unit being unfamiliar. McGavran credits this typology in the missiological and church growth vocabulary to Ralph D. Winter. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 47-48.

<sup>67</sup>C. Peter Wagner, *The Healthy Church* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1996), 60.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*, 28.

pushed along without having a personally experienced salvation and regeneration. Nominalism, therefore, becomes most evident in the second or third generation when the first glow of the religious change has cooled down and Christianity has been *domesticated*. All belong to it as natural descendants of its founders.<sup>69</sup>

If with evangelistic zeal, the church maintains a spirit of cultural awareness and seeks to meet cultural needs of the changing culture, it will help to both recognize and possibly mitigate church growth diseases.

**Evangelistic zeal.** One key to recognizing and mitigating church growth diseases is having evangelistic zeal. Evangelistic zeal can be understood as faithful obedience to the Great Commission in making kingdom people along with a gratitude attitude (prayer life) that expects fruitfulness because of God's effectual grace. As Peters explains, without zeal, there are problems in evangelistic effort:

There is little carry-over of evangelism concern and effort from one group of people to another. There is a tendency to slacken in the work of evangelism and missions when the *home-group* has been reached with the gospel. This tendency must not be permitted to become practical. Therefore, missions to people outside of the home circle must be emphasized from the very beginning. People must become involved in missions at an early stage.<sup>70</sup>

**Cultural awareness.** Another key to recognizing and mitigating church growth diseases is having cultural awareness. The cultural awareness of the church in its community can be ascertained through numerical analysis as explained in the last part of this section. For example, in the survey results from chapter 4, the churches were told, "The community that the church is located in can be broken down in a variety of

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<sup>69</sup>George W. Peters, *A Theology of Church Growth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 233, emphasis in original.

<sup>70</sup>*Ibid.*, 232, emphasis in original.

demographic ways like racial makeup, household income, age distribution, etc.” Then they were asked, “What would you say best describes your church in relation to your community?” Their three options and responses are found in Table 17.

Table 17. Community similarity

	Numerical response	Percentage response
We are a mirror image of our community in our demographic makeup	26	20.00
We are very much like the majority of our community in our demographic makeup – although there are people groups in the community that are not represented in our church	86	66.15
We are not very much like the majority of our community in our demographic makeup	17	13.08
No Response	1	0.77
Total	130	100.00

To judge the accuracy of the responses, a demographic analysis of the church would be compared with that of its community to see if they were, for example, truly “a mirror image of our community in our demographic makeup.” If both the demographic analysis of the church and the demographic analysis of the community are the same, then they are correct in their response and thus may be considered culturally aware. Similarly, if the analyses are not the same, then they are incorrect in their response and thus may be considered culturally unaware.

As discussed earlier in this thesis, the challenge and opportunity of using the HUP in evangelism is in understanding people consciousness, or when members of a HU “think of themselves as separate.”<sup>71</sup> The challenge of people consciousness in evangelism comes in the degree of people consciousness that any one particular HU has. The opportunity of people consciousness in evangelism is to understand how the “barrier” of people consciousness can best be overcome. The failure to understand that there are HUs and that they have varying degrees of people consciousness, or using the HUP as an evangelism tool, may result in the church reaching people groups only like themselves.<sup>72</sup> Thus, not using the HUP highly correlates to the probability that there are HUs that are not being effectively evangelized because of their people consciousness.

**Cultural needs.** Another key to recognizing and mitigating church growth diseases is identifying cultural needs and meeting them through social action.<sup>73</sup> This key ties directly into the teaching ministry of the church in helping the church develop a comprehensive biblical worldview which by definition incorporates the needs of society. Donald Atkinson and Charles Roesel refer to meeting the needs of people as ministry evangelism:

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<sup>71</sup>McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 155.

<sup>72</sup>McGavran writes, “In all churches, young and old, bridging growth or cross-cultural evangelism needs to be emphasized. Homogeneous unit church that are only evangelizing their homogeneous unit are not pleasing to God. Disciples must be made of *panta ta ethne*, all the peoples.” Ibid., 73.

<sup>73</sup>Hunter writes that a strategy element must take “seriously the fact that secular people do not perceive the relevance of Christianity to their needs and motives. The appropriate strategy is to speak promptly and explicitly to the basic human needs and motives that grip and dominate people in our time.” Hunter, *The Contagious Congregation*, 99.

Ministry evangelism is ministering to persons' needs with the purpose of sharing with them the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. This holistic approach to both ministry and evangelism rests on the foundations of the incarnation and the priesthood of believers. We have seen that these two doctrines remind us of God's involvement in human suffering, through the coming of Jesus Christ as the Word made flesh, and of every Christian's responsibility to be a ministering priest to others.<sup>74</sup>

As seen from the survey results from chapter 4, meeting needs was the only evangelistic outreach methodology that resulted in evangelistic effectiveness.<sup>75</sup> This result is significant when recalling McGavran's definition of a HU as "simply a section of society in which all the members have some *characteristic* in common."<sup>76</sup> By this definition, one can see how broad and elastic the term HU is as McGavran writes, "The homogenous unit is an *elastic* concept, its meaning depending on the context in which it is used."<sup>77</sup> The elastic nature of a HU does include a characteristic of needs. Therefore, a practical application of the HUP in the local church setting is to identify and to relate to a HU's people-consciousness at a common characteristic or at a level of need. Thus if a church has evangelistic zeal, maintains a spirit of cultural awareness, and seeks to meet

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<sup>74</sup>Donald A. Atkinson and Charles L. Roesel, *Meeting Needs Sharing Christ: Ministry Evangelism in Today's New Testament Church*, Member Book (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 1995), 18.

<sup>75</sup>The churches were given nine outreach activities and then ask to respond to the amount of use of each activity. Then, their level of use was evaluated with a baptism ratio based on worship attendance. Of the nine outreach activities listed, only the response "outreach to specific groups of people based on common characteristics or needs" showed an increase in both the average worship attendance and the baptism ratio when moving from "little or none" to "sometimes" to "often." In other words, there was a direct correlation between the outreach activity and both the worship attendance and the baptism ratio of the church – the more churches engaged in outreach to specific groups of people based on common characteristics or needs, the greater their worship attendance and their baptism ratio increased. The elastic nature of a HU does include a characteristic of needs. Therefore, a practical application of the HUP in the local church setting is to identify and to relate to a HU's people-consciousness at a common characteristic or at a level of need. A visual representation of this data is shown in Table 13 in chap. 4.

<sup>76</sup> McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 81, see also 69, emphasis added.

<sup>77</sup>*Ibid.*, 70, emphasis added.

cultural needs of the changing culture, it can recognize and possibly mitigate church growth diseases. Robert Logan relates meeting the needs of people with prayer:

In a compassionate heart softened and prepared by God's Spirit, exposure to people's needs gives birth to godly vision for ministry. Do you wish to establish a church, or are you serving in a church? First, walk the streets of the community. See its people. Talk with them and ask them what their needs are. Then pray that God would open your eyes to see the reality of what type of ministry, by the power of his Holy Spirit, God would give through you to meet the needs of those hurting people. The opportunities are limitless.<sup>78</sup>

### **Name Identity**

This thesis began by extolling the influence of the Church Growth Movement (CGM) and its founder, Donald A. McGavran, on my ministry. One of McGavran's many contributions to missiological thought, the HUP, came under much criticism, which this thesis contends arose from miscommunication and misunderstanding. As a result of the criticism, in recent years there has been a lack of conversation concerning the HUP as a powerful tool in both the numerical and the spiritual growth of the church. This thesis wants the conversation of the HUP to continue – at least with respect to its underlying principles.

Thus, the dilemma as to whether or not the HUP should be used as an evangelistic tool needed to be addressed. Specific questions needed to be asked and answered. Is the HUP a faithful attempt to fulfill the Great Commission? Or does it lead to churches that are built on racism and elitism? Does the HUP hinder or help *koinonia*? Does the HUP make a mockery of the unity of the church? Is the HUP biblical? Critics and proponents disagree on the answers to these questions. However, if the HUP can be

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<sup>78</sup>Robert E. Logan, *Beyond Church Growth* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1989), 28.

found to be biblically defensible, theologically sound and missiologically appropriate, then it should be employed as an evangelistic tool.

Therefore, the purpose of this ministry research thesis was to demonstrate how the HUP is an excellent tool to reach and transform one's culture for Christ. In fact, this ministry research thesis contended that the failure to recognize and utilize the HUP as a tool in evangelism could actually lead to the homogeneous churches that its opponents are so quick to criticize. Consequently, the goals were that a clear understanding and definition of the HUP be actualized and that such an understanding and definition be analyzed and found to be biblically defensible, theologically sound, and missiologically appropriate. As with any ministry research thesis, this treatise attempted to advance a new point of view resulting from research and prayerful reflection. The focus was on McGavran's original use and understanding of the term and how the HUP could be used today in the local church setting. The conclusions of this thesis are presented below as incognito infiltration, biblically based, divinely focused, culturally relevant, evangelistic strategy, and *koinonia* church.

### **Incognito Infiltration**

The HUP is alive and well. Peter Wagner writes, "A more contemporary term for the homogeneous unit principle is 'the people approach to world evangelization.' It is now widely recognized and accepted as a primary starting point for missiological strategy."<sup>79</sup> In this respect, the HU is recast as "peoples" or "people groups" and the

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<sup>79</sup>A. Scott Moreau, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), s.v. "Homogeneous Unit Principle," by C. Peter Wagner.

HUP is recast then as the “people movement theory.” In addition, there are related concepts that are generally accepted which reflect the underlying principles found in the HUP – concepts like “contextualization,” “cultural sensitivity,” and “cultural relevancy in communication.” Furthermore, as seen in this chapter, many of the concepts surrounding the HUP have infiltrated the church through discipleship training. Furthermore, the church intuitively understands the cultural phenomenon of homophily when it engages in age-based Sunday school classes, youth groups, worship styles, or vacation Bible school as examples.

Thus, though the HUP may not be discussed in the local church, it is alive and well, though infiltrating the church incognito in most respects. The problem is that the application of the HUP is disjointed. In addition, this thesis is also concerned with the controversial nature of the HUP. It believes that any attempt to reference the HUP in either a productive theological conversation or application would most likely lead to disappointment and failure.

Therefore, based on the conclusion from chapter 3 as well as the vital teaching ministry of the church, it is the hope that a new, systematic discipleship study can be developed from this thesis which would be entitled A.G.A.P.E. – Asking God and Approaching People Evangelistically. This discipleship study would help the church in implementing the various aspects of the HUP in the local church setting without the necessary burden of constantly defending or explaining the HUP with its related baggage. In its simplest form, A.G.A.P.E. would be defined as “asking God to identify people that you can present the gospel to with cultural relevancy and sensitivity.” Furthermore, with the “love” acronym of A.G.A.P.E., it fits well into a strategy of love (God’s love for

people in the gift of salvation, God's love as the force behind the revealing of where God is at work, God's love as the source and power to do God's work, one's love of God, and one's love of neighbor).

### **Biblically Based**

It was the attempt of this thesis in chapter 3 to examine the Scriptures thoroughly and thereby testing HUP as to its scriptural fidelity. It is the conclusion of this thesis that the HUP is biblically defensible. In addition, this thesis believes that defining the HUP directly from the Bible as A.G.A.P.E. would create less controversy in its use and definition. An applicable excerpt from Paul's letter to the church in Colossae was suggested as a biblical reference:

Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak. Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person. (Col 4:2-6, ESV)

### **Divinely Focused**

The first aspect of the love acronym is "Asking God." Prayer was explained not only as communication, but also as indispensable in the God-church love relationship. As communication, this thesis explained prayer in relation to the HUP to be much like a pair of glasses for one with poor eyesight. It helps to bring clarity in seeing where God is at work so as to go and join God in his work of salvation. This pair of glasses is understood as the role of prayer – God's tool of communication. As the God-church love relationship, this thesis argued that at its systematic, theological core, the HUP is a theistic worldview that acknowledges that God is at work through grace. Failing to

accept and respond to God's work or activity is practical deism. Thus, prayer is understood as a part of human responsibility in evangelism which acknowledges and depends on God's sovereignty in evangelism.

### **Culturally Relevant**

The second aspect of the love acronym is "Approaching People." Cultural relevancy is also a communication tool. It uses numerical analyses to become culturally aware by examining a churches' cultural context and attempting to quantify, classify, and analyze various subsets of the population to determine if a HU exists and the possible effect on evangelistic efforts. It seeks God's wisdom and guidance in being culturally sensitive. Understanding the diversity and complexity of one's cultural context is a critical step in trying to minister to that culture. As explained, the North American cultural context is diverse and complex. The application of HUP is an excellent, and perhaps even necessary, tool for understanding and reaching that culture for Christ.

### **Evangelistic Strategy**

The third aspect of the love acronym is "Evangelistically." Evangelistically communicates a focus on a strategy of evangelism. The HUP incorporates a variety of evangelistic styles: responsive evangelism, proactive evangelism, lifestyle evangelism, and lordship evangelism are examples. A.G.A.P.E., as an evangelistic strategy, can be illustrated as seen in Figure 14:

Furthermore, a strategy of evangelism requires evangelistic zeal. McGavran had a heart for evangelism. He reveals his heart's desire when he writes concerning God's desire:

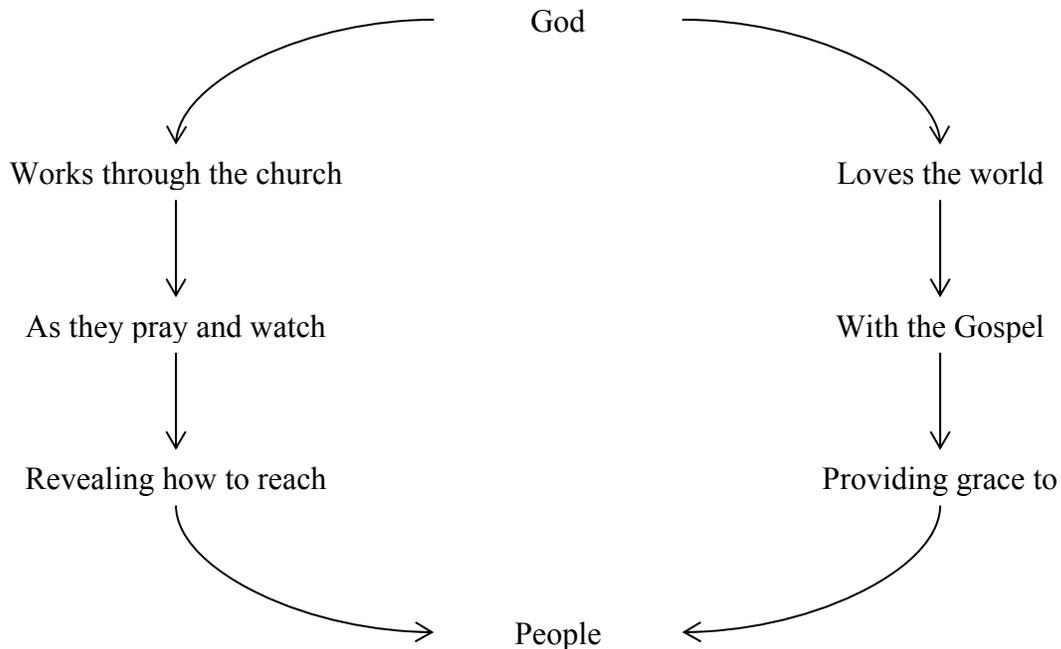


Figure 14. Asking God and approaching people, evangelistically (A.G.A.P.E.)

Among other desires of God-in-Christ, he beyond question wills that lost persons be found—that is, be reconciled to himself. Most cordially admitting that God has other purposes, we should remember that we serve a God *who finds persons*. He has an overriding concern that men and women should be redeemed. However we understand the word, biblical witness is clear that people are “lost.” The finding God wants them *found*—that is, brought into a redemptive relationship to Jesus Christ where, baptized in his name, they become part of his household. He is not pleased when many findable sheep remain straggling on the mountain, shivering in the bitter wind. The more found, the better pleased is God.<sup>80</sup>

### Stewardship Responsibility

A.G.A.P.E. also takes into account the stewardship handling of the gospel message. Because the HUP is a theistic worldview that acknowledges that God is at work through grace, the HUP strives to be wise and faithful to the presence and activity

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<sup>80</sup>McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 21, emphasis in original.

of God. Thus, failing to accept and respond to God's work or activity is not only practical deism but also poor stewardship of the gospel message. Therefore, the HUP becomes a stewardship strategy when evaluating the receptivity of a HU and determining the extent that people consciousness creates a barrier in responding to the gospel and how that barrier can best be overcome. The church needs to act both faithfully and prudently with the gospel message as the world would do with worldly things. If the HUP is used in a proactive way, it has the potential to reach HUs from the population that are not currently churched. Thus, the church may become more diverse and representative of the total population if the HUP is used as a tool of evangelism.

### ***Koinonia Church***

Finally, it is imperative that A.G.A.P.E. be used by a *koinonia* church. In a *koinonia* church, acceptance of the gospel proclamation necessitates obedience through participation in the gospel's purposes which deal directly with God's mission of salvation through a *koinonia* church. Thus, a *koinonia* church is responsible in the stewardship of the gospel message. A *koinonia* church is intentional in its evangelistic methodology. A *koinonia church* is culturally relevant in its evangelistic strategies. A *koinonia* church understands God's sovereignty and thus its dependence on God for evangelistic success. A *koinonia* church is biblically based in its teaching responsibility. In effect, a *koinonia* church is kingdom focused. A *koinonia* church understands that the kingdom is bigger than any one, local church. Vicedom explains,

There is danger that the church itself may become the point of departure, the purpose, the subject of the mission. This is not, however, in accord with Scripture,

since it is always the Triune God who acts, who makes His believers members of His kingdom. Even the church is only an instrument in the hands of God. The church herself is only the outcome of the activity of God who sends and saves.<sup>81</sup>

Therefore, this thesis contends that a *koinonia* church should use A.G.A.P.E. It is biblically based and divinely motivated. Thus, because it is biblically based and divinely motivated, it will prove to be an effective evangelistic strategy for a *koinonia* church.

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<sup>81</sup>Vicedom, *The Mission of God*, 4-5.

## APPENDIX 1

### AN EXPOSITION OF ACTS 2:42

For a variety of reasons explained below and in the D.Min. research thesis, Acts 2:42 and its related context is uniquely relevant to an understanding of the HUP. Therefore, Acts 2:42 will be examined in more detail in this appendix. First, we will look at the verse in detail and then introduce some of those issues that are relevant to the HUP.

#### Verse

This verse will be analyzed based on certain parts of speech: subject, verb, and indirect object. Then, the outline of the verse with regards to the surrounding content will be presented. The verse in various translations is provided for reference.

Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament (NA27): Ἦσαν δὲ προσκαρτεροῦντες τῇ διδαχῇ τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ τῇ κοινωνίᾳ, τῇ κλάσει τοῦ ἄρτου καὶ ταῖς προσευχαῖς.

English Standard Version (ESV): And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

New American Standard Bible (NASB): They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

New International Version (NIV): They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB): And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to the prayers.

Revised Standard Version (RSV): And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

## Subject

The subject “they” comes from the verb ἦσαν (they were) and the participle προσκατεροῦντες (devoting).<sup>1</sup> The immediate antecedent for the pronoun “they” in verse 42 comes from the three thousand souls who received Peter’s word, were baptized, and were added in verse 41. The three thousand souls were part of the audience at Peter’s Pentecost sermon and according to verse 5, “devout men from every nation under heaven” (ἄνδρες εὐλαβεῖς ἀπὸ παντὸς ἔθνους τῶν ὑπὸ τὸν οὐρανόν).

## Verb

ἦσαν is an imperfect, active, indicative of the verb “to be.” Even though it can be left un-translated, the translation of “they lived” is preferred.<sup>2</sup> The participle προσκατεροῦντες is present and active and most translations use it as the main verb but with the imperfect tense of εἰμί.<sup>3</sup> To use the participle with an adjectival and adverbial force, one could translate, “They lived [by] (continually) devoting themselves.”

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<sup>1</sup>The following resources were used to translate the verse from the Greek manuscript: W. Hall Harris III, *The Lexham Greek-English Interlinear New Testament: SBL Edition* (Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2010); Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, electronic ed. of the 2nd ed. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996); and, Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, electronic ed. (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

Although the conclusions drawn are my own, they are based on study of a variety of commentaries that are included in the Bibliography of this thesis.

<sup>2</sup>The ESV, NIV, RSV, and HCSB all leave it un-translated. The NASB translates it as “they were.” Although “they were” is certainly a more literally translation of the verb “to be,” it fails to provide the pictorial sense of how “they” (the 3,000 converts) “existed” or “lived.”

<sup>3</sup>ESV, NIV, RSV, and HCSB translate as “they devoted.” NASB95 translates as “they (were) continually devoting.”

## Indirect Objects

Following the participle are four nouns in the dative case: τῇ διδασχῇ (literally, “to the teaching or instruction” with the genitive modifier “of the apostles”), τῇ κοινωνίᾳ, (literally, “to the fellowship”), τῇ κλάσει (literally “to the breaking” with the genitive modifier, “of the bread”), and ταῖς προσευχαῖς (literally “to the prayers”). In addition, there is a καὶ (“and”) between “teaching” and “fellowship” and one between “breaking” and “prayers.” However, there is no καὶ between “fellowship” and “breaking.” This absent καὶ leads to three ways in understanding and translating to what the 3,000 converts were continually devoting themselves.

The first way to understand and translate the verse is to place heavy emphasis on the absent καὶ and have “the fellowship” in apposition to the “the breaking” and “the prayers.” Thus, “the fellowship” is explained by “the breaking of the bread” and “the prayers.” Therefore, there were only two activities that the 3,000 converts were continually devoting themselves to: “the teaching of the apostles” and the “the fellowship.”

The second way to understand and translate the verse is to consider all four phrases as equal in substance. Thus, “the breaking of the bread” and “the prayers” are not seen as modifying “the fellowship.” The absent καὶ then is seen as simply separating the four activities into two groups. One group is the “the apostle’s teaching” and “the fellowship.” The second group is “the breaking of the bread” and “the prayers.” The ESV, NASB95, NIV, and RSV follow this understanding in translation.

The third way is similar to the second in that it considers all four phrases as equal in substance. However, the absent  $\kappa\alpha\iota$  does not separate the four activities into two groups. The HCSB follows this understanding in translation.

To place the emphasis on the absent  $\kappa\alpha\iota$  seems problematic both from a grammar standpoint and certainly from a theological one. Because the dative cases (“to the teaching” and “to the breaking”) are modified by two genitive cases (“of the apostles” and “of the bread”), it seems more likely that the  $\kappa\alpha\iota$  is included in both cases to show the symmetry between the four activities to which the new converts were devoting themselves.

### **Outline**

Verse 42 can be seen as a conclusion to the Pentecost narrative (2:1-42) or the start of a Lukan summary passage (2:42-47). While debatable, it seems more likely that it is the conclusion of the Pentecost narrative based on a grammatical point. The subject of the sentence is “they” which, as discussed, has its antecedent in the previous verse and refers back to the audience in verse 5. Thus, the Pentecost narrative can be seen as the filling of the Holy Spirit (2:1-13), Peter’s sermon (2:14-36), a call to repentance and the gift of the Holy Spirit (2:37-40), and the new believer’s acceptance and devotion (2:41-42). Furthermore, after the Pentecost narrative, the subjects change from in verses 43-47, starting with “awe came” and ending with “the Lord added.”

### **Relevance**

The NT naturally falls into four parts: (1) a theological history of Jesus referred to as the gospels, (2) a history of the growth of the early church called Acts, (3) circulated

letters of the early church, written primarily by Paul, concerning both theology and praxis called epistles, and (4) a prophetic apocalypse called Revelation. Acts 2:1-42 contains elements of all four parts of the NT, each of which has several applications to the HUP.

First, Luke records the first (and purest) example of the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20, Luke 24:44-49, John 20:21-23, and Acts 1:6-8) in action (Acts 2:1-42).<sup>4</sup> Second, you can see the important born-again aspect of the church in the filling of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4) as well as the power of the Holy Spirit in evangelism (Acts 2:5-13).<sup>5</sup> Third, you have an account of the content of the gospel proclamation (Acts 2:14-36). The content deals with the gospels (theological history of Jesus) and the related prophecies of the OT.<sup>6</sup> (Note that the theological history of Jesus includes also his message concerning the kingdom of God which sees its final consummation in Revelation.) Fourth, you have the necessary response to the gospel proclamation which is repentance and receipt of the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:37-40).<sup>7</sup> Finally, you have the acceptance and devotion of the converts (Acts 2:41-42). The devotion includes the apostles' teaching, which today's church now possesses in the epistles.<sup>8</sup> The devotion also includes to the fellowship or to the church which includes the church's mission of

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<sup>4</sup>The Great Commission is being fulfilled as the disciples are sent and go as witnesses (Matt 28:19, Luke 24:48, John 20:21, Acts 1:8).

<sup>5</sup>The Great Commission is being fulfilled in the power of the Spirit (Luke 24:49, John 20:22, and Acts 1:8).

<sup>6</sup>The Great Commission is being fulfilled concerning Jesus as the Christ in fulfillment of the Scriptures (Luke 24:44-46).

<sup>7</sup>The Great Commission is being fulfilled with regard to repentance and baptism (Matt 28:19, Luke 24:47).

<sup>8</sup>The Great Commission is being fulfilled in the command to teach (Matt 28:20).

being witnesses and making disciples.<sup>9</sup> In addition, you can see both an HU and the principle of receptivity from the description of the audience in Acts 2:5, “devout men from every nation under heaven” (*ἄνδρες εὐλαβεῖς ἀπὸ παντὸς ἔθνους τῶν ὑπὸ τὸν οὐρανόν*).

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<sup>9</sup>The Great Commission is being fulfilled in the continuation of “make disciples” and “be witnesses” (Matt 28:19, Luke 24:48, John 20:21, Acts 1:8).

## APPENDIX 2

### COVER LETTER AND SURVEY INSTRUMENTATION

From a population of established churches of the Baptist General Association of Virginia, a written response survey was mailed to a randomly selected sample on May 7, 2009. The template for the cover letter is found on page 206 of this appendix and the survey instrumentation is found on pages 207 and 208 of this appendix.<sup>1</sup>

The letter was addressed to the pastor on record for the church. The letter includes my personal introduction and the reasons for writing and requesting information as well as the method for choosing their particular church. In addition, a brief overview of the survey instrumentation is given, a confidentiality statement and the invitation to be contacted and to discuss any level of anxiety when taking the survey.

The risk assessment for the respondents was considered low and the disclosure and agreement to participate is included in the cover letter. The survey instrumentation asks for the church's name for tracking purposes and the church's setting and average weekly attendance for Sunday school and worship services. The degree of involvement in various outreach activities is requested as well as a general overall evangelistic methodology. A response concerning the similarity between the church and the community is solicited as well as some baptismal information. Finally, the degree of familiarity with the HUP and related concepts is requested.

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<sup>1</sup>Both items have been reformatted to fit within this document's space and parameters.

## Cover Letter

Todd D. Kube  
11005 Milestone Dr.  
Mechanicsville, VA 23116  
(804) 550-9449

[Date]

[Pastor's Name]  
[Church's Name]  
[Address]  
[City], VA [Zip]

Dear Rev. [Last Name]:

Grace and Peace to you in the Name that is above all names: Christ Jesus, our Lord and Savior! [paragraph break in original] I am a D.Min. student earning a degree in missions, evangelism and church growth and am currently working on my thesis and I need your assistance. Your church has been randomly selected from churches affiliated with the General Baptist Association of Virginia to participate in the attached survey. The survey asks for some basic demographics of your church and the surrounding community in addition to some outreach oriented questions and some general opinions. As noted below – all information gathered is completely confidential. There is no real risk involved and only a small amount of your time is needed. In the event you feel any anxiety in completing this survey, please do not hesitate to call me.

For your convenience, a self-addressed stamped envelope is provided for the return of the survey instrumentation. I thank you for your time and service for the Lord and pray that you will help me in advancing the Kingdom.

In Christ's Love

The Reverend Todd D. Kube

### **Agreement to Participate**

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to determine if evangelistic efforts in local churches are targeted to specific people groups or people in general. This research is being conducted by Todd D. Kube for purposes of a Doctor of Ministry Thesis. In this research, you will be asked to provide certain community and church demographic information and the church's outreach methodology. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.* By your completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

### Survey Instrumentation

Name of Church (for tracking purposes only) \_\_\_\_\_

Setting of Church:    \_\_\_\_\_ Rural            \_\_\_\_\_ Suburban            \_\_\_\_\_ Urban

Average Weekly Attendance:    \_\_\_\_\_ Worship            \_\_\_\_\_ Sunday School

How much does your church use each of the following in reaching out to the community?

1 = Little or none

2 = Sometimes

3 = Often

\_\_\_\_\_ Outreach through mass mailings to the community for upcoming church events

\_\_\_\_\_ Outreach through advertisements in local newspaper for general church services

\_\_\_\_\_ Outreach through advertisements in local newspaper for special church services

\_\_\_\_\_ Outreach through advertisements in local newspaper for events like VBS

\_\_\_\_\_ Outreach to specific groups of people based on language or ethnicity

\_\_\_\_\_ Outreach to specific groups of people based on age or sex

\_\_\_\_\_ Outreach to specific groups of people based on common characteristics or needs

\_\_\_\_\_ Automatic letters or phone calls to first-time visitors

\_\_\_\_\_ Automatic visits to first-time visitors

Which one of the following best describes your evangelistic methodology?

\_\_\_\_\_ We try to reach everybody we can in the community

\_\_\_\_\_ We target specific groups of people in the community

The community that the church is located in can be broken down in a variety of demographic ways like racial makeup, household income, age distribution, etc. Which one would you say best describes your church in relation to your community?

\_\_\_\_\_ We are a mirror image of our community in our demographic makeup.

\_\_\_\_\_ We are very much like the majority of our community in our demographic makeup – although there are people groups in the community that are not represented in our church.

\_\_\_\_\_ We are not very much like the majority of our community in our demographic makeup.

How many baptisms have there been in your church over the last five years? \_\_\_\_\_

How many baptisms were Adults? \_\_\_\_\_ (non-Adults? \_\_\_\_\_)

How many baptisms were relatives of current church members? \_\_\_\_\_

(How many baptisms were not relatives of current church members? \_\_\_\_\_)

Please check your familiarity with the following.

	<u>Not</u> <u>familiar</u>	<u>Somewhat</u> <u>familiar</u>	<u>Very</u> <u>familiar</u>
Homogeneous Unit Principle	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Principle of Receptivity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>“Understanding Church Growth”</i> by Donald A. McGavran	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People Approach to Evangelism	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Church Growth Movement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## APPENDIX 3

### SUPPLEMENTAL SURVEY RESULTS

This appendix will serve as supplemental data which the reader may find interesting but not necessarily germane to any conclusions of this thesis. Although the statistical data provided many data tables for review and analysis, in order not to be overwhelmed with the amount of statistical data that could be generated, this appendix will limit itself to three additional tables.

#### **Familiarity by Setting of Church**

Respondents were asked their familiarity with five subject matters relative to this thesis. Participants were to respond with either “not familiar,” “somewhat familiar,” or “very familiar.” Table 4 of chapter 4 summarizes that data based on all responding churches. Table A1 takes that summary and breaks down the results based on the setting of the church. Rural churches were more likely to respond with “not familiar” to the five subject matters than the suburban and urban churches. Likewise, in all cases, they were the least likely to respond to “very familiar” on the five subject matters than the suburban and urban churches. What is of particular interest is that for whatever reason, even though the rural churches lacked familiarity with the HUP and related concepts, they nevertheless had the highest baptism to worship percentage of the three church settings as shown in Table 8 of chapter 4.

Table A1. General familiarity by church setting

	Total responses	Percentage not familiar	Percentage somewhat familiar	Percentage very familiar
HUP	130	49.24	25.38	25.38
Rural	67	53.73	28.36	17.91
Suburban	38	42.10	28.95	28.95
Urban	23	52.18	13.04	34.78
The principle of receptivity	129	53.49	33.33	13.18
Rural	68	60.30	32.35	7.35
Suburban	37	43.24	37.84	18.92
Urban	23	52.18	34.78	13.04
<i>Understanding Church Growth</i> by Donald A. McGavran	129	42.64	34.88	22.48
Rural	67	46.27	35.82	17.91
Suburban	38	39.47	36.84	23.69
Urban	23	34.78	37.78	30.44

Table A1, continued

	Total responses	Percentage not familiar	Percentage somewhat familiar	Percentage very familiar
People approach to evangelism	130	40.77	42.31	16.92
Rural	67	49.25	38.81	11.90
Suburban	38	31.58	50.00	18.42
Urban	23	41.41	42.18	16.41
CGM	129	20.16	44.96	34.88
Rural	67	25.37	46.27	28.36
Suburban	37	13.51	40.54	45.95
Urban	23	17.39	47.83	34.78

### Familiarity by Number of Concepts

When discussing Table 4 of chapter 4, the observation was made that the results were interesting and often incongruent when combined with one another. For example, there is a critical relationship between the HUP and the principle of receptivity. However, despite 25.38 percent who responded that they were “very familiar” with the HUP, only 10.77 percent of the total population responded to being “very familiar” with both concepts. Therefore, Table A2 summarizes the “very familiar” responses of each topic with one another.

Table A2. Respondents “very familiar” response to the HUP and other concepts

	Percentage very familiar with two concepts	Percentage very familiar with three concepts	Percentage very familiar with four concepts	Percentage very familiar with all five concepts
HUP and the principle of receptivity	10.77			
HUP and <i>Understanding Church Growth</i>	13.08			
HUP and people approach to evangelism	6.15			
HUP and CGM	16.92			
The principle of receptivity and <i>Understanding Church Growth</i>	9.23			
The principle of receptivity and people approach to evangelism	5.38			
The principle of receptivity and CGM	8.46			
<i>Understanding Church Growth</i> and people approach to evangelism	10.00			
<i>Understanding Church Growth</i> and CGM	16.15			
People approach to evangelism and CGM	10.77			

Table A2, continued

	Percentage very familiar with two concepts	Percentage very familiar with three concepts	Percentage very familiar with four concepts	Percentage very familiar with all five concepts
HUP, the principle of receptivity, and <i>Understanding Church Growth</i>		6.92		
HUP, the principle of receptivity, and people approach to evangelism		3.85		
HUP, the principle of receptivity, and CGM		7.69		
HUP, <i>Understanding Church Growth</i> , and people approach to evangelism		5.38		
HUP, <i>Understanding Church Growth</i> , and CGM		10.77		
HUP, people approach to evangelism, and CGM		5.38		
The principle of receptivity, <i>Understanding Church Growth</i> , and people approach to evangelism		5.38		
The principle of receptivity, <i>Understanding Church Growth</i> , and CGM		4.62		

Table A2, continued

	Percentage very familiar with two concepts	Percentage very familiar with three concepts	Percentage very familiar with four concepts	Percentage very familiar with all five concepts
<i>Understanding Church Growth, people approach to evangelism, and CGM</i>		9.23		
HUP, the principle of receptivity, <i>Understanding Church Growth</i> , and people approach to evangelism			3.85	
HUP, the principle of receptivity, <i>Understanding Church Growth</i> , and CGM			6.15	
The principle of receptivity, <i>Understanding Church Growth</i> , people approach to evangelism, and CGM			4.62	
HUP, the principle of receptivity, <i>Understanding Church Growth</i> , people approach to evangelism, and CGM				3.85

**Results Based on Baptisms to Worship Attendance Percentage Trisected**

Table 8, Table 9, Table 10, Table 11, and Table 12 of chapter 4 compared baptisms to worship attendance percentage based upon the various data collected.

Another informative way of reviewing the data is to compare the baptisms to worship attendance percentages among the churches with the highest and lowest baptisms ratios and to examine if any peculiarities are noticed. Therefore, Table A3 trisects the baptisms to worship attendance percentages into (1) a top tier of 40 churches with the highest baptisms to worship attendance percentages, (2) a middle tier of 40 churches with baptisms to worship attendance percentages between the top and bottom tier, and (3) a bottom tier with the lowest baptisms to worship attendance percentages.<sup>1</sup>

Table A3. Baptisms to worship attendance percentage trisected

		Baptisms to worship attendance percentages		
		Top tier	Middle tier	Bottom tier
Number of respondents		40	40	40
	Baptisms to worship attendance average percentage	6.77	3.70	1.72
Church setting respondents		40	39	40
	Rural percentage	60.00	46.15	47.50
	Suburban percentage	32.50	33.33	25.00
	Urban percentage	7.50	20.52	27.50

<sup>1</sup>These results only include respondents who answered the baptism inquiry as requested. Of the 130 total respondents, 7 respondents did not respond to the baptism question and 3 respondents used a range for baptisms. Therefore, the total respondent pool for this analysis is 120.

Table A3, continued

		Baptisms to worship attendance percentages		
		Top tier	Middle tier	Bottom tier
Average attendance				
	Sunday school range	11-720	15-260	5-345
	Sunday school mean	117.45	102.70	71.93
	Sunday school median	150	95	50
	Sunday school mode	30, 45, 85	50, 95	30, 35
	Worship range	28-1200	22-1725	15-350
	Worship mean	177.75	194.55	102.88
	Worship median	107.50	142.50	82.50
	Worship mode	40, 100	80	70, 100
Average baptisms per year				
	Range	1.40-61.60	0.80-64.40	0.00-9.40
	Mean	12.02	7.20	1.82
	Median	7.50	5.10	6.50
	Mode	5	2.8	0, 3, 5, 8

Table A3, continued

		Baptisms to worship attendance percentages		
		Top tier	Middle tier	Bottom tier
Familiarity with HUP respondents		40	40	40
	Not familiar percentage	55.00	40.00	50.00
	Somewhat familiar percentage	25.00	32.50	22.50
	Very familiar percentage	20.00	27.50	27.50
Familiarity with the principle of receptivity respondents		39	40	40
	Not familiar percentage	56.41	47.50	55.00
	Somewhat familiar percentage	33.33	30.00	40.00
	Very familiar percentage	10.26	22.50	5.00
Familiarity with <i>Understanding Church Growth</i> respondents		40	39	40
	Not familiar percentage	37.50	48.72	35.00
	Somewhat familiar percentage	45.00	23.08	42.50
	Very familiar percentage	17.50	28.20	22.50

Table A3, continued

		Baptisms to worship attendance percentages		
		Top tier	Middle tier	Bottom tier
Familiarity with people approach to evangelism respondents		40	40	40
	Not familiar percentage	45.00	40.00	35.00
	Somewhat familiar percentage	40.00	42.50	47.50
	Very familiar percentage	15.00	17.50	17.50
Familiarity with CGM respondents		39	40	40
	Not familiar percentage	20.51	17.50	20.00
	Somewhat familiar percentage	43.59	42.50	50.00
	Very familiar percentage	35.90	40.00	30.00

Table A3, continued

		Baptisms to worship attendance percentages		
		Top tier	Middle tier	Bottom tier
Community similarity respondents		40	40	39
	We are a mirror image of our community in our demographic makeup percentage	25.00	22.50	10.26
	We are very much like the majority of our community in our demographic makeup – although there are people groups in the community that are not represented in our church percentage	67.50	70.00	69.23
	We are not very much like the majority of our community in our demographic makeup percentage	7.50	7.50	20.51
Evangelistic methodology respondents		40	38	39
	We try to reach everybody we can in the community percentage	87.50	84.21	87.18
	We target specific groups of people in the community percentage	12.50	15.79	12.82

Table A3, continued

		Baptisms to worship attendance percentages		
		Top tier	Middle tier	Bottom tier
Outreach through mass mailings to the community for upcoming church events respondents		40	39	39
	Little or none percentage	75.00	64.10	66.67
	Sometimes percentage	20.00	28.21	25.64
	Often percentage	5.00	7.69	7.69
Outreach through advertisements in local newspaper for general church services respondents		40	40	39
	Little or none percentage	32.50	50.00	64.10
	Sometimes percentage	45.00	27.50	20.52
	Often percentage	22.50	22.50	15.38
Outreach through advertisements in local newspaper for special church services respondents		40	39	39
	Little or none percentage	15.00	28.21	33.33
	Sometimes percentage	45.00	43.58	46.15
	Often percentage	40.00	28.21	20.52

Table A3, continued

		Baptisms to worship attendance percentages		
		Top tier	Middle tier	Bottom tier
Outreach through advertisements in local newspaper for events like VBS respondents		40	40	39
	Little or none percentage	35.00	30.00	43.59
	Sometimes percentage	35.00	30.00	30.77
	Often percentage	30.00	40.00	25.64
Outreach to specific groups of people based on language or ethnicity respondents		40	38	39
	Little or none percentage	95.00	92.11	87.18
	Sometimes percentage	2.50	2.63	7.69
	Often percentage	2.50	5.26	5.13
Outreach to specific groups of people based on age or sex respondents		40	38	39
	Little or none percentage	62.50	60.53	66.67
	Sometimes percentage	35.00	31.58	30.77
	Often percentage	2.50	7.89	2.56

Table A3, continued

		Baptisms to worship attendance percentages		
		Top tier	Middle tier	Bottom tier
Outreach to specific groups of people based on common characteristics or needs respondents		40	38	39
	Little or none percentage	40.00	42.11	66.67
	Sometimes percentage	47.50	44.73	30.77
	Often percentage	12.50	13.16	2.56
Automatic letters or phone calls to first-time visitors respondents		40	39	38
	Little or none percentage	15.00	20.51	31.58
	Sometimes percentage	15.00	17.95	13.16
	Often percentage	70.00	61.54	55.26
Automatic visits to first-time Visitors respondents		40	40	39
	Little or none percentage	20.00	32.50	28.20
	Sometimes percentage	40.00	45.00	35.90
	Often percentage	40.00	22.50	35.90

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## ABSTRACT

### A BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL, AND MISSIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE HOMOGENEOUS UNIT PRINCIPLE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR EVANGELISM AND CHURCH GROWTH IN NORTH AMERICA

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This research thesis examines the Homogeneous Unit Principle (HUP) to determine its efficacy in reaching and transforming one's culture for Christ. Chapter 1 introduces the HUP and the surrounding controversy and identifies the purpose, goals, rationale, definitions, limitations, and general direction of the research thesis.

Chapter 2 discusses the classical and dictionary definitions of the HUP and finds them to be inadequate in understanding the HUP in relation to the man who theorized it, Donald McGavran, as well as the missionary context in which he theorized it. Thus, a new working definition of the HUP was advanced.

Chapter 3 analyzes the working definition of the HUP from a biblical, theological, and missiological perspective. This analysis attempted to assuage the critique and controversy surrounding the HUP by understanding the HUP within a systematic theological framework which emphasized the church, its unity, its mission, its message, and its mandates. The opus of this analysis was to formulate a new concept based upon an understanding of the HUP but without the surrounding controversy:

A.G.A.P.E. (asking God and approaching people, evangelistically) with Colossians 4:2-6 as its biblical reference which is developed further in chapter 5.

Chapter 4 summarizes the results of a written response survey that was mailed to selected churches of the Baptist General Association of Virginia. The survey asked about community outreach activities, evangelistic methodology, relationship between church and community demographics, number and type of baptisms, and familiarity with topics concerning the HUP.

Chapter 5 examines the practical application of the HUP for the established church setting. It highlights that many of the concepts of the HUP are already present in disciple studies, although not in a systematic way which emphasizes the HUP. Prayer and grace are highlighted as important concepts in applying the HUP as an evangelistic tool.

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