CHURCH GROWTH WORDS FROM THE RISEN LORD

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To my colleagues
in the
Evangelism and Missions Departments of
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary
Fort Worth, Texas

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Because this is a book about the church, it is altogether appropriate that I pay special tribute to the churches which have nurtured me on my spiritual pilgrimage, from the point of my conversion to the present day.

Thanks to the South Main Baptist Church in Houston, Texas, in whose context I made a public profession of my personal encounter with Jesus Christ and through whose ministry I came to a deep appreciation of the Word of God.

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FOREWORD

For one to write acceptably about evangelism, one must be acquainted with the subject in at least two ways. First of all, one must know evangelism from the standpoint of theory. Its biblical and historical basis, its theology, and its need must be understood. But, one who writes books on evangelism must also be acquainted with the subject experientially. It is necessary that it be the practice in the life of the writer. In both of these respects, Dan Crawford is extremely qualified to write on this subject. He has been a practitioner in evangelism. This was true of his ministry as a pastor, a student director on a large university campus, and as a consultant in evangelism for the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. That which he has practiced throughout his ministry, he now teaches in the classroom at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. From the standpoint of theory and practice, he well understands evangelism.

In *Church Growth Words from the Risen Lord,* Dr. Crawford clearly presents a sane balance between the divine and the human in church growth. He sees church growth as beginning with God. Some books on church growth so magnify the human aspects that the divine aspect is almost totally forgotten. The divine and the human are seen in very balanced proportion in this book.

Dr. Crawford gives great evidence of extensive knowledge of this field. He obviously knows what is going on, particularly in churches of the Southern Baptist Convention. This book contains a realistic appraisal of what Southern Baptist churches are doing in evangelism in the late decades of the twentieth century.

There is a magnificent comprehensiveness about this book. It touches nearly all facets of church growth evangelism. It has an abundance of helpful, illustrative material coupled with very pertinent statistical data. It is not only extremely informative, but it also has the capacity to motivate one to do more in the area of evangelism and church growth.

I found this book to be tremendously helpful. My own mind was stimulated and stretched. My heart was kindled afresh to remember where real priorities ought to lie. It is a privilege to recommend this book which comes from the pen of a colleague in the Department of Evangelism at Southwestern Seminary. I hope the reading of *Church Growth Words from the Risen Lord* provides as much of a challenge for you as it did for me.

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PREFACE

"What's become clear to you since we last met?" Ralph Waldo Emerson inquired of old friends. It is an appropriate question for the beginning of this book.

My first book was addressed to the individual in re1ationshI to personal, life-style evangelism.[1] That book came at a time in my ministry when, as a national Consultant in evangelism my primary assigned was equipping individuals in evangelism. My present position, which includes the teaching of church growth evangelism at the seminary level, has impressed upon me the need for a second book on evangelism. The fact that Jesus Christ addressed His commission to individuals underlines the priority of the personal. The fact that those individuals to whom Jesus gave the commission were a group nucleus of the church underlines the importance of church evangelism. Whereas the two personal and church evangelism are

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[1] Dan R. Crawford, *EvangeLife: A Guide to Life – Style Evangelism (*Nashville: Broadman Press, 1984).

intrinsically intertwined, they must often be addressed separately. This book, which will explore and apply the resurrection passages of our Lord, is a book addressed to the church.

It seemed like a great idea at the time. We were three struggling seminary students, each recently married. Adjacent to the apartment complex where we lived was a piece of land that had obviously been at one time a garden.

One of Our number, more courageous than the other two, went to the woman who lived in the house adjacent to the piece of property and asked if we could work that garden. Because her husband had died several years before, and the garden had not been Worked Since that time, she agreed to let us do whatever we would like to do in the garden. With eagerness and a great sense of anticipation, we went to the garden store and purchased every kind of seed we thought might grow in our garden. On a particular Monday with no seminary classes scheduled, we rented a tiller and the three of us tilled the ground, pulled weeds, and planted seed all day long. Late in the afternoon we stood back and admired our work, dreaming of inexpensive food and an occasional diversion from our seminary studies as we worked the garden.

I remember the next morning as being one of the worst of my life. I could hardly get out of bed due to the soreness of every muscle in my body. If my memory serves me correctly, none of the three of us attended seminary that day. Neither did we venture back into the garden for another dose of pain. Oh, we occasionally went out to the garden and admired our work and looked with increasing difficulty for some evidence of harvest in the midst of weeds, but there was no harvest.

We had a desire to grow a garden. We were committed to growing the garden. We knew a little bit about growing a garden, and we put in one hard day of work to grow that garden. Several weeks later our unattended garden produced its total harvest—a half bag of somewhat dry green beans. Our lesson was learned, perhaps a more profound lesson than we were learning in the classroom. The lesson was not fully understood until some years later, but three seminary students learned that you can work extremely hard out of deep commitment and desire based on some degree of knowledge, but if you don't stay with it, not much growth takes place.
Most ministers I know would like to see their church grow. They have a deep desire for growth, blended with a sincere commitment to growth. They have knowledge of both the biblical principles of growth as well as the practical methods of growth. Most are willing to work hard to accomplish growth. This book is written to strengthen that desire, deepen that commitment, increase that knowledge, and motivate that hard work. It is also written to encourage you to "stay with it."

I had finished my Sunday morning preaching engagement at the Highview Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky, and was on my way to the airport when I turned on the car radio. On that first Sunday after Easter, I heard Billy Graham preaching on the "Hour of Decision" program. The thesis of his message was that we need to place more emphasis on what Jesus said following the resurrection comparing the amount of interest we give to the seven *last* words of Christ, Graham said, "The church needs to hear again and again the first words of Jesus after the cross." That timely statement found me in the midst of the process of turning classroom lectures into a manuscript. It sent me back to my Office to revise my notes according to the

chapter titles of this book. In these post resurrection passages, I found significant growth words for the church.

A recent estimate by David B. Barrett indicated, "Each year, some 10,000 new books and articles on mission and evangelij0 are Published, flVo1ving seventy or so major language."[2] No doubt, a significant percentage of these treat the specific subject of church growth. The uniqueness of this Volume is its base on the *first* statements of the resurrected Lord to the nucleus of the first church.

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[2] "Annual Statistical Table on Global Mission: 1988," David B. Barrett, *International Bulletin of Missionary Research,* January 1988, 16.

CONTENTS

Chapter 1: The Platform for Church Growth

Platforms speak of foundations. Foundations secure the superstructure; they determine direction. The platform foundation for church growth must be a theological platform. Church growth and theology are always related to each other in the New Testament. There is a divine link between theology and methodology, between doctrine and discipling, between instruction and implementation, between being understanders of the Word and being doers of the Word. Throughout the history of the church, its growth in any generation has been vitally linked to the theology of that generation. It naturally follows that any renewal of church growth will only be significant to the extent it is properly related to sound theology. What are some appropriate planks in this theological platform?

The Biblical Base for the Platform

The biblical base for the platform of church growth evangelism is seen in the authority given Jesus Christ to launch the church and empower it to grow. The Greek word used in Matthew 28:18 for authority is *exousia,* and this authority gave Jesus the "supreme right to appoint to office: thence comes the great commission. It means the right to require obedience. It means the right to govern in both earth and heaven. Christ claims to be Lord of life. He has the right to command." [3]

In giving the disciples the Great Commission, Jesus supported them with His great authority. Only one with great authority could undergird such a great commission. The fact that Jesus had "all" authority means that He possessed every resource necessary for the advancement of the church. As D. A. Carson wrote, "Jesus' promotion to universal authority serves as an eschatological marker inaugurating the beginning of his universal mission." [4]

On the basis of this authority, "the Christian disciple is to carry out the great commission of the church." [5] It is doubtful that these early disciples would have even attempted such an enormous assignment had they not been assured that the authority of Jesus Christ undergirded their every effort. Not only was this authority the foundation, the platform for their ministry, it also was a strong motivation to do that ministry. G. E. Mendenhall wrote, "What was it that gave such an impetus to this movement so that from such a small beginning it became as the sands of the seashore? The answer is the authority of the living Christ." [6]

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[3] George A. Buttrick and Sherman E. Johnson, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew, The Interpreter's Bible,* ed. George A. Buttrick (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1951), 7:622.

[4] D. A. Carson, "Matthew," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary,* ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 8:595.

[5] Faiwell, Jerry, *Liberty Bible Commentary on the New Testament* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1978), 92.

[6] G. E. Mendenhall, "Missions," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible,* ed. George A. Buttrick (New York: Abingdon, 1963), 3:405.

This authority spoken of by Matthew (Matt. 28:18) was also referred to by Luke when he quoted Jesus, saying, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by his own authority" (Acts 1:7). While this refers specifically to God's sole authority over time, it has implications for the platform of church growth evangelism. While the disciples were curious about deadlines, Jesus was concerned with lifelines. As Richard Rackham wrote:

> Authority had been given to him to execute the judgment but not to know the time. And as he had come into the world not to satisfy curiosity but to give *life;* so he was sending his apostles not to utter predictions but to proclaim the gospel of salvation.[7]

The biblical base for the platform of church growth evangelism is also seen in the activities which were to occur "in my name" (Mark 16:17) and "in his name" (Luke 24:47). The passage in Mark seems to indicate that disciples who act in fulfillment of the commission will have their actions accompanied by the miraculous. "Aside from textual questions the emphasis in these final verses seems to be on the authority of Christ." [8] This is a reference to the same authority referred to by Matthew (Matt. 28:18) and by Luke (Acts 1:7).

The reference in Luke 24:47 indicates that the message proclaimed in the fulfillment of this commission should be done "in his name." "The preaching which takes place on the basis of this name, borrows the significance and authority from him in whose name and in whose commission it takes place." [9] The evangelistic growth of the *New* Testament church began and proceeds under the authority of Jesus Christ as we *fulfill* His commission "in his name."

Finally, the biblical base of the platform of church growth evangelism is found in the One who sent Jesus Christ to commission His disciples. Jesus Indicated "As the Father has sent Me, *I* also send YOU" (John 20:21). In each passage we have noted that the divine base for the platform of church growth evangelism has been divine authority. Likewise, here "the authority of the sender was united to the One being sent."[10]

As the Father sent Jesus into the world to redeem persons and gather them into the fellowship of His church, so we are sent to continue the evangelistic growth of that church. This responsibility as well as our relationship to Him, is seen in the Words of William Barclay:

> The sending out of the church by Jesus is paralleled to the sending out of Jesus by God, but no one can read the story of the fourth gospel without seeing that the relationship between Jesus and God Was Continually

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[7] Richard B. Rackham, *The Acts of the Apastl0s* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1964), 7.

[8] H, D. Speuce *Mark, The Plp/t Commentary* (New York and Toronto: Funk and Wagnalls Co., n.d.), 2:633.

[9] John Peter Lange, *Lange Commentary on the Holy ScrJpture* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1960), 8:400.

[10] Karl Heinrich Rengstorj', "Apostello," *Theologjs0g Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament,* ed. Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart: Verlag von W. Kohlhammer, *1935),* 1:403.

dependent upon Jesus' perfect obedience perfect submission, and perfect love. Therefore it follows that the church is *only* fit to be the messenger and the instrument *of Christ when* she perfectly loves him and perfectly obeys him.[11]

As Christ was entrusted with the authority of God for the establishment of the church, so we are entrusted with a similar authority for the continued expansion of His church. That authority is the biblical base for the platform of church growth evangelism.

The Divine Base of the Platform

Childhood birthdays were always a mixed blessing for me. On those days when my growth was recognize and celebrated *I* received presents and proper accolades I also endured the annual birthday spanking The dread intensified with each individual spank, for I knew that at the end of counting the years there would be One more spank, even harder than the rest, and then the words "one to grow on." It was that last "one to grow on" spank that always reminded me that growth was Continual and that there would be other celebrations of my growth. In a theological sense, God is our "One to grow on." His presence reminds us that growth is continual and that even on days when growth is not visible it is always potential.

All evangelistic growth begins with God. E. Y. Mullins's classic definition of God underscores this point:

> God is the supreme personal spirit; perfect in all His attributes; who is the source, support and end of the universe who guides it according to the wise, righteous and loving purpose revealed in Jesus Christ; who indwells in all things by His Holy Spirit, *seeking ever to transform them according to His own will and bring them to the goal of His kingdom.*[12]

Evangelistic church growth was God's plan from the beginning. It continues to be God's plan to "transform" to the ends of the earth. When God created us in His image, that creation placed within us an emptiness that can only be filled by a personal relationship with God. The psalmist expressed it thus, "As the deer pants for the water brooks, So my soul pants for thee, 0 God" (Ps. 42:1). The image is of a young deer desperately searching every possible source for the water that would quench his thirst. Envision that deer running frantically as his thirst intensifies. Imagine his panic as he realizes that time is of the essence. Then, suddenly, there is water. The water has been there all along, promised and waiting, but the deer had to find it for himself so it would be significant in his memory. Like the deer, we search for that one presence that can fill the void in our lives. When we find it, it is that ever-present, promised hope that God desires to live in and with His creation. Augustine said it this way, "Thou hast made us for thyself, Oh God, and our souls are restless until they find their rest in thee." God created within

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[11] William Barclay, *The Gospel of John* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, *1956),* 2:273.

[12] E. Y. Mullins, *The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Express ion* (Nashville: Baptist Sunday School Board, 1917), 214-215.

humans a void and then set them free to choose the filling of that void, with eternal hope that they would return to the God who created them.

The fact that God is the eternal Trinity speaks to His desire for evangelistic growth. Had God wanted simply to be our dictator and our judge, He could have done so without being three in one. The purpose of the Trinity was addressed by A. H. Strong:

> If God be absolutely and simply one, there can be no mediation or atonement, since between God and the most exalted creature the gulf is infinite. Christ cannot bring us nearer to God than he is himself Only one who **iS** God can reconcile us to God. So, too, only one who is God can purify our souls. A God who is only unity, but in whom is no plurality, may be our judge, but, so far as we can see, cannot be our Savior or our Sanctifier.[13]

Because God is Trinity, lie not only could create us in His image and set us free to make our choices but also can redeem us through the Son and walk with us through the Spirit. That which we know about God----that He creates communicates, acts, and anticipates response-indicates to us His vital interes*t* in His church growing evangelically.

The Personality Base of the Platform

The priority of the hymn writer is appropriate:

> The church's one foundation
> Is Jesus Christ her Lord;
> She is his flew creation,
> By Spirit and the Word
> From heaven he came and sought her
> To be his holy bride,
> With his own blood he bought her,
> And for her life he died.[14]

The church experiences evangelistic growth as it remains true to that portion of the platform that is represented by the person of Jesus Christ.

In Jesus' birth evangelistic intent was exhibited The genealogical accounts of Matthew and Luke record in the family line of— Jesus such notorious Sinners as David and Rabab, *implying* that Jesus did not come to this world to be isolated from sin but to offer redempti0 from it. The small crowd that gathered around the manger, among other things, was a "pre-picture" of

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[13] Augustus Hopkins Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1907), 350.

[14] "The Church's One Foundation," Samuel J. Stone, 1866. *Bpjjst Hymna?,* 1975 Edition (Nashville: Convention Press, 1975), 236.

the "all-ness" that will someday gather around the throne of God. Present were humble parents with royal blood in their veins, shepherds from Israel who were ordinary people doing an ordinary job, and later Wise Men, People of adventure and thought and science. Jesus Christ was born into this world to offer salvation to *all* people.

The way Jesus lived and taught, as well as His encounters with people, present to us an evangelistic profile. In the first place, Jesus was always prepared. There is no incident in the Gospels where Jesus was unprepared or ill prepared to share the good news with any person with whom He came in contact. No doubt part of that preparation was inherent in who He was, but part of it also was due to His own spiritual, emotional, and intellectual preparation.

In the second place, Jesus always began where the people were (i.e., with the obvious needs in their lives). Again, while part of this knowledge was divine, a portion of it must have been His sincere sensitivity to who people were and where they were in life. This stands in stark contrast to some modern methods of sharing the gospel which begin where we think people are, rather than where they actually are.

In the third place, Jesus moved from where people were to where He was. In other words, He started with their needs and moved them to His truth. In order to start where people are, we have to know where we are going to take them. Otherwise, we will get distracted along the way. Jesus knew the goal of His witnessing, thus He could begin with the needs of the person and move them to the truth of the gospel.

Finally, Jesus never approached any two persons the same way. While His methods are timeless and repeatable, His approaches were always unique. Each individual received a unique, tailor- made, specially designed presentation of the gospel based on that person's needs and His truth.

We are sometimes guilty of approaching everyone the same way in our presentation of the gospel. Jesus identified the uniqueness in a person and acknowledged it by beginning at that point with His approach. Whether His presentations of the gospel came through His encounters, His teaching, His discipling, or through the performance of miracles, Jesus remained true to His purpose "that they might have life, and might have it abundantly" (John 10:10).

Similarly, the death of Jesus indicates evangelistic intent. His death may be described by the word *propitiation,* appeasing the wrath of God so that justice and holiness will be satisfied and sin can be forgiven (Rom. 3:25; 1 John 2:2; 4:10). His death may be described by the word *redemption* delivering from the bondage of sin and releasing to new freedom by the sacrifice of the Redeemed One (Rom. 3:24; Gal. 3:13; Eph. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:18-19). His death may be described by the word *Justification* a judicial act of God based on the work of Christ through Which righteous is imputed to the sinner and received by faith, causing the sinner to be absolved from sin, released from its penalty, and restored to righteousness (Acts 13:38-39; Rom. 3:24-26; *4:5-8).* His death on the cross may be described by the word *reconciliation* changing of the relationship between humans and God based on a changed status of the person through the redemptive work performed by Christ (Acts 10:43; 2 Cor. *5:18-19;* Eph. 2:16).

In an art gallery in France there is a Picture of a Young soldier lying face down in the snow with his arms Outstretched. The story behind the Picture is significant. The communication line from the battle to the headquarters had been Severed by enemy fire. Because the battle was going badly Without communication this Young soldier ran out into the midst of that fire, taking hold of One end of the communication line in his right hand, the other end of the communication line in his left hand, and, for just a brief period of time became a living Conductor between the two so that communication could be restored and the battle won. The one word description under the Painting is the word *Through.* In a far greater way Jesus Christ came into the world in the midst of enemy fire. Communication between God and man had been distorted By His death on the cross, Jesus was symbolically reaching out with One hand to take hold of God and with the other hand to take hold of man. *In* His own death He became a living Conductor between the two.

Likewise, the resurrection of Jesus indicates an evange1istic intent through His deity. Had He remained dead, redemption could not have been finalized. Thus the resurrection of Jesus demonstrates the completion of His redemptive work upon the earth. He is now able to live in, with, and through His followers and offer to them the ultimate triumph of the believer eternal life. Prior to His resurrection, Jesus had demonstrated this evangelistic intent by saying to His disciples, "Because I live You shall live also" (John 14:19).

The Human Base of the Platform

Evangelism is a necessity because of the human situation. Findley Edge has written:

> The biblical doctrine of man differs from all other views of man in two significant respects; namely, in the heights to which it raises man as a creature made in the image of God and in the depths to which it plunges man as a result of sin.[15]

The first two chapters of Genesis tell us that mail was created in the image of God as the climactic act of all creation and that he was made to have fellowship with God. The third chapter of Genesis tells us that man disobeyed God and fell from God's favor. He yielded to the temptation offered by Satan. This caused an immediate effect of man being out of God's perfect creation, His perfect will, and His perfect garden. It created a far-reaching effect of man being alienated from God and needing redemption and restoration.

The nature of man then is that he is dependent upon God and responsible to God (Matt. 4:4; Rom. 14:12; Gen. 1:28; Rev. 7:9-12; 1 John *1:5-7;* 2:9-10; Rom. *5:12).* Man's nature is further seen in the fact that he does not always appear to be in the image of God
(Rom. 1:28-32; 3:23; 7:14-20; 8:22-25).

This nature of man was described by A. H. Strong when he wrote:

It was the nature of man, when he first came from the hand of God, to fear, love and trust

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[15] Findley B. Edge, *A Quest for Vitality in Religion* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1963), 134.

God above all things. This tendency toward God has been lost; sin has altered man's innermost nature. In place of this bent toward God there is a fearful bent toward evil.[16]

However, there is within the nature of man the potential for restoration to God (Luke 24:27; John 3:3; 2 Cor. 5:17; 1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3; Rom. 8:29). The future promises that there will be a brotherhood of man as people come from "every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (Rev. 5:9) and yield to the lordship of Christ, every knee bowing and every tongue confessing that he is Lord (see Phil. 2:10; Isa. 45:23; Rom. 14:11).

Involved in the human base of this platform is the doctrine of sin. By definition there are several Hebrew Words for sin which carry with them the Concepts of crookedness and violence and foolishness, but the basic word both in Hebrew and Greek for sin means to miss the mark. The idea is that of missing a target, the target being the will and character of God. To miss it is to come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23).

Sin was regarded by Kierkegaard as man using his freedom to find security in some human, finite thing rather than relying totally upon God. According to Herschel H. Hobbs, sin is "rebellion against God's authority."[17] Sin then, in essence, is man using his "rights" wrongly. The results of sin are numerous. Sin alienates one from God (Rom. 8:7; Gen. 3:8 if; Rom. 1:18-32). Sin degrades the sinner (Rom. 14:7; Eph. 4:17-19). The addition, sin disrupts social relations (Eph. 2:11 if). Likewise, sin brings about suffering (Gen. 3:19; Rom. 8:18-22; 2 Pet. 3:13). Finally, sin brings death (Gen. 2:17; Rom. 6:23,21. 18:6).

But as terrible as sin is, it offers great Opportunities both to God and to man. To God it offers the Opportunity of extending His grace toward people. To people it offers the Opportunity of accepting grace from God. The Purpose of salvation is redemption. The trading in of the old person for the new person. This is similar to the way you would trade in a book of Savings stamps at a "Redemption Center" for something new and of greater value. Just as you "redeemed" your savings stamps so you were "redeemed" in Christ. This redemption brings about your salvation from sin. In the words of Ben Campbell Johnson:

> The meaning of this divine participation was redemption In Jesus Christ, God came to us and showed us the divine nature; in the suffering and death of Christ, God made clear the extent of divine love; in the resurrection of Christ, God triumphed over sin, evil, death and all that death implies.[18]

The nature of salvation is forgive55 and reunion with Christ. This results in new life in Christ. The conditions of salvation are repentance (Heb 11:6• John 3:16; Rom *4:5)* and faith (Matt. 3:2; 4:17; Luke 24:47; Acts 2:3grn 17:30; 20:21). The combination of repentance and faith is placed in proper perspective by W. T. Conner:

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[16] Strong, 637.

[17] Herschel H. Hobbs, *Fundamentals of Our Faith* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1960), *65.*

[18] Ben Campbell Johnson, "Toward a Theology of Evange1j5 " *The Christian Ministry* (Jan-Feb 1988): 11.

> Each implies the other. Neither is possible without the other. At the same time and in the same act that one turns from sin, he turns to Christ . . . repentance and faith are not two acts or moral attitudes. They are two aspects of one act or attitude.[19]

The assurance of salvation is the certainty of God's promise. God has never broken one of His promises. There is absolutely no reason to believe that in the future God will break a promise. Thus when He offers salvation and a person repents and turns in faith to Christ, salvation is assured. The redeemed ones then become part of the congregation of believers, providing the final plank in the theological platform.

The Congregational Base of the Platform

Evangelism is plural. While that statement may not have validity in an English grammar classroom, it certainly has validity in a theology classroom. The Bible says, "We are witnesses to these things . . . we and the Holy Spirit, who is God's gift to those who obey him" (Acts *5:32,* GNB). Look at the phrase "we are witnesses." Notice the individual nature of the gospel up to a certain point: God, THE Father, sent His ONLY Son to purchase redemption for each INDIVIDUAL person so that we might come SINGULARLY to a PERSONAL faith in Him. Once that faith is entered into, the plural nature begins as we become a part of the FAMILY of God and as "we are witnesses to these things."

The nature of the church may be seen in the fact that it was a product of evangelism. The witness of the early disciples of Christ brought into the faith people who eventually established local congregations of believers. The church is universal in the sense that all believers in Christ throughout the ages are part of His church. The church is also local in the sense that there is a visible operation of one part of the universal church at one point in time in one location. The Greek word for church, *ekklesia,* is used one hundred fifteen times in the New Testament, and at least ninety-two of these references are to the local church The fact that God intended *for* His universal church to be united is implied by the numerous biblical references to the unity of the body of Christ (Rorn 12:4 *if).*

According to the commission of our resurrected Lord to His disciples they were to make other disciples. In the words of C. B. Autrey, "Evangelism is the instrument for the task of the church."[20] Gene Getz reminds us that the church "exists to carry out two foundational (to make disciples) and *edification (*to teach them).[21]

This evangelistic purpose is seen more fully in the various analogies used to describe the church. Paul depicted the church as the "body of Christ" and said that we are to be about the business of building up that body. One builds up a body both internally and externally so as we use the gifts God has given us, we are not only to minister to each other within the body of Christ

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[19] W. T. Conner, Christian Doctrine (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1937), 187.

[20] C. E. Autrey, *The Theology of Evangeljs* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1966), 13-14.

[21] Gene C. Getz, *Sharpening the Focus of the Church* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1984), 48.

but to reach out beyond the body of Christ to bear Witness to those on the Outside (Eph. 1:22-23.4.15).

John described the church as the "bride of Christ" (John 3:29). A bride is intensely proud of her bridegroom Prior to the wedding she normally *takes* him home to show him off to her friends. Following the Wedding, visits are made to friends to introduce the bridegroom. The bride feels that the bridegro0 is Worthy of her Proclamation; therefore, she tells everyone. So it is with the bride of Christ. We should be correspondingly proud of the bridegro0 and eager to proclaim Him to everyone. This analogy of the bride also lends an intimacy to the church's relationship to her Lord. "Christ intends this intimacy with the church so that he may continue to do through this historical community what he began in his particular, personal existence."[22]

In writing to Timothy, Paul described the church as the "pillar and Support of the truth" (1 Tim. *3:15,* GNB). One who has found the truth not only wants to Support and undergird it but naturally wants to share that truth. Truth by its very nature is unselfish and designed to be shared with others.

The church today is not perfect, nor has *it* ever been. The church in Corinth was ensnared in immorality and jealousy. The Church in Galatia was caught in a doctrinal downspin. *The* church in Ephesus was headed into pre-Christian practices. The church in Pergamum tolerated false teachings. The church at Thyatira allowed immoral practices. The church at Sardis was infected with internal spiritual decay. The church at Philadelphia displayed little power. The church at Laodicea had grown apathetic. Though the church from the first Christian century to the twentieth has been blemished with imperfections, its purpose has remained the same. The purpose of the church, while sometimes included, remains the proclamation of the good news and the making of disciples to the ends of the earth. Kent Hunter of the Church Growth Center in Corunna, Indiana, wrote:

> People aren't growing in discipleship, the health of the church is poor, there is little effective outreach to the unchurched, and the vision of the Great Commission is clouded . . . however, one of God's specialties is resurrection! He resurrected Jesus on that glorious Easter dawn. He resurrects the faith in people touched anew by the gospel. Even more, he resurrects churches! [23]

Conclusion

Platforms are not built to exist alone. Platforms are those structures on which we stand, walk, work, build, and live. Likewise, theology is not meant to exist alone; on these doctrines we build and grow the church of Jesus Christ. Rising from this theological platform as pillars and guides are some principles of church growth evangelism.

Chapter 2: The Principles for Church Growth

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[22] Johnson, 12.

[23] Kent R. Hunter, "Membership Integrity: The Body of Christ with a Backbone," *Church Growth.. State of the Art,* ed. C. Peter Wagner (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1986), 91.

Growth is accomplished best when certain proven principles are followed. To ignore these principles, or even to make light of them, is to leave oneself open to faulty growth, unacceptable harvest, or embarrassing failure. Likewise, in church growth there are proven biblical and historical principles that should be heeded. To ignore them is to ask for difficulty in the growth process. The most important of these principles are found in God's Word.

The Biblical Base for Church Growth

Matthew's account of the Great Commission contains the primary source for investigating the biblical base of principles for church growth evangelism. After commissioning His followers to make disciples of all the nations, Jesus instructed them to teach these new disciples, "all that I commanded you" (Matt. 28:20). To understand these "commands" is to gain insight into the biblical principles of church growth evangelism. These principles relate primarily to growth—both individual and corporate.

As we look at principles for church growth evangelism, we must keep in mind that "the totality of Christ's teaching is to be taught, becoming the rule of faith and practice." [24] Our faithful obedience to and teaching of that which our Lord "commanded" us will result in the growth of His church. Whether we are seeking to understand His teachings or teach them to others, the emphasis must always be on obedience. We are ever to be "doers of the word" (Jas. 1:22).

We who follow Jesus' commands and pass them on to others must understand that "he enlists soldiers that he may train them up for his service to observe what Christ has commanded. Due obedience to the commands of Christ requires a diligent observation."[25] Further, we must understand that "He sends out the apostles with this provision, that they do not obtrude their own opinions, but purely and faithfully pass down what He himself commanded." [26] As we seek to grow an evangelistic church, we are limited to principles which find their base in the "commands" of our Lord. These commands, as they translate into principles, "must be carefully passed on to each new generation. Failure to do so means failure to disciple the world."[27] Thus, being careful to couch and confine our thinking to that which finds its base in the commands of our Lord, we are ready to look at some principles of church growth evangelism.

Principles of Growth and Death in Churches

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[24] Alexander B. Bruce, *The Synoptic Gospels, Expositor's Greek New Testament,* ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., *1953),* 1:340.

[25] Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary in One Volume* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Co., 1967), 1362.

[26] John Calvin, *A Harmony of the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Calvin New Testament Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1980), 3:255.

[27] D. A. Carson, "Matthew," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary,* ed. Frank E. Gaebelejn (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Co., 1984), *8:599.*

Research demonstrates that, generally speaking, there are four ways that churches grow.[28] The first category of growth is *internal growth.* This is growth that cannot be measured in numbers; it is growth in depth and quality. It is the spiritual growth that comes through the discipling process and the teaching program of the church. While it often accompanies numerical growth, it may exist in a church that is not growing numerically. For this reason, even the smallest church, in' an area where little if any growth is possible, can still grow internally and thus experience church growth.

The second general category of growth is *expansion growth.* This addition of new members to the church comes about in three ways. There is first of all biological expansion (i.e., growing by adding children from the church families to the membership of the church). In most evangelical churches, this takes place upon the baptism of the child. A second kind of expansion growth is through transfer expansion (i.e, adding a member of another congregation to your congregation). In most evangelical churches this takes place by transfer of "church letter" or in some cases by statement of previous membership in a church of like faith and order.

The third kind of expansion growth for churches is conversion expansion (i.e., adding people to church membership who were previously non-Christian). In most evangelical churches this is done on a public profession of faith in Christ and by an affirming vote of the congregation. This third type of expansion should be the priority of a truly evangelistic church.

Each year the *Baptist Standard* (newspaper of the Baptist General Convention of Texas) publishes a list of Baptist churches in Texas which baptized more than 100 persons in the last church year. In 1986 *I* sent a survey to each of these churches. Fifty-three churches responded, and their answers produced some interesting statistics. While more than one category was checked by most pastors, it is interesting that 45 percent of the churches indicated that a significant area of baptisms for them would be "children raised in your church," in other words, biological expansion. Nineteen percent Indicated a significant portion of their baptisms would be "youth raised in your church," likewise biological expansion. Thirty percent indicated a significant portion of the baptisms would be "adults transferring from other denominations by baptism," or transfer expansion. Only 38 percent of the churches responding indicated they had significant growth from "adults not transferring from other denominations" In other words, conversion expansion among adults was rather low among the leading Southern Baptist churches in Texas in baptisms during the 1986 church year. Although this Survey was certainly not done well enough or widely enough (conducted over a large enough area, or as thoroughly as Possible) to merit any major conclusions its results indicate that churches are not growing like they should be through conversion expansion. While we are doing an acceptable job leading persons to Christ who already have some contact with our church, we are doing a less than acceptable job evangelizing those persons who have no natural or family ties to our churches.

The third category of growth is *extension growth* (i.e., growth that comes by the starting of new missions or chapels). Many times these new missions or chapels will reach people for Jesus Christ who cannot be reached by existing congregation.

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[28] For further study, read Donald McGavran and George C. Hunter, *Church Growth. Strategies That Work* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1980).

A fourth category is *bridging growth* (i.e., the starting of congregations in other countries and languages). This type of growth would be geographically removed from the mother church. In some denominations this is done through a cooperative program of financial support and through mission agencies, while other churches prefer to support such work directly through the local church.

There are three major dangers to be avoided in looking at these categories. The first danger would be expansion growth without internal growth. Adding numbers without deepening of faith creates a monster. When a plant grows too large for its roots, it falls. A similar outcome awaits the church that grows too large numerically for its spiritual foundation.

A second danger arises when a church depends on expansion growth by biological and transfer expansion alone. In such a church, the only genuine professions of faith are being made by persons who are already affiliated in some way with the church, either through family ties or some in-church organization membership. I know of a church that baptizes approximately fifty persons a year while averaging over one thousand in their Sunday morning Bible study. Among these fifty baptisms a year are children reared in the church, yet this church has been listed as one of the ten fastest growing churches in its denomination. The church not only is lacking in evangelistic zeal; it is content to grow by ways other than conversion expansion.

The third danger is to experience expansion growth, and perhaps internal growth, in the local congregation, but have no concern for bridging growth. This danger shortens the vision of the church, eliminating all areas outside the local church field. Where vision is short, there will eventually be a lack of church growth.

When illness strikes a previously growing person, the growth of that person wanes, sometimes even to the point of death. A similar situation exists in the lives of churches. On a videotape series entitled, "Your Church Can Grow," Peter Wagner of Fuller Theological Seminary lists eight diseases of the church, the first two of which are terminal. A brief summary of this list follows.[29]

Ethnikitis is the number-one killer of churches today. It is a disease of changing neighborhoods, most frequently found in the urban setting.

Old age, a second terminal disease, takes place not necessarily when the members get older but when the people begin to move away and no one else moves in. This disease occurs mostly in rural areas.

The disease of *people blindness is* the inability of members to understand the cultural gap between themselves and those whom they are trying to reach for Christ.

Hypercooperat ion is based on the idea that the more cooperative a church is with other denominations the more it will grow. This is a false premise and does not normally lead to growth.

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[29] C. Peter Wagner, "Your Church Can Grow," Part I (Videotape) (Ventura, CA: Gospel Light Publications, 1984).

Koinonitug is a disease which does not allow new people into the fellowship of the church. The church becomes ingrown. This disease is also known as "fellowship inflammation.

Sociological strangulation is a disease of a growing church. It is the inability of the physical facilities to handle the increasing numbers of people. It normally strikes in the area of the parking lot or the worship center.

Arrested spiritual development is a disease where the members are not growing spiritually. The Solution or cure for this disease is spiritual renewal, sometimes referred to as revival.

Saint John s' *syndrome* is a disease of a second generation church, a church that is twenty to thirty years of age. At this point the level of commitment begins to decline when original members are replaced by new members who do not have the same sense of heritage.

These diseases often indicate that a church has ceased to grow, or will soon cease to grow, and may indicate that a church is about to experience death. Churches really do die. Most often, those churches are not pronounced dead nor is there a burial. They just continue to exist in a death-like state.

Why would one include a section on death in a book about growth? Two experiences during my student days in seminary are worth remembering at this point. I remember a chapel message by J W. MacGorman entitled "Dead Churches and Delayed Funerals." I also remember my missions professor, Cal Guy, quoting someone else in saying "Any way you look at it, death is better buried than *it* is propped up." Hollis L. Green has written an entire book on five reasons churches die. Some of his ideas follow. [30]

Churches begin the death process when they overly prioritize their program. Even in a church of average size, it is Possible for a family of five to have an automobile parked on the church parking lot every day of the week. Perhaps we are spending so much time at the church building that we have little time left for being the church in the workplace. Thus, our field of witness becomes limited by the physical facilities of our faith, and, "Christianity has lost its Sunday punch because the first day of the week has become the psychological last day."[31]

Churches begin the death process when they employ or continue to tolerate ineffective staff members. In most situations this be gins with the pastor. Churches normally do not grow beyond the pastor's own growth. If the pastor is dying spiritually, the church will be dying spiritually. If the pastor is no evangelistic, the church will be no evangelistic. There will be exceptions, but the general rule will be that the church will follow its pastor's leader ship, or lack of it. In larger churches, this same principle would apply to areas of the church assigned to ineffective staff members; for instance, a youth program could die because of an ineffective youth minister.

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[30] Hollis L. Green, *Why Churches Die* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, Inc., 1972).
[31] Green, 14.

Churches begin the death process when they fail to realize the importance of organizational structure. Neither pure doctrine nor- sound theology by themselves will guarantee the growth of a church. There are basic organizational principles for growth that must be followed, adapted, or discarded and replaced with more appropriate principles. Failure to realize and implement this will be an invitation for the death process to begin.

Churches begin to die when fellowship becomes an end within itself. It may well be that without meaningful fellowship a church will die, but it is also a fact that when fellowship's end is more fellowship, the church is almost dead. That kind of fellowship gradually decreases the circle of interest until there is no vision of people outside that circle. Eventually, the circle itself becomes nonexistent.

Churches begin the death process when they continually ignore any type of spiritual renewal or revival. Our infatuation with the traditional is good as long as traditional methods make the church grow. When the traditional has ceased to be of value, it needs to be properly discarded and replaced with new, innovative approaches. Most churches would never destroy an established program. We have subtly developed a more compassionate way to replace a non-effective program. We simply change its name and Continue to do the same things. Most churches that have ceased to grow need a renewal, not of former programs but of former spiritual Commitment.

A direct "spin-off" of dying churches is the fact that the "churches to population ratio in America is declining. In 1900 there were twenty seven churches for every 10,000 Americans. In 1950 there were seventeen churches for every 10,000 people. Today there are twelve churches for every 10,000 Americans . . . and the decline continues! Add to this the estimate that churches lose *2,765,000* people to secularism and nominalism each year, and between *3,500* and 4,000 churches die during that same period.[32]

Principles of Growing an Evangelistic Church

Let us turn from a discussion of illness and death to a discussion of life. The liveliest principle of church growth evangelism today is no doubt the homogenous unit (people group) principle. Donald McGavran first verbalized this idea while serving as a missionary in India. He became aware of the fact that "societies were conscious of themselves as distinct peoples." [33]

McGavran further explained:

The faith spreads most naturally and contagiously along the lines of the social network of living Christians, especially new Christians. Receptive, undiscipled men and women usually receive the Possibility when the

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[32] "The Key to Effective Evangelism," *The Win Am Growth Report, 15:1.*

[33] McGayran and Hunter, 30.

invitation is extended to them from credible Christian friends, relatives, neighbors, and fellow workers from within their social web.[34]

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.

McGavran's observation not only has biblical basis but finds Support in recent Surveys. A Gallup survey recently revealed that 58 percent of regular churchgoers began going when invited by someone they knew. Conversely, 63 percent of those who did not church at all reported that none of their friends had invited them. A survey of 4,000 converts on the West Coast done by the Institute for American Church Growth showed that 70-80 percent of these new converts attended church because of "friends and/or relatives." Lyle R. Schaller's research asked the question: "Why are you in this church rather than some other?" Between 66 and *75* percent gave friendship or kinship responses.

The homogeneous unit principle has further support from a Church Growth America survey which interviewed 720 people. Two hundred forty were new Christians; 240 were persons who had joined the church but had dropped out within the first year, and 240 were presented with the gospel but made no decisions. Each was asked to identify the person who presented the gospel to them as "friend," "salesman," or "teacher." Of the new converts still in the church, 94 percent identified that person as a "friend." Of the 240 persons who had joined a church but dropped out, 71 percent identified the person presenting them the gospel as a "salesman." Of the 240 who made no decision, 84 percent described their presenter of the gospel as a "teacher." Obviously, the gospel was received more readily from those who were identified as friends.

A recent survey conducted among Oklahoma Baptists indicated that 79 percent of 10,000 people answered a survey question: "What was responsible for your coming to your church?" with the answer "A friend or relative invited me."

There is a danger, however, in the homogeneous unit principle. A word of caution is given best by Ebbie Smith who wrote: "The homogeneous unit idea must be a strategy, never a principle. Principles are absolute. Strategies are means to an end and can be adapted or discarded." [35]

With this perspective in mind, the homogenous idea could be discarded where it was not effective, or where it was no longer desired as a part of the overall strategy of a church. Some interpret the homogeneous unit idea as being contrary to the New Testament principle of proclaiming the good news to all peoples. Three facts must be remembered.

First, the church has not categorized people. Society has categorized people into social groups, racial groups, economic groups, ethnic groups, Political groups, peer groups, age groups,

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[34] Ibid.

[35] Ebbie C. Smith, *Balanced Church Growth* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1984), 21.

etc. The fact that all people identify with some group or groups is something the church cannot ignore. If people are reached best in their groups, then this is a strategy we must consider.

A second fact to remember is that all groups of people will be reached best when all groups of people are reaching. My former professor and present colleague, Roy Fish, has proposed through the years to his evangelism classes at Southwestern Seminary the idea of "total penetration by total participation" If we can reach all types of people with the gospel by equipping all types of people to reach out with the gospel, then this is a strategy we must consider.

Third, the homogeneous idea will be best understood when it is viewed from the perspective of the nonbeliever. Hopefully, the longer One is a Christian, the more committed he or she is to the brotherhood of all humankind and the unity of God's people. However, the nonbeliever may not have that concept in mind and perhaps will only listen when a trusted friend with a similar lifestyle or social identification presents the gospel to them.

In addition to the homogeneous unit principle, another principle worthy of consideration and application is that of the motivation of the church for growth. There are obviously some poor methods of motivation that have been used in the past. Lyle Schaller says: "Perhaps the most effective means of creating passivity in a congregation is to use guilt as the basic motivating force, but guilt usually leads first to agitated activity followed next by hostility and finally by passivity."[36]

Somewhat different, yet similar, is motivation that makes people feel guilty because they refrained from doing something that was their "Christian duty." The church leader who instructs the congregation to "take several prospect cards on your way out of the building and visit the people on your way home today" may well have prospect cards lying unused on coffee tables in the homes of church members all over the community.

It seems that the proper theological motivation for sharing the gospel grows out of our response to what Christ has done for us. Michael Green reports that a large number of second century Christians were evangelistic "because of the overwhelming experience of love of God which they had received through Jesus Christ." [37]

This motivation must be complemented by the understanding that a loving God has commanded us through His Son to be His witnesses. While this is a command, it is a command from a loving Father.

Practically speaking, church members are motivated to assist in growth programs when they are confronted with the facts. Apathy usually sets in when we begin spending too much time thinking about the way things "used to be"—which, in fact, is seldom the way they really were. Nostalgia may lead to a distorted view of present conditions. In churches where I lead growth seminars I always take with me a computer printout of the latest demographic material from that

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[36] Lyle E. Schafler, "The Passive Church," *The Clergy Journal, 54* (July 1978).

[37] Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Bercjmans Publishing Co., 1970), 236.

church field. As I share the information, invariably someone will deny that the facts are true, yet these well- documented facts are true and when properly understood can be great motivating factors for church members.

Likewise, persons involved in evangelistic growth need the support of other Christians. Jesus told His disciples that as they witnessed, they would be like "sheep among wolves" (Matt. 10:16, NIV). In that kind of setting a strong support system is needed. From any perspective, consistent and continual affirmation is better than an appreciation dinner once a year.

Still another principle of church growth involves equipping the laity for witness and ministry. The number of laypersons who can be adequately equipped is a matter of debate. Some believe the only goal should be equipping every church member to witness. Others take a more practical approach and estimate that 10 percent of those present on Sunday morning for worship could be adequately equipped in witness and ministry. Still others indicate that 20 percent of the congregation will do 80 percent of the work and stress that the key is to "get the best from the best."

The idea that the laity must be equipped is underlined by a recent study by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board which determined that if the 3,700 missionaries employed by the Home Mission Board were to win one person per day to Jesus Christ every day of the year it would still take 100 years for them to reach all the non-Christians in the U.S [38]

The same agency estimated that if the 33,000 active Southern Baptist pastors were to win one person each day to faith in Christ, it would take twelve years and 120 days to reach the estimated 163 million lost people in America. By the end of that time there would be at least 20 million more lost people in America, requiring another two years to evangelize at that rate.[39]

Obviously then, the laity must be equipped to evangelize nonbelievers. The task is not as easy as one might think, for in today's complex world, the average Occupation alone requires that the worker learn, assimilate and apply twenty four times as much information as he or she did a decade ago, a fact shared by *U S. News and World Report* in a recent issue. In this kind of complex world it is difficult, but not impossible to equip Christian laity to share the good news of Jesus Christ with a non-Christian world.

To fail to equip the laity because of the problems, or to under- equip them because of the complexities is to ask for difficulty. Alice in Wonderland spoke words befitting a theologian when she said "If you don't know where you are going, any path will get you there."

We must set challenging, yet attainable, goals in equipping the laity to witness. We ought to set numerical goals without fear of failure. "Many evangelistic campaigns are from the start doomed because those who planned them also planned that the measure of Success will not be the number found."[40]

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[38] "Winning America to Christ Cannot Be Done by Missionaries Alone," *Research Digest,* 3, 10 (1986): 3.

[39] To Reach the Lost in the U.S. What If. . ." *Research Digest, 9* (1987): 4.

[40] McGavran and Hunter, *75-76.*

Many times the failure to set adequate goals is a result of a failure to dream realistically. Win Am lists nine reasons why we reject a dream:

1. *There something wrong with it.* Something wrong can be found with every dream.
2. *You won't get the credit.* God can do tremendous things through people who don't care who gets the credit.
3. *It s' impossible.* Every great dream is impossible.
4. *Your mind is already made up.*
5. *You don't presently have the people, power, money, or muscle to pull it off*
6. *It will create conflict.*
7. *You've never done it that way before.*
8. *It might fail.*
9. *It might succeed.* Reaching a dream will mean new challenges, new problems, the need for a new dream.[41]

We should plan our equipping of the laity to such extent and with such goals in mind that if God chooses not to bless it, our efforts will fail.

Principles of Growth in Small and New Churches

There are particular principles that are applicable to growth in a small church because small churches find it monumentally difficult to grow. Carl Dudley reminds us, "A small church cannot grow in membership without giving up its most precious appeal, its intimacy."[42] In the second church I pastored there was great resistance to the principles of growth that I learned in seminary. I tried to model outreach for them. I led a husband and wife to join our church, but there were actually negative votes against the husband because of his past reputation in the community. I tried the principle of multiplying the membership by dividing the cells in the church (for Southern Baptists that is understood as splitting the Sunday School classes), but every time I tried to split the adult Sunday School class, all the adults kept going to the class taught by Mr. E. B. Birdwell. Everyone knew that he was the closest thing to a Bible scholar that the church had to offer. Only four church members, plus this pastor, participated in a Sunday afternoon community-wide survey. Even though we discovered new people in the community, some of the old-timers did not believe it. I left the church after my tenure as pastor with the same in attendance in Sunday School as when I arrived. Approximately twenty years later I was back for a reunion and discovered that while the faces had changed, the church was still averaging the same number in Sunday School. Small churches grow with great difficulty, but they can grow.

When all attempts to adapt, modify, and apply the principles of church growth to the small church have failed, the small church can still grow through extension growth and bridging growth. The pastor of a small church would be well advised to plant in the people a vision of peoples beyond their own community. Small churches can experience the excitement of seeing

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[41] "Don't Reject a Dream Just Because." *The Win Am Growth Report,* 18:3,

[42] Carl S. Dudley, *Making the Small Church Effective* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1978), 49.

other churches grow through their support and encouragement even though their own congregation may not be able or have the desire to grow.

Related to the difficulty of growth in small churches is the principle of starting a new church. Beginning a new congregation is especially productive in developing suburban areas where new homes have surrounded old, rural churches. The members of those older churches perhaps see the newcomers as a threat generally and may see them as a threat if they joined their small churches. While the small churches may not desire new members, they could easily, by cooperative efforts, help start a new church which would appeal to the new residents of the community.

New churches are necessary because people move into new homes. Many of those new homes are in new housing developments with no church in the immediate vicinity. In 1984, 39 million Americans (17 percent of the U. S. Population) moved from one residence to another.[43] The average adult American now moves thirteen times in his adult life. When one moves to a new home, one is of the mind-set to look for new things. A new church could be very appealing to someone living in a new home.

New churches are needed because:

> Studies have shown that 60.80% of the new adult members of new congregation8 are persons who were not actively involved in the life of any worshiping congregation immediately prior to joining that *new* congregation . . . new Christians as well as young adults born since 1940 are found in disproportionately larger numbers in new missions than in the older churches.[44]

One who is interested in starting a new church would be well advised to study the principles of church growth that apply directly to church starting.[45]

There are several apparent barriers as small and/or new churches begin to grow. The most formidable barrier arises when attendance reaches the level of 200 regular adult attenders. Most churches never grow past this barrier. It is estimated that 80 to 85 percent of the churches in the world are under 200 in regular adult attenders. The problems in passing this barrier begin when a church reaches approximately 150 regular adult attenders and is not conquered until the church begins to average 250 regular adult attenders.[46]

Whatever principles are employed to assist in the growth of a church, one must pay particular attention to a fourfold balance.

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[43] "Geographical Mobility Affected 39 Million in 1984," *Research Digest,* 9, 1 (1987): 3.

[44] Lyle E. Schaller, "Why Start New Churches?" *The Circuit Rider* (May 1979): 3.

[45] For further information on starting new churches, see the following books: Charles Brock, *The Principles and Practices of indigenous Church Planting* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1981); Charles L. Chancy, *Church Planting at the End of the Twentieth Century* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1982); Jack Redford, *Planting New Churches* (Nashville: Broaciman Press, 1978); David *3.* Hasselgrave, *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House).

[46] For further information the Fuller Institute of Evangelism and Church Growth in Pasadena, California has a seminar entitled "Breaking the 200 Barrier."

Churches need to grow in spiritual depth through the education and proclamation programs of that church.

Churches need to grow in evangelistic zeal that focuses on the community surrounding the church.

Churches need to grow through equipping the laity in witness and ministry to nonbelievers.

Churches need to grow through increased vision of those who reside outside the confines of their church field, even to the ends of the earth.

Characteristics of Growth Principles

Let us look in this section at four different sources of characteristics of growing churches. In their book Ten Steps for Church Growth Donald McGavran and Win Am list the following characteristics of growing churches:

1. Growing churches have discovered universal church growth principles and have applied them properly.
2. Growing churches respect biblical principles.
3. Growing churches yield to God's unswerving purpose—to save all mankind.
4. Growing churches give priority to evangelism.
5. Growing churches rightly discern the body of Christ.
6. Growing churches rightly discern their communities.
7. Growing churches find new groups and ways to disciple people.
8. Growing churches reproduce through planned parenthood—planting new churches.
9. Growing churches structure for growth through the organization of the church.
10. Growing churches risk for growth—venturing out to do what God wants done. [47]

A second list of church growth characteristics comes from a recent study by a Methodist bishop's committee of seventy pastors from small and large churches across the United States. This study cited several characteristics of growing United Methodist churches:

1. Vibrant worship: "Give them something they can hold on to."
2. Dynamic pastor: "Certain ministers had growth wherever they went."
3. Singable music.
4. Strong lay leadership.
5. A spirit of warmth: greeters and name tags.
6. Small group opportunities: "A must for building relation.. ships and a sense of belonging."
7. Strong education programs: "Don't bring them in and forget them."

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[47] Donald McGavran and Winfield Am, *Ten Steps to Church Growth* (San Francisco: Harper and Row Publishers, 1977).

8. Good location and Size: "Do you want a 7-11 church with limited opportunities, or a Wal-Mart church with multiple ministries." [48]

To encourage and develop these characteristics, the bishop's committee also recommended that every seminary be required to have a department of evangelism. The committee said, "Seminaries are producing clinical pastors who are learning by trial and error."[49]

The third list of characteristics comes from Pastor Dan Bauman of the 3,400-member College Avenue Baptist Church in San Diego, California. During a recent summer, Bauman combined his vacation with a sabbatical study leave and took a firsthand look at some of America's most successful churches. During his travels, Bauman interviewed pastors and church members alike, took notes during sermons, asked questions of church leaders, measured the spiritual environment and evaluated church priorities. In a description of what he calls "the healthy church" Bauman lists the following:

1. It is a praising place.
2. It is a praying place.
3. It knows where it is going.
4. It cares for the world.
5. It is involved in equipping.
6. It is led by a small core of committed leaders.
7. It is a place of encouragement.

Bauman also states that the most successful churches visited were characterized by:

1. Friendships and personal relationships,
2. An emphasis on small groups.
3. The use of creative alternatives in outreach.[50]

The final list of characteristics comes from a Southern Baptist source. This study reports:

Fastest growing Southern Baptist churches, when compared to other SBC churches, are more likely to be:

1. Located in densely populated suburban areas,
2. Located in areas growing in population,
3. Located in areas that are increasing economically,
4. Located in areas populated by married adults with children,
5. Young churches (less than 10 years since organized),
6. Pastored by men who have longer than average tenure,
7. Pastored by men who are fulltime rather than bivocational,

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[48] "United Methodist Seek to Reverse Membership Losses," *The Dallas Morning News,* May 1986, 56a.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Edward E. Plowman,"On the Road and in the Pew with Dan Bauman," *National and International Religion Report,* 1 (30 Nov. 1987): 7.

8. Composed of young adult members,
9. Composed of better educated members,
10. Composed of members employed in white collar occupations,
11. Inclined to place greater emphasis on evangelism and numerical growth,
12. Metro-regional in geographic orientation and outreach (rather than neighborhood and community oriented).[51]

Conclusion

Let us keep in mind that human principles are secondary to biblical principles. Let us keep in mind that all principles must be employed with full integrity and ethical soundness. The end of church growth evangelism does not always justify the means. It is possible for a church to grow by using improper principles and methods. I am not sure how some churches reach the size they have reached. Perhaps it is by telling people that in joining their church all their problems will be solved. One can always get a crowd with that kind of appeal. The appeal to "join us and you will prosper in a material way" will likewise draw a crowd. While problems may cease, and material blessings may come, these are examples of improper strategies for growing a church. When Jesus Christ drew a crowd, He turned to them and indicated they could follow Him no longer unless their priorities were right. Count the cost. Be honest with people. Jesus could have built a large church, but He told the whole truth and built a kingdom. Let us keep the proper priorities in place.

Chapter 3: The Priority for Church Growth

Is it possible that we have become so intrigued with and affected by the pressures and the politics of the kingdom that we have lost sight of the priorities of the King?

Church newsletters and bulletins indicate not only that it is possible but also that it is perceived to have already happened. In the church newsletters and bulletins which cross, my desk I see increasingly the quotation "of unknown origin" that informs us "the main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing," The question for our consideration becomes, What is the main thing?

My good friend Dale Cross, Urban Evangelism Strategist for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, says our priorities are to get the gospel "out" (i.e., *infiltration).* We must let nothing stand in the way of proclaiming the gospel to the last person on this earth, allowing that gospel to infiltrate every element of our Societies. We must also get the gospel "straight" (i.e., *interpretation).* We must understand what the gospel is and apply that gospel properly to the conditions of humanity. In addition, we must get the gospel "in" (i.e., *incarnation).* We must become so involved in the lives of other people that they see the good news of Jesus Christ

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[51] "Jones Publishes in *Urban Review," Research Division Digest,* 8 (April 1986): 4.

incarnated in our lives. Finally we must get the gospel "up" (i.e., *inspiration).* We must communicate to people of little hope and lagging hope and lost hope that there is legitimate hope in the person of Jesus Christ. So, let us look at the Scriptures for a word from the risen Lord Concerning our priority.

The Biblical Base for Priority

From the biblical perspective, the "main thing," or priority word for church growth evangelism, is "disciple" (i.e., to "make disciples," Matt. 28:19, NASB). This is done initially by the sharing of "the gospel" (Mark 16:15) and continually by the teaching of "the gospel." The gospel content was discussed by Jesus in Luke 24:46-47.

The familiar translation of Matthew's account of the Great Commission begins with the word "go." Yet the priority is not to go but the *reason* we are to go (i.e., to "make disciples"). Our commission is to "make disciples," and this is "the priority in the mission of the church."[52]

R. C. H. Lenski wrote:

The heart of the commission is in the one word *mathateusate.* This imperative, of course, means, "to turn into disciples," and its aorist form conveys the thought that this is actually to be done. The verb itself does not indicate how disciples are to be made, it designates only an activity that will result in disciples. It connotes results, not methods and ways. [53]

In an attempt to summarize the thrust of the great commission, Gene C. Getz wrote:

They were to *make disciples—an* imperative. In verse 19 the word "go" in the original text is a participle, along with two additional participles in verse 20, "baptizing" and "teaching." But all of these verb forms imply *action* and spell out in greater detail what Christ wanted them to do. In essence, Jesus was saying, "as you *go, make disciples; baptize* these disciples, and *teach* them to do what I have taught you." Stating it still more simply, the disciples of Christ heard Jesus say that day, "Go everywhere and win men to Christ (i.e., make Christians), and then baptize them and teach these Christians the truth that I have taught you.[54]

Perhaps a word needs to be said concerning the difference in making disciples and making converts. If we simply make converts, the church may cease to exist in one generation. If, on the other hand, we make disciples—teaching them all that Christ has commanded—the church reproduces in the next generation. On this contrast William Hendriksen wrote:

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[52] Wayne E. Ward, "Matthew," *The Teacher's Bible Commentary,* ed. H. Franklin Paschall and Herschel H. Hobbs (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1972), 615.

[53] R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), 1172.

[54] Gene C. Getz, *Sharpening the Focus of the Church* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1984), 48.

To "make disciples" is not exactly the same as "make converts," though the latter is surely implied. The term "make disciples" places somewhat more stress on the fact that the mind, as well as the heart and the will, must be won for God. A disciple is a pupil, a learner.. . This however is not enough. True discipleship implies much more. Mere mental understanding does not yet make one a disciple. It is a part of the picture, in fact an important part, but only a part. The truth learned must be practiced. It must be appropriated by heart, mind, and will so that one remains or abides in the truth. Only then is one truly Christ's disciple.[55]

Thus the priority of growing an evangelistic church is to "make disciples" through the life-changing gospel of Jesus Christ.

Whereas Matthew's account Commissioned the disciples to "make disciples," Mark's account of the commission instructed disciples to proclaim "the gospel" (Mark 16:15). A. T. Robertson noted, "This commission in Mark is probably another report of the missionary *Magna Charta* in Matt. 28:16-20 spoken on the mountain in Galilee."[56] George W. Peters agreed that, "the 'heralding of the gospel' in Mark corresponds to Matthew's 'make disciples' and suggests oral proclamation as the method of missions."[57] The difference is noted in the fact that "Mark has *preach* (i.e., 'proclaim') *the gospel* where Matthew has a verb meaning 'make disciples.'"[58] According to A. B. Bruce, "This makes the command in Mark more specific and evangelistic than in Matthew. The emphatic expression emphasizes the urgency of this universal message."[59]

The idea of "the gospel" *(euaggel ion)* is

from the earlier meaning of "reward for good news" and "good news"... . The word developed into a technical Christian term, i.e., the content of the Christian faith, the good tidings of God's redemptive act in Jesus Christ.[60]

Thus the sharing of "the gospel" in order to "make disciples" is the biblically based priority of growing an evangelistic church.

General Ideas and Some Misconceptions of the Priority

Once one understands the priority of presenting the gospel for the making of disciples, it is important to understand the content of that gospel. Indeed our command to go is given not to

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[55] William Hendriksen, *Matthew, New Testament Commentary,* ed. William Hendrjksen (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973), 1:999- 1000.

[56] A. T. Robertson, *Matthew and Mark, Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1930), *2:405.*

[57] George W. Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), 190.

[58] Henry E. Turlington, "Mark," *The Broadman Bible Commentary,* ed. Clifton J. Allen (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1969), 8:402.

[59] Alexander Balmain Bruce, *Mark, The Expositor's Greek New Testament,* ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974), 1:456.

[60] Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene A. Nida, *A Translation Handbook on the Gospel of Mark* (London: United Bible Societies, 1961), 2.

see the distance we might travel to share the gospel, but to proclaim that gospel wherever we go. We must identify the ingredients of the gospel and clarify the proclamation of that gospel.

The overall purpose of the Bible is related to the good news of redemption, the redemption of sinful humanity through the revelation of God. This redemptive purpose is seen in the first two chapters of Genesis where God's pre-creation *plan* of redemption is revealed in creation. God's redemptive plan is also seen in Genesis 3:1-11, 26 where redemption is *required* because of the fall of man. Likewise, God's redemptive plan is seen as redemption is *prepared for* in Genesis 11:27 through Malachi 4. Finally, redemption is *effected* in the Gospels through the person and work of Jesus Christ. Redemption is *shared* in the Book of Acts (Acts 2:47; 4:4; 6:7; 8:12; 9:31; 11:21; 16:14; 21:20). God's redemptive purpose is *explained* in the New Testament Letters, both the Pauline Letters and the General Letters. Ultimately, God's redemptive purpose is *realized* in the Book of Revelation.

While the good news begins in Genesis 1:1 and continues through Revelation 22:21, it specifically centers in the person of Jesus Christ—His birth, life, death, resurrection, and reign. Like the shape of an hourglass, history begins with the broad spectrum of all humanity, represented in one person, Adam. History as we know it ends with representatives of all nations gathered around God's eternal throne. In between that broad beginning and broad ending, there is the narrow focal point of history which is the person of Jesus Christ. The proclamation and presentation of relationship to that person is our priority. While it does not appear as such in the New Testament, a word for this priority is *evangelism.* F.O. Whitesell wrote, "The evangelism of the New Testament is the realization in time of God's eternal redemptive purpose."[61]

To understand evangelism properly, one must eliminate some ideas that are not evangelism and thereby narrow the focus to true biblical evangelism. Evangelism is not "everything you do." In a casual conversation with a new friend, I inquired, "What does your church do in the area of evangelism?" His feeble reply after some nervous shifting in his chair was, "Our program is our witness." Unless that program was specifically designed to be evangelistic, it may not be a proper witness. The advertising world teaches us that good products do not always sell themselves. Just because we have a valid message is no indication that that message will communicate itself in the midst of our programs. Not everything that is done in the program of a church necessarily communicates the saving message of the gospel. While evangelism may be the motivating intent of everything done in the program of a church, it must be more. It must become the practical priority.

Evangelism is not just living in a Christian nation. In a door-to- door survey in Madison, Wisconsin, the person at the door answered the question, "Would you call yourself a Christian?" with the response "Sure, I live in the United States, don't I?" Just as there are Christians in predominantly non-Christian countries, there are also non-Christians in predominantly Christian countries. The determining factor is not where you buy, build or borrow but what you believe.

Evangelism is not simply believing in something. There is a current popular feeling that "it doesn't matter what you believe as long as you believe something." If that were true, I could pour gasoline into a glass filled with ice cubes and drink it, believing that it was iced tea, and it

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[61] F. D. Whitesefl, *Basic New Testament Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1949), 21.

would not hurt me. If this idea were true, I could play catch with a bottle of nitroglycerine, believing it was a basebell, and not fear the consequences of a dropped "ball." This idea has never been true and is not true today. It does matter what you believe.

Evangelism is not just church membership. Having your name on a church roll does not make you a Christian anymore than having your name on the roll of a Lions Club makes you a lion or having your name on the membership roll of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes makes you an athlete. The gospel is not primarily about membership, but about relationship.

Evangelism is not simply informing people that they are saved. While acknowledging the difficulty in human discernment, this appears to have been a problem in the early life of my own son. While attending a church camp at a very early age, he "went down to the front" at the appeal of the preacher. The preacher then informed all those who had come "to the front" that they were now saved. In reviewing the experience with my son, he gave no apparent indication that he understood the plan of salvation or that he was under conviction of sin. He went forward because he wanted to be a part of what was going on and did not want to be out of place. A few years later as we talked with him about conversion, he kept referring to this particular church camp and saying that the preacher had told him he was already saved. In genuine evangelism, the public proclamation of salvation must be preceded or at least accompanied by the personal invitation to Christ to enter our lives and save us.

Evangelism is not just meeting human needs for social betterment. Upon completion of a witness training course, one of the participants in the course, a director of Christian social ministries, said to me, "I was apprehensive when you began, but then I discovered that your evangelism and my social ministries are the same." While I was gracious to him, I did not take that statement as a compliment but rather as an indictment of one of us. While evangelism and social ministries come from the same source, they are not the same. Granted, social ministries may and ought to resuit in evangelism. This is often not the case. In a similar fashion, evangelism can focus so much on the process of leading persons to faith in Christ that it ignores the real social needs of the individual. Evangelism and social ministries need each other. They complement each other; they support each other, but they are not the same. Billy Graham said, "I maintain that evangelism is much more than nonverbal witness. . . . Social presence isn't gospel presentation. The gospel is an announcement of the Good News."

Evangelism is *not* simply getting a verbal "yes." One year I was responsible for coordinating an evangelistic effort on the part of Christian college students on South Padre Island in Texas during the Easter weekend. As in Florida, this is a time when thousands of young persons head for the beaches to celebrate the spring. As one person said, "It is an 's' time—sand, surf, sun, suds, and sex." Our purpose was to make it an "S" time—salvation. One of the means we used to communicate the good news was a mobile medical unit staffed by volunteer doctors and nurses. For the most part we treated sunburn and minor accidents. One night a young man fell in a drug-oriented accident and cut his head severely enough to need stitches. He came to our tent for help. After the doctor had done his work and the young man was waiting to be released, one of the volunteers began to talk to him about why we were there. His response was, "Oh, do I have to become a Christian again?"

When asked what he meant, he made reference to another religious group who had a food tent on the beach. They were offering free food, but the prerequisite was you had to hear a presentation of the gospel and respond in the affirmative. As this young man explained, "I have become a Christian twice already today." The purpose of his verbal "yes" was to get physical food and had nothing to do with spiritual conviction or response. The verbal "yes" must be preceded by the personal commitment "yes."

Finally, evangelism is not simply learning better methods of witnessing. Wayne McDiil shared this adapted parable:

Now it came to pass that a group existed who called themselves fishermen and lo, there were many fish in the waters all around. In fact, the whole area was surrounded by streams and lakes filled with fish and the fish were hungry.

Week after week, month after month, year after year those who called themselves fishermen met in meetings and talked about their call to fish, the abundance of fish and how they might go about fishing. Year after year, they carefully defined what fishing means, defended fishing as an Occupation, and declared that fishing is always to be a primary task of fishermen.

These fishermen built large, beautiful buildings for local fishing headquarters. The plea was that everyone should be a fisherman, and every fisherman should fish. One thing they didn't do however; they didn't fish.

In addition to meeting regularly, they organized a board to send out fishermen to other places where there were many fish. The board was formed by those who had great vision and courage to speak about fishing, to define fishing, to promote the idea of fishing in faraway streams and lakes where many other fish of *different* colors lived. Also the board hired staffs and appointed committees and held many meetings to define fishing, to defend fishing, to decide what new streams should be thought about, but the staff and committee members did not fish.

Large, elaborate and expensive training centers were built whose original and primary purpose was to teach fishermen how to fish. Over the years, courses were offered on the needs of the fish, the nature of *the* fish, how to define fish, the psychological reactions of fish, and how to approach and feed fish. Those who taught had doctorates in "fishology," *but* the teachers did not fish. They only taught fishing.

Further, the fishermen built large printing houses to publish fishing guides. Presses were kept busy day and night to produce materials solely devoted to fishing methods, equipment and programs and to arrange and encourage meetings to talk about fishing. A speakers bureau was also provided to schedule special speakers on the subject of fishing. After one stirring meeting on "the necessity of fishing," one young fellow left the meeting and went fishing. The next day he reported that he had caught two outstanding fish. He was honored for his excellent catch and scheduled to visit all the big meetings possible to tell how he did it. So he quit fishing in order to have time to tell about his experience to the other fishermen. He was also placed on the fishermen's general board as a person having considerable experience.

Now, it is true that many of the fishermen sacrificed and put up with all kinds of difficulties. Some lived near the water and bore the smell of dead fish. They received the ridicule of some who made fun of their fishermen's clubs and the fact that they claimed to be fishermen yet never fished. They wondered about those who felt it was little use to attend and talk about fishing. After all, were they not following the master who said: "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men"? (Matt. 4:19).

Imagine how hurt some were when one day a person suggested that those who don't fish were not really fishermen, no matter how much they claimed to be. Yet it did sound correct. Is a person a fisherman if year after year he never catches a fish? Is one following if he isn't fishing?[62]

Better fishing methods make better fishermen only when those methods are applied directly to fishing.

The Priority of Evangelism

While the word *evangelism* does not appear in the New Testament, other words related to it do appear. A study of these words, plus a broader look at other terms for evangelism, will give us a better focus on what biblical evangelism really is.

The Greek word *euaggelion* appears seventy-seven times in the New Testament (sixty-six of these in the Pauline Letters). It is usually translated "gospel," as in Mark 1:14. The word literally means "good *(eu)* messages *(aggelia)"*

The Greek word *euaggeljzo* appears fifty-five times in the New Testament and is usually translated "proclaim" or sometimes "preach," as in Revelation 14:6 and 1 Corinthians *15:2*. The Greek word *euaggeljgtes* is used three times in the New Testament and is usually translated "evangelist," as in 2 Timothy *4:5;* Ephesians 4:11; and Acts 21:8.

Similar to evangelism is the New Testament concept of "making disciples." The Greek word *mathetes* meaning "disciple" is used 269 times in the New Testament but is confined to usage in the Gospels and Acts. Related words are *matheteusate* (i.e., "make disciples" or in some cases, "teach," still again "instruct.") The Greek word *matheteno* means "I disciple."

The concepts of evangelism and discipleship are so interrelated that "evangelizing and discipling cannot be separated. They are part of the same process."[63]

Perhaps it would help to make a distinction between "making disciples" and discipleship" as we use the terms today. "Making disciples" is that process which *begins* with the personal witness—through life-style and verbalization of the believer which the Holy Spirit may or may not use to bring about Conviction in the life of the nonbeliever. It progresses as the Christian is

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[62] Wayne McDill, *Making Friends for Christ* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1979), 8-9. Adapted from John M. Drescher, "A Plea for Fishing," *Pulpit Digest* (July/August 1978).

[63] Ebbje C. Smith, *Balanced Church Growth* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1984), 16.

faithful in bearing witness to the non-Christian and *climaxes* at that point in time when the nonbeliever under Holy Spirit Conviction makes a personal commitment to Jesus Christ, inviting Him to come into his life as Lord and Savior. It *continues* as that new Christian in the fellowship of the body of Christ develops into a mature believer who Witnesses to other nonbelievers.

"Discipleship," as we use the term and concept, begins when a person accepts Christ as Lord and Savior. In other words, discipleship is the maturing and equipping of the believer in Christ whereas "making disciples" is a reference to the entire process.

What then is evangelism? Evangelism is bearing witness or testifying, derived from such Greek words as *marturia, marturion, martureo, marturomal,* and *martus* (Acts 1:8; John *5; 15;* 1 John *5:6-12).*

Evangelism is fishing for persons, coming from the Greek word *zogron,* and its root word *zogreo,* meaning "capture alive and for life" (Mark 1:17; Luke 5:10; 2 Tim. 2:26).

Evangelism is being the salt of the earth (Matt. 5:13).
Evangelism is being the light of the world (Matt. 5:14).
Evangelism is being like leaven (Matt. 13:33).
Evangelism is bearing fruit that remains (John 15:8,16).
Evangelism is being the aroma of Christ (2 Cor. 2:15).
Evangelism is the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:17-21).
Evangelism is advertising the deeds of God (Ida. 43:2 1; 1 Pet. 2:9-10).

But how should we define evangelism? In 1918 the Anglican Church offered this definition of evangelism:

> To evangelize is to present Christ Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit, that men shall come to put their trust in God through him, to accept him as their Savior and serve him as their King in the fellowship of his church.[64]

Archbishop William Temple defined evangelism as follows:

> To evangelize is so to present Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit that men come to put their faith in God through him, to accept him as their Savior and to serve him as their King in the fellowship of his Church.[65]

To C. E. Autrey, former Evangelism Director for Southern Baptists, "Evangelism is confronting the lost personally with the gospel of Christ. It is urging the lost to accept Christ as Savior.[66]

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[64] Commission on Evangelism, Report of a Commission on Evangelism Appointed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York Pursuant to a Resolution of the Church General Assembly Passed at the Summer Session, 1943, *Towards the Conversion of England* (Westminster: The Press and Publications Board of the Church Assembly, 1944), 1.

[65] Michael Green, *Evangelism Now and Then* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 13-14.

In 1974 the Lausanne Congress on Evangelism offered this definition in its covenant:

> To evangelize is to spread the Good News that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead according to the Scriptures, and as the reigning Lord he now offers the forgiveness of sins and the liberating gift of the Spirit to all who repent and believe... evangelism itself is the proclamation of the historical, Biblical Christ as Savior and Lord, with a view to persuading people to come to him personally and so be reconciled to God.[67]

George Hunter, dean of the E. Stanley Jones School of Evangelism and Church Growth at Asbury Seminary offered this definition of evangelism: "Evangelism is what we do to help make the Christian faith, life and mission a live option to undiscipled people, both outside and inside the congregation."[68]

Delos Miles, former Southern Baptist foreign missionary and presently professor of evangelism at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, said, "Evangelism is being, doing, and telling the gospel of the Kingdom of God, in order that by the power of the Holy Spirit persons and structures might be converted to the Lordship of Jesus Christ."[69]

William Schweer, professor of evangelism at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, defined evangelism as "the Spirit led . . . communication of the gospel of the Kingdom . . . in such a way or ways that the individual recipient has a valid opportunity to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and become a responsible member of his church."[70]

Michael Cocoris, pastor of the Church of the Open Door in Lo Angeles and former professor of evangelism at Dallas Theological Seminary, said:

> Evangelism is communicating the gospel of Jesus Christ with the immediate intent of converting the hearer to faith in Christ, and with the ultimate intent of instructing the convert in the Word of God so that he can become a mature believer.[71]

Win and Charles Am described evangelism as "Proclaiming Jesus Christ as God and Savior and Persuading people to become Ills disciples and responsible members of His church."[72]

R. B. Kuiper said, "Evangelism is simply the promulgation of the evangel."[73]

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[66] C. E. Autrey, *You Can Win Souls* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1961), 2.

[67] J. D. Douglas, ed., "Let the Earth Hear His Voice" (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1975), 4.

[68] George G. Hunter, III, *The Contagious Congregation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1979), 47.

[69] Delos Miles, *Introduction to Evangelism* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1983), 14.

[70] G. William Schweer, *Personal Evangelism for Today* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1984), *15.*

[71] G. Michael Cocoris, *Evangelism: A Biblical Approach* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1984), 14.

[72] Win Am and Charles Am, *The Master Plan for Making Disciples* (Pasadena: Church Growth Press, 1982), 175.

[73] R. B. Kuiper, *God-Centered Evangelism* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1966), 7.

Herb Miller contended that "evangelism is . . . the winning of the allegiance of new persons to the Lordship of Jesus Christ."[74]

J. I. Packer, professor of theology at Regent College, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, said, "Evangelism includes the endeavor to elicit a response to the truth taught. It is communication with a view to conversation. It is a matter, not merely of informing, but also inviting."[75]

George E. Sweazey, professor of homiletics at Princeton Theological Seminary and author of *The Church as Evangelist,* provided this definition:

> Evangelism is every possible way of reaching outside the church; to make contacts with definite persons, to cultivate their knowledge of the Christian faith and living, to lead them to confess Christ as their Lord and Savior, to bring them into church membership, and to help them commence Christian habits and church participation.[76]

David J. Bosch, dean of the faculty of theology at the University of South Africa, believed evangelism may be defined as "that dimension and activity of the church's mission which seeks to offer every person, everywhere, a valid opportunity to be directly challenged by the gospel of explicit faith in Jesus Christ."[77]

According to Gaines S. Dobbins, for many years dean of the School of Religious Education at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, evangelism "in the broadest sense, means any testimony borne to another by a Christian with a view to making Christ known and accepted."[78]

Roland Q. Leavell, for many years secretary of evangelism for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, said evangelism "is giving the good news of God's redemptive love to lost souls. . . . No evangelism is complete until the evangelized become evangelists."[79]

D. T. Niles, executive secretary of the East Asian Christian Conference of the World Council of Churches, defined evangelism as "the proclamation of an event and an invitation to an encounter."[80] But Niles most familiar definition is: "Evangelism is witness. It is one beggar telling another beggar where to get food."[81] In their book, *Planning Strategies for World Evangelization,* Edward R. Dayton, director of evangelism and research for World Vision International, and David A. Frazier, research consultant for Mission Training and Resource

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[74] Herb Miller, *Evangelism's Open Secrets* (St. Louis: CBP Press, 1984), 9.

[75] .J. I. Packer, *Evangelism to the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 1961), 50.

[76] George E. Sweazey, *The Church as Evangelist* (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1978), 53.

[77] David J. Bosch,"Evangelism: Theological Currents and CrossCurrents Today," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research,* 22 (July 1987): 103.

[78] Gaines S. Dobbins, *A Winning Witness* (Nashville: Baptist Sunday School Board, 1938), 12.

[79] Roland Q. Leavell, *Helping Others to Become Christians* (Atlanta: Home Mission Board, SBC, 1939), 7-8.

[80] D. T. Niles, *That They May Have Lfe* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1951), 33.

[81] Ibid, 96.

Center, Nashville, Tennessee, defined evangelism this way: "To evangelize is to communicate the gospel in such a way that men and women have a valid opportunity to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and become responsible members of His church."[82]

Finally, James F. Engle and William Norton wrote, "True evangelism is the overflow of a God-enriched life, and the entire body engages, to one degree or another, in sharing the Good News through lifestyle, deeds, and words."[83]

My own personal feeling is that evangelism is allowing Jesus Christ to live in and communicate uniquely through you with such effectiveness that nonbelievers are affected at a point of need and drawn through the power of the Holy Spirit to personal faith in Him as Savior and Lord, thus beginning a new life of spiritual growth in and through His church.

While these definitions give us insight into what evangelism is on the personal level, a definition needs to be developed for church evangelism. Since this book deals primarily with the commissions of our Risen Lord related to church evangelistic growth, let me offer the following definition of church evangelism:

Church evangelism is using unique gifts with in a local body to minister to unique needs of the local community, with the clear intent of communicating the way to salvation and the importance of participation in a local church fellowship. Ultimately church evangelism, through cooperative efforts, seeks to "disciple all nations."

Recipients of This Priority

Having defined the good news, let's take a look at its recipients. Early on the Sunday morning of the resurrection when Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome brought their sweet spices to anoint the body of Jesus, they were confronted with an open, empty tomb and by an angel who gave them a commission. To the surprised women the angel said, "Go tell his disciples" (Mark 16:7).

The good news of Jesus Christ was to be shared first with His church (disciples). Granted, it wasn't much of a church yet. In fact, no one had yet called it a "church" nor had anyone called its members "Christians." They were nevertheless the "church" in the New Testament sense of that word. This church certainly needed to hear this bit of good news. They desperately needed to hear that Jesus Christ was alive. Even as this church had a special need to hear this bit of good news, churches in our day need the reassuring word of the gospel—that Christ is alive for His church!

The angel speaking to the women at the open tomb did not stop with the disciples but added "and Peter" (Mark 16:7). The good news of Jesus Christ is not only available to the church; it is available to individuals, both those within the church as Peter was, and those on the outside of the church as Peter had been earlier in his life. Peter, like that early church, certainly

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[82] Edward R. Dayton and David A. Fraser, *Planning Strategies for World Evangelization* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1980), 80.

[83] James F. Engle and William Norton, *What's Gone Wrong with the Harvest?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), 143.

needed to hear this bit of good news. This one who was so bold in his affirmation of faith faltered, denied his Lord, and desperately needed to know that Jesus Christ was alive. Peter needed a reaffirmation of that initial encounter with Jesus Christ. Just like Peter, individuals in our own day, both within and without the church, desperately need to hear that Jesus Christ is for them. While some need to hear it as a reaffirmation of their initial encounter with Christ, others need to hear it for the first time. Thus individuals are recipients of this good news.

Later in this same chapter of the Gospel according to Mark, Jesus appeared to His disciples and commissioned them to take this good news "to all creation" (Mark 16:15). The good news is not confined to or through any one particular church or church group. Nor is the good news confined to an individual or group of individuals. This good news of Jesus Christ is designed to be shared with all creation. In a recent survey of opinions among "missiologically" minded persons regarding the spiritual state of the unevangelized, the B. Earl Carver School of World Mission at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, discovered that 80 percent of those responding to the survey believed that Christians should "persuade as many people as possible, worldwide, to accept Christ as their personal Savior." Another 19 percent believed that Christians should "preach the gospel message as widely as possible, but leave it entirely to the individuals whether to accept or not." This leaves only 1 percent of those responding who believed that Christians should present the gospel in something less than a worldwide dimension.[84]

Yet a recent issue of The Win Am Growth Report showed the ratio of missionary to denomination members to be alarmingly low in many church groups.

Denominational statistics indicate *one missionary* for the following number of members

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[84] Survey results of an E. Earl Carver School of World Missions Survey as reported in a letter from E. Earl Carver, March 28, 1987, to the survey respondents, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California.

Church of the Lutheran Brethren	193
The Missionary Church	208
Mennonite General Conference	228
Christian and Missionary Alliance	255
Evangelical Free Church	430
Free Methodist	605
Seventh-Day Adventist	607
Wesleyan Church	620
Presbyterian Church in America	639
Church of the Nazarene	867
Evangelical Covenant Church	915
Baptist General Conference	1,289
Churches of Christ	1,471
Association of Free Lutheran Congregations	1,472
Assemblies of God	1,646
Church of God (Anderson, Ill.)	2,439
Church of the Brethren	3,763
Reformed Church in America	3,975
Southern Baptists	4,286
United Church of Christ	7,406
American Lutheran Church	7,548
Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod	8,477
American Baptist Church	8,710
Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod	9,446
Presbyterian Church U.S.A.	11,624
Lutheran Church in America	11,830
Episcopal Church	23,520[85] (Give footnote)

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[85] Waldo Werning,"Missionary Ratios," *The Win Am Growth Report,* 18:2.

The good news of Jesus Christ is intended for the whole world. Our commission related to that good news is nothing less than sharing its content with all persons. This will only be done through our personal and corporate commitment to the priority of evangelism.

Personal Commitment to the Priority

Personal commitment to the priority of evangelism is based first of all upon a personal conversion experience. After all, one cannot Church Growth Words *from* the Risen Lord share what one does not have. As the freshness of that personal experience deteriorates, the excitement of sharing one's faith in Christ likewise deteriorates. On the other hand, as that freshness is kept alive through continual encounter with Jesus Christ and daily walking with Him in His Word, the freshness of that experience can be shared as though it were new.

Commitment to evangelism is likewise based on our understanding that it is our privilege as well as responsibility to share that good news. It is true that when God saved us through Jesus Christ, He was not only intending to save us but also to work through us to save other people. A misunderstanding of this fact often makes persons reservoirs of God's blessing rather than channels of God's blessing. An often repeated tragedy is that it takes God so long to work on us before He can work in us, and so long to work in us before He can work through us, that by the time He is able to work through us, there is little time left.

For the person called by God into vocational ministry, there is an additional commitment. That is the commitment of call. A seminary student had shared with me his call to the ministry. After sharing some present problems, he said, "Some days my call is all that I have to go on." My response was, "Some days that is all you need to go on." Evangelism is difficult, but it is reinforced and supported by the call to be evangelistic in ministry. We must find ways and means of communicating the gospel both verbally and through our life-styles, using the gifts that God has given us to build up His church, not only internally but externally. We must be willing to pay any price to carry out the commission to which we have committed ourselves, namely that of sharing our faith in Jesus Christ with every person.

We will be confronted by numerous excuses. When one tries to relate evangelism to the program of the local church, one will hear most of the following excuses, plus others:

1. We tried this before.
2. Our church is unique.
3. It's too expensive.
4. It's too radical.
5. It takes too much time.
6. We don't have enough staff members.
7. Our church is too small.
8. The people will never accept it.
9. We have never done this before.
10. We like what we are doing now.
11. We are not quite ready for this.

12. We can't afford it financially.
13. It's not practical.
14. Our community is changing.
15. We need to think about it longer.
16. Let's refer it to a committee.
17. It won't pay for itself.
18. Our people are just not interested.
19. That's what we hired our pastor to do.
20. We might offend someone.
21. We might become too large and ruin our fellowship.
22. We need to pray about it some more.
23. What if we fail?
24. This church has a history of problems.
25. We just can't run the risk right now.
26. I am not sure what the Bible says about that.

In spite of these excuses and others, in spite of shortcomings and fears, in spite of whatever Satan might throw at us, our commitment to evangelism must always be seen as a commission, a command from our Risen Lord.

If evangelism were based merely on need or desire, it would not succeed. That is true in every area of life. Several summers ago my son, James, was old enough to mow the yard for the first time. He had been looking forward to it. I was anxiously anticipating it. He began to mow the yard. About halfway through the summer, he decided he was too old to mow the yard. In an attempt to get James to mow the yard, I said to him, "Son, the yard needs mowing." His response was "OK, Dad, I'll do it." Basing my appeal on *need,* I continued for several days to tell him that the yard *needed* to be mowed—_without success. *I* changed my approach to *desire* and said, "James, I know you *want* to mow the yard. You would like to see your dogs again." Since we have miniature dachshunds, the story is not quite as bad as it sounds, nor was the grass extremely high. Basing my appeals on desire had no more effect than basing them on need. Finally, I had to say, "James, mow the yard!" The next sound I heard was that of the lawn mower hitting the grass.

I have a teenage daughter who has no hangups. Everything she owns is on the floor of her room. In order to get her to clean the room, I might base my appeal on need and say, "Danna, your room *needs* cleaning." The response would always be, "OK, I'll clean it." After several days I change my approach to one based on desire and say, "Danna, I know you *want* to have a clean room." The results are the same—nothing. Finally, in desperation I say, "Danna, clean your room!" The next sound heard is clothes hitting hangers.

To base our appeals on need or desire is oftentimes a futile effort. The only thing that seems to work in human relationships is the command of the loving father. Likewise, on the divine level, the Lord has not asked us to evangelize the world because the world needs to be evangelized—although that is obviously true. Nor has He asked us to evangelize the world because we want to— although that should be true. In His divine knowledge, He knew that neither of those would produce adequate results. In reality the loving Father has commanded us

to be His witnesses to the ends of the earth. That command, like the ones which I shared with my children, was not based on hatred or vengeance but based on love and His desire to see all men come to a personal relationship with His Son.

Conclusion

With a commitment to that kind of Father and an understanding of the true essence of biblical evangelism, we are ready to look at the process of church growth evangelism.

Chapter 4: The Process for Church Growth

Process involves the "how" of a situation. Plans, foundations, and blueprints are adopted. Goals, objectives, and dreams are envisioned. But process involves "how" to translate those basics into reality. The Risen Lord had a process, a "how to," in mind for His church and so stated that process in His commission to the church.

When I became a national evangelism consultant with the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, our family moved to the Atlanta, Georgia, area. We did what many families want to do—we decided to have our home built. We selected a lot, a builder, and blueprints. Construction began. The excitement of moving into a home built just for us was almost indescribable. In my own emotions, it is matched only by the feeling that happened six months after we moved in. One night, after a four-inch rain, the little creek on the back of our property became a raging river. When all was said and done, eight inches of water stood on the lowest living level of our home. Shortly afterward, we discovered that the house had been built on a lot labeled "flood hazard zone." After eighteen months of law suit proceedings, we sold the house and moved out, having learned at least one significant lesson. There was no problem with the builder building a house from those blueprints. There was really nothing wrong with the lot except that a house from those blueprints should not have been built on that lot. A house from a different set of blueprints would have worked well on that lot. Another lot would have been more suitable to our blueprints. We had our dreams and our goals, but the "how to" did not match them. That may be why Jesus did not give a specific, detailed strategy for His church but rather generalized with statements like "go preach," "you are witnesses," and "so send I you." Those are the biblical words of this process.

The Biblical Base for the Process

Matthew's account of the Great Commission uses three participles—going, baptizing, and teaching—to describe in representative form how we are to go about growing an evangelistic church. Contrary to the popular translation, "Jesus does not command, 'go!' The participle is merely auxiliary to the main verb. 'Having gone, disciple!' To go to the nations is the self-

evident and natural way." [86] Likewise, "the concepts 'baptizing' and 'teaching' are simply two activities, in coordination with each other, but both subordinate to 'make disciples.' "[87] In other words, the process—going, baptizing, and teaching—leads to the priority—"make disciples."

The account of the commission according to Mark states that followers of Jesus Christ are to *"go* into all the world and *preach* the gospel to all creation" (Mark 16:15, author's italics). The word *go* is

> not in the original a direct command, but a participial construction, "going into all the world, preach the gospel." It has sometimes been inferred that the precept is conditional, and means, wherever you go (for other purposes), there preach the gospel.[88]

As in Matthew's account so in Mark's account we are told that part of the process of growing an evangelistic church is the going with the gospel. Furthermore, "it is the duty of the church, and that means that it is the duty of every Christian, to tell the good news of Jesus to those who have never heard it. The Christian duty is to be the herald of Jesus Christ."[89] Mark's word *preach* might better be translated "proclaim." Again, the processes of going and proclaiming lead to the priority of "making disciples."

The biblical base for the process of growing an evangelistic church is, according to Luke, "You are witnesses of these things" (Luke 24:48). Similarly, the biblical base for the process of growing an evangelistic church according to Acts is, "You shall be My witnesses" (Acts 1:8). The Gospel of Luke and Acts make up a two-volume work. Therefore, much of what is stated in the latter verses of the Gospel is repeated in the early verses of the Acts. "In the gospel account, verse 48 stands for that part of Acts I which Constitutes the disciples as witnesses you *are witnesses* (Verse 48); *you shall be my witnesses* (Acts 1:8). The two are variant forms of the same commission."[90]

> In both Luke and Acts, the process was one of witnessing.
>
> The word of course is our word "martyrs." To tell the story, to tell it not as hearsay, but as of their knowledge. And to tell it at cost. There was no other plan. No other has yet been found, in a world grown big with plans. Nor will be.[91]

The connection between Luke and Acts at the point of "Witnesses" is seen further in the words of R. C. H. Lenskj:

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[86] R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1943), 1172.

[87] William Hendrjksen *New Testament Commentary Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973), 1000

[88] Joseph A. Alexander, *The Gospel According to Mark* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1958), 441.

[89] William Barclay, *The Gospel of Mark* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956), 389.

[90] Ray Summers, *Commentary on Luke* (Waco: Word Books, 1972), *335.*

[91] George A. Buttrick, *The Gospel According to St. Luke, The Interpreter's Bible,* ed. George A. Buttrick, *(New* York: AbingdonCokesbury Press, 1952), 8:433.

This is not admonition, but only a glorious future fact: "You shall be my witnesses" even as Jesus designated them already in Luke 24:48. They are to be more than heralds (preachers) who proclaim only what they are ordered to proclaim; they are to be herald "witnesses" in the sense of I John 1:1, meaning those who have themselves seen, heard, touched, experienced, and are qualified, even called, to testify accordingly.[92]

As individual Christians fulfill the process of "witnessing," the church grows evangelistically. According to Richard N. Longeneckr:

The Christian church, according to Acts, is a missionary church that responds obediently to Jesus' commission, acts on Jesus' behalf in the extension of his ministry, focuses its proclamation of the Kingdom of God in its Witness to Jesus, is guided and empowered by the self-same Spirit that directed and Supported Jesus' ministry, and follows a program whose guidelines for outreach have been set by Jesus himself.[93]

As with going, baptizing, teaching, and preaching, so it is with witnessing. The process leads to the priority. Witnessing is a process that has the potential of resulting in the making of disciples. The biblical base of the process of growing an evangelistic church as recorded by John is expressed in these Words of our Lord, "As the father has sent Me, I also send you" (John 20:2 1). The process of "going" described by both Matthew and Mark's accounts is here expressed with the idea of sending.

Jesus has brought to its consummation the task that he came to accomplish, the task that the Father laid upon him, he sends his followers into the world. The charge is given added solemnity from being linked thus to the mission of the son. Their mission proceeds from his. It is only because he has accomplished it, that they are sent into the world.[94]

The followers of Jesus are not only *"going"* to grow an evangelistic church but also are being "sent" by the Lord of the church. "The general result . . . seems to be, that in this charge the Lord presents his own Mission as the one abiding Mission of the Father; this he fulfills through his Church. His disciples receive no new commission, but to carry out his."[95] The purpose of being sent is that disciples might be made.

The process of growing an evangelistic church is represented by the biblical ideas of going, baptizing, teaching, preaching (proclaiming), witnessing, and being sent. These biblical terms are representative of the kinds of activities in which we must be involved in order to "make disciples" and grow an evangelistic church.

Creating a Conducive Atmosphere for the Process

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[92] R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1964), 31-32.

[93] Richard N. Longenecker, *Acts, The Expositor's Bible Commentary,* ed. Frank B. Gaebelejn (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), *9:256.*

[94] Leon Morris, *The GospelAccording to John, The New International Commentary on the New Testament,* ed. F. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1952), 1:846-847

[95] A. Plummer, *The CambridgeBjblefors00jg and Colleges* (Cambridge: University Press, 1902) *The Gospel According to St. John,* 362.

Every church or group has its "in thing"—that which new members know in advance they will be expected to support, either directly or indirectly. To grow an evangelistic church is to make evangelism the "in thing." Most strategies leave this out. Many churches assume their members support evangelism.

Evangelism was obviously the "in thing" with the disciples of our Lord. The clear and unmistakable commission of Jesus Christ is a challenge to the church. We have our marching orders. As Robert Coleman said: "If the pattern of Jesus means anything at all, it teaches that the first duty of. . . an evangelist is to see to it that a foundation is laid in the beginning upon which can be built an effective and continuing evangelistic ministry to the multitudes." [96]

The atmosphere and mind set for this foundation can be created through various aspects of church life and program. Perhaps the most effective program through which we can create this atmosphere of evangelism is the Sunday School. Surveys of Southern Baptist Sunday Schools through the years have indicated that the Sunday School provides our best prospects for evangelism, either through members of the Sunday School who are not Christians or non-Christian parents of children enrolled in the Sunday School. Overall figures indicate between *25* percent and 33 percent of non- Christian prospects enrolled or related to our Sunday School will be baptized in our churches.[97] In a survey taken of the Southern Baptist churches in Texas that baptized over one hundred persons per year, the question was asked, "To what human factors do you attribute the significant number of baptisms in your church last year?" Of the pastors responding, 72 percent indicated the Sunday School was a significant factor. Sunday School outreach/visitation efforts made up a significant factor for 66 percent. Sunday School leadership training in evangelism was a significant factor for 47 percent of the pastors who responded. From any perspective, "the Sunday School has the best potential organization for evangelism to be found in the church life."[98]

Yet on the national level, across denominational lines, the Sunday School is declining. In 1970 the national enrollment of the Sunday School was *40,508,568.* In 1986 the enrollment was *26,589,251-_a* decline of over 34 percent. In 1970 the Sunday School enrollment represented 31 percent of the total church membership. In 1986 it represented 18 percent. In 1970 10 percent of the United States population indicated they had received no religious training as a child. In 1986 27 percent responded that they had received no Childhood religious training.[99] Win Arm of the Institute for American Church Growth concluded:

> Based on our research with many denominations, I am convinced the difference between growing Sunday Schools and declining ones can be summed up in one word: *mission!* The most important issue in moving a Sunday School forward in growth *is a clear purpose that reflects the mission andprior/ty of Christ,* Without such a purpose, a Sunday

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[96] Robert B. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Westwoocj, N.J.: Fleming H. ReveJi, 1963), 33.

[97] See also R. Othal Feather, *Outreach Evangelism: Through the Sunday School* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1972), x. I

[98] Roland Q. Leaveli, *Evangelism: Christ's Imperative Commission* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1951), 111.

[99] "The Sunday School—A Method in Search of a Mission?" *The Win Am Growth Report,* 19: 1.

School will flounder, turn inward toward "maintenance," become exclusively nurture-oriented and eventually stagnate and die.[100]

Discipleship Training can also create an atmosphere in a church that is conducive to evangelism. Church Training, or Training Union as it was called in my younger days, had an impact on my early understanding of who Christians are and what Christians are to be about. I learned some of my communication skills in Church Training. I was encouraged to stand before a group of my peers and communicate my part on the program without use of a quarterly or notes. In my twenty years of working with students, both on the university level and now on the seminary level, I have observed that the level of doctrinal knowledge and skills of practical application of that knowledge has shown a steady decrease through the years. I believe this can be partially attributed to the de-emphasizing of Church Training where we first learned of doctrine and ministry skills. It is as true now as when the program was first stated, "If the supreme objective of the church training is training in Christian service, surely the members should not stop short of the highest possible service, personal soul winning."[101]

Other means by which we might create an atmosphere and mind set conducive to evangelism include Bible study groups, whether they take the form of home Bible study groups or Bible study within mission organizations or in other kinds of settings. This atmosphere can also be created through prayer groups who pray for sensitivity in witnessing, for nonbelievers, and for laborers in the harvest.

A church can create an atmosphere for evangelism through its worship services. Evangelistic music, sharing of evangelistically oriented testimonies, and preaching on evangelistic texts all lend themselves to an atmosphere conducive to evangelism. They also offer the positive invitation to accept Christ as a part of every worship service. "Jesus used various methods to invite people to the kingdom of heaven. He used the weekly attendance in the synagogue or temple. Within the order of the synagogue and temple worship, he evangelized."[102] An atmosphere conducive to evangelism can be created through special events, such as church programs, calendar events, holidays, special occasions. Personal example and peer influence and the publicity and promotion of church activities can also reflect a commitment to evangelism. Anything a church does can be done alone. They can "dovetail" in such a way that they reflect the commission of our Lord to evangelize.

Equipping Persons to Evangelize Within the Process

Robert Hamblin, former vice-president of evangelism for the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention recently spoke to an evangelism class at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. He asked the students, "What is our biggest problem?" After Some discussion, Hamblin replied, "Our biggest problem is we are not winning enough people to faith in Jesus Christ." He cited the fact that we used to have 7,000,000 Baptists and baptized 300,000 persons per year. Now we have 14,000,000 Southern Baptists and baptize less than 370,000 persons per year. However, he went on to say that churches which involve

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[100] Ibid, 1.
[101] Leavell, 112.
[102] Ibid., 121.

their people in Continuing Witness Training (CWT) baptize 12-15 percent more people than churches not using Continuing Witness Training.

I took a survey among Texas Baptist churches reporting over 100 baptisms per year. Of the pastors responding to the survey, 91 percent said personal witness training was one of the human factors that contributed to the significant number of baptisms in their church. This included the programs of Continuing Witness Training, as well as Evangelism Explosion, Lay Evangelism School, Friendship Evangelism, MasterLjfe Discipleship Training, and various other kinds of witness training.

New Christians want to learn. Sometimes we tell them, "We would like to teach you how to become an usher" or "We would like to train you to serve on a committee." While ushering and serving on a committee are significant and meaningful responsibilities in the life of a church, they are not usually exciting to new Christians. However, if new Christians were told, "We would like to teach you how to tell others what has just happened in your life," we could benefit from their enthusiasm and excitement.

We should equip people to witness through intensive witness training courses or "crash course" training. These seminars or retreats condense training sessions to only a few hours. They are designed for the person who cannot give several hours per week over a long period of time but who could give one evening or a Friday night-Saturday morning. Much can be accomplished in a short period of time when interest is focused only on the subject of witness training. However, we should also offer to people an opportunity *for* continual witness training. Programs such as Continuing Witness Training, Lay Evangelism School, and Evangelism Explosion offer a person a chance to receive training over several weeks. Both intensive and continual training have weaknesses and strengths. They both should be offered so that more people will have opportunity to be involved in training. If only one witness training program is offered, some persons who are not a part of that program may not feel that they have a responsibility to witness. They may look upon those in the training program as the specialists in the field of evangelism and may see themselves as less adequate witnesses.

D. James Kennedy, pastor of the Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Florida and author of *Evangelism Explosion,* said that one of the major weaknesses in his church was that the persons not involved in Evangelism Explosion were likely not involved in witnessing of any kind. They were content to leave evangelism to those who were specially trained to do evangelism.

Witness training ought to include "on-the-job training." We learn by example. "Having called his men, Jesus made it a practice to be with them. This was the essence of his training program— just letting his disciples follow him."[103] In this apprentice-type training, we must remember that we are training people to follow our example, not to be like us. There is a vast difference between a model and a mimic. As Walter Henrichsen reminded us: "In the training process it must be remembered that the trainer cannot take upon himself the work of the Holy

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[103] Coleman, 38.

Spirit . . . in the final analysis the trainer can only contribute to a person's development in two areas: the giving of time and the opportunity to learn."[104]

Another type of witness training is motivating people in the area of life-style evangelism. Paul Little reminded us, "Witnessing involves all that we are and therefore do. It goes far beyond what we say at certain inspired moments."[105] Bridges must be built; relationships must be strengthened. Witnessing that consists only of confrontation comes across as arrogant. If we use only confrontation, we may come across as condemning the unbelievers. We may tap into feelings and emotions of which we are unaware. This witnessing style does convey the urgency of accepting Christ. On the other hand, if our witnessing consists totally of life-style Witnessing, we may give the impression that accepting Christian salvation is not an urgent Concern. Life-style evangelism allows time for listening. Listening is the price we pay to be heard.

A balance of the verbal, confrontational style of witnessing with the life-style kind of Witnessing is to be desired. A church would do well to not only equip people with methods of verbalizing their faith but also to motivate the people to live lives that support their verbal witness: "Evangelism must not be seen as either/or but as both/and. Evangelism is not either verbal witness or life-style witness. Evangelism is both verbal witness and life-style witness."[106] Equipping in evangelism must not ignore the training involved in mass evangelism: "In every possible way Jesus manifested to the masses of humanity a genuine concern. These were the people he came to save—he loved them, wept over them and finally died to save them from their sins. No one could think that Jesus shirked mass evangelism."[107]

The idea of equipping for mass evangelism is underlined by a statement reportedly made by C. E. Matthews, onetime head of Southern Baptist evangelism. He indicated that *75* percent of revival success is in the preparation. Evangelists and musicians must not be the only ones who equip and prepare themselves for revival meetings. To a large degree the numerical success and visible results of a revival meeting will be determined by the preparation of the laity prior to the meeting. This equipping takes the form not only of witness training but also decision counseling, visitation training, preparing of various committee and task force groups involved in the preparation for the meeting, as well as other forms of preparation.

Mass evangelism efforts need not be limited to revival meetings. Music concerts, dramatic presentations, rallies in stadiums and parks, as well as numerous other means are possibilities for mass evangelism. One of the most recent means being promoted is evangelistic telemarketing. The equipping of Christians to use the telephone to seek evangelistic prospects and to Witness, while very indirect and nonpersonal, may have significant implications. Seminars are being held around the country for training in the use of the telephone as a tool for church growth.

At times the equipping of persons to evangelize takes the form of an organized group within the church, such as an evangelism council or committee or task force. This group may

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[104] Walter A. Henrjchsen, *Disciples Are Made, Not Born* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1974), 93.

[105] Paul E. Little, *How to Give Away Your Faith* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1966), 23.

[106] Dan R. Crawford, *EvangeL ife: A Guide to Life-Style Evangelism* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1984), 2 1-22.

[107] Coleman, 27-28.

develop goals and objectives for the church evangelism program and present them to the church for adoption. The advantage of such a group is that it involves the laity in planning an evangelism program for the church. They become informed about the needs of the community and may develop a profile of the community surrounding the church. The congregation sees that evangelism is being planned and promoted from within the congregation, rather than imposed by a pastor or staff member upon the congregation.

Whatever we do in the way of equipping persons in evangelism, we must remember that equipping humans is not enough, it must be blended with the divine equipping of the Holy Spirit. Apart from this divine equipping, we are limited to human ingenuity, creativity, and energy. Human equipping plus divine equipping allows not only for the unlimited vision of God but also provides us with the unlimited resources of God for evangelism.

Focusing on the Felt Needs of Individuals Within Target Groups as Part of the Process

While we are not called to categorize people, we are encouraged to reach people by the most effective means possible. The society in which we live has categorized people Age and other indicators automatically place people in categories. We live in a world of specialization. While general principles of evangelism are effective, they will be more effective when they are specialized to reach people within social and cultural groups. Persons who join the body of Christ provide a vital Christian link to the social or cultural group of which they are a part. These groups can be targeted for witnessing. Thus we come to discuss target group evangelism.

Perhaps the most sensitive group for evangelism is made up of children. Several dangerous extremes must be avoided. Saying a child is "too young" to become a Christian is dangerous. Just because you became a Christian at a certain age, perhaps as a child, does not mean children today must reach that age before becoming Christians. When I became a Christian, the "normal" age for children to make a decision for Christ was somewhere between the ages nine to twelve. I think the *"normal"* age has dropped to between eight and ten, especially for children raised in a Christian home. We must remember that almost everything is happening earlier in our lives now than was the case years ago. Children know more now and are more intellectually and creatively stimulated. We bought our first home computer when my son was ten years old. While I was trying desperately to read the instructions, he set it up for us. After all, he had seen it done at school. When *I* was ten years old, I was trying to learn how to set my watch. Some children may make legitimate professions of faith because of early intellectual ability. Other children may make a public decision for Christ before they understand what they are doing. This is why children compose a sensitive area in evangelism.

Another danger is "herding" children into the church in groups when the motive seems to be to get the entire class or group "saved." An overzealous Sunday School teacher or other children's worker may attempt to do this. Families sometimes push the last child into a public decision so that "the family circle" may be complete. These are dangers in children's evangelism.

One of the greatest joys parents can have is leading their children to faith in Jesus Christ. The church bears responsibility for equipping the parents to do that rather than serving as the

agent for that conversion experience in the place of the parents. Many parents miss this joy because of feelings of inadequacy or not knowing what to say in answer to the questions of children. Perhaps they miss this joy due to inconsistent life-styles or a feeling that the children will not listen to them. Perhaps it is a misunderstanding of the biblical principle of *oikos* (Deut. 6:20-25).

One point to consider in witnessing to children is sensitivity to what the children say. Many times children give indications that conviction is taking place in their life. This often follows public observances of baptism or the Lord's Supper or a church business meeting or perhaps a sermon on hell or heaven. One must also realize that religious language can be confusing to children. Terms such as "into my heart" used in a time of heart transplants may need to be carefully explained. "Conviction" and "lostness" are difficult concepts for children to grasp. We must not get upset when children fail to understand our terminology. It is important that adults not misuse their authority when witnessing to children. Sometimes children can be forced into a public decision because they respect a particular adult or because they want to please the adult. The use of "a third party" is always advisable. When the parent or adult teacher has done his or her best in communicating the faith to a child, it is always appropriate for a third person to talk with the child to clarify understanding.

In my survey of Texas Baptist churches reporting over 100 baptisms per year, *45* percent of the responding pastors indicated that children raised in the church made up the majority of the baptisms for their church. Only 17 percent indicated that children not previously related to their church made up a significant portion of their baptisms. In the category related to youth, 19 percent of the pastors said that youth raised in the church were a significant part of the baptism results. Youth not previously related to the church made up a significant part of the baptisms for 47 percent of the churches in the survey. From the perspective of these churches, the figures seem to indicate that we are baptizing children who are raised in our churches but we are not doing a very good job baptizing teenagers who are raised in our church. Perhaps we are baptizing "church children" before they reach their teenage years and "nonchurch children" during their teenage years.

Youth evangelism is an exciting area because of the numbers and the dynamics involved. The following facts give evidence of the tremendous challenge of working with youth:

1. One of every five inhabitants of the world is a youth (15 to 24 years of age) (19.4% or 922 million).
2. Projections indicate youth will exceed one billion by the end of this decade.
3. Four out of five young people are residents of *less* developed regions.
4. Of the world's youth, 44% live in urban areas.
5. Recent studies reveal the key words in the experience of young people in the present decade are: "unemployment," "anxiety," "defensiveness" and "survival."
6. Of the world's youth Population, 60% live in Asia; 11 % in Africa; 9% in Latin America; 8% in Europe; 5% in North America; *5%* in Russia.[108]

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[108] Jimmy K. Maroney, "The State of the World's Youth," a paper delivered to the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, Richmond, Va., 15 Oct. 1986, 2-3.

With over 1,000,000 teenagers enrolled in Southern Baptist Sunday Schools, baptisms are at 2,000 teenagers per week:

> Youth should be easier to win to Christ than adults because the Savior has every manly, heroic, and lofty characteristic to inspire the ideals of youth. Youth find in Jesus all the fearlessness, self restraint, magnanimity, loyalty, endurance and sincerity that may be wished to inspire the highest idealism.[109]

When targeting the youth age group for evangelism, leaders need to be aware that teenagers will be led to faith in Christ best by other teenagers. Thus an important part of the process is equipping and motivating Christian teenagers to Witness.

College and university students provide an interesting resource for evangelism. In fact, the mind of the university student may be the most crucial battlefield in the world today. A recent survey indicated the five greatest problems in the lives of university students were:

1) Boredom with life.
2) Deep meaninglessness.
3) Crippling guilt.
4) Aching loneliness.
5) Fear of death. [110]

These problems create an open territory for the gospel message. If our gospel does not speak to these needs, it does not speak at all. A survey by the Division of Student Work of the Baptist General Convention of Texas among Baptist campus ministers indicated that counseling was largely devoted to interpersonal relationship problems (40 percent). The second highest category involved decisions about what to do in life *(25* percent). It is not hard to see that the needs of university students can be met by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

A growing target group for evangelism is young adults. Recent surveys indicate one of every eight young adults in America approaching their thirties professes no religious preference. This represents approximately 5.3 million persons. *Missions USA* shared the following information from a news story by Adon Taft, Religion Editor for the *Miami Herald:*

> They pack the pews but pass the collection plate quickly by. They like religious music to have a contemporary sound but want Madison Avenue slick sermons to have old fashioned Biblical content. They seek answers to difficult personal and social questions but seldom volunteer for demanding but mundane tasks such as teaching Sunday School or canvassing a neighborhood for new prospects. These are the baby boomers, 76 million men and women who offer a mixed blessing for America's churches and synagogues. They may be neither the salvation nor the Armageddon of religious institutions. The nation's largest generation of 24-41 year olds in history is attending worship services in great numbers but doing less than older members to support churches with their money or talents. Those who have come into

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[109] Leavell, 230-23 1.

[110] Leroy Eims, *Winning Ways* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1971), 62-64.

the church or synagogue have brought with them the ambiguity of the culture in which they grew up. These are the young adults who gave us *Playboy Magazine,* Campus Crusade for Christ, Woodstock, "Godspell," flower children, and *Valley Girls.* They question the morality of war and industry, but four times as many of them are living together outside of marriage today as did young adults twenty years ago, and four times as many of them are getting divorced as did their parents.[111]

Young adults are seeking to establish identities. They are the in- between group, meaning they are in-between school and employment or in-between romances or in-between jobs or in-between commitments. They are the group in the midst of life-style choices. Many of them are reevaluating institutions such as the home, the school, the church, or the government. Most of them are searching for meaning, purpose, and a caring community. Obviously our gospel can be applied to the needs of the young adults.

Single adults make up a growing percentage of our world population. In the United States almost 40 percent of persons over age eighteen are single. Some have never married; others are separated; still others are divorced; many are widowed. In a volume entitled *Single Adults: The New Americans,* a five-year study of singles reported that the greatest disadvantage among single adults is loneliness and the greatest advantage is freedom.[112] Our gospel has much to say to these two areas. Perhaps the loneliest figure in all of history is Jesus Christ__alone in a crowd at a wedding feast in Cana, alone in the midst of His closest associates as they slept while He prayed, alone on a cross rejected by His friends. Likewise, Jesus understood freedom. Claiming to be the truth, He proclaimed that the truth could make one free. The greatest freedom is the freedom found in relationship with Jesus Christ.

Single parents comprise a rapidly growing segment of the single adult population. This trend seems likely to continue in light of high divorce rates and projections that only three of every ten new households will consist of a married couple.[113]

> The church must become a listening friend where singles can tell their story, share their moments of pain and exhilaration and dream new dreams in the presence of supportive concern. But more than this, the church must so implant the good news of Jesus Christ within single adults that he becomes a significant part of their story shared with other single adults.[114]

Another target group for evangelistic outreach is median adults. Anytime people go through transitions in life, they are more open to help from outside sources. During the median adult years, the midlife transition takes place. Lucien Coleman has informed us that:

> Even though the midlife transition can be uncomfortable, even painful, it plays an important role in adult development. Adulthood at its best is a dynamic growing experience. God

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[111] "Baby boomers flood churches, but give little support." *Missions USA,* Jan-Feb 1987, 3.

[112] See Jacqueline Sinenaur and David Carroll, *Single Adults: The New Americans* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1982).

[113] Thomas Exeter, "The Census Bureau's Household Projections," *American Demographics,* Oct. 1986.

[114] Dan R. Crawford, ed., *Single Adults: Resource and Recipient for Revival* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1985)14-15.

created us for growth and growth comes not when we are in a state of equilibrium but when we are restless and disturbed, dissatisfied with the status quo.[115]

A receptivity rating chart developed by W. Charles Am shows the influence that an event in life can have on a person's willingness to listen to the gospel. On a scale of 0-100 Am lists death of a spouse as a 100; divorce is rated 73; death of a family member is a 63; personal injury or illness a *53;* change in family member's health is 44. Other times of significance are incurring a large mortgage or loan, starting to work, trouble with an employer, change in residence, or an addition to the family. Many of these take place during the median adult years; therefore, those times when persons are most open to a presentation of the gospel may be during the median years. Because this is also a time when people are developing a sense of security, it makes evangelism a challenge with this age group.

An emphasis upon evangelism in and through the family has long been overlooked. The biblical concept of *oikos* is strong; yet our application of that concept has been weak. *"Oikos* means house. . . . It also carries the meaning of household or family. It can mean a whole household of people living together as a clan or in a tribe. . . . Also all of those persons who touch the household in terms of having a relationship to it."[116]

A major biblical pattern for passing on the faith was through the family. More recently we have relegated the privilege of passing on the faith to the professional clergy and to certain trained and "gifted" Christians. A recent survey among 400 Baptist leaders revealed the following information: When asked "Who was the most influential in your salvation process?" 42 percent indicated it was a family member. Another 11 percent indicated a friend or neighbor led them to Christ. These people were influenced by the *oikos—"those* persons who touch the household in terms of having a relationship to it." Thus approximately 50 percent of leaders surveyed indicated their conversion process was affected by their *oikos.*

While evangelism through the family is possible, it has become more complex because of changing neighborhoods. The traditional family unit of one working husband, one housekeeping wife and two children now makes up only 7 percent of the family population of the United States. Our neighborhoods are no longer traditional. They are now made up of blended families, single-parent families, single adults without children or partner, working mothers, and older adults living alone. Yet neighbors still desire honesty, consistency, and friendship. Where there is a desire to make the family a witnessing medium in the community, ways can be found to bear creative witness.

A final age group as a target for evangelism is Composed of older adults. The percentage of elderly Americans has increased from 4 percent over age sixty-five in 1900 to 12 percent today, according to the Census Bureau. Sometime after the turn of the century, the number of senior adults will increase to more than 20 percent of the population. Charles V. Longino Wrote, "There will be an even greater increase in the number of the 'oldest old,' people aged 85 and older, from 2.2 million (now) to 4.9 million (in the year 2000) to 13 million (by the year

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[115] Lucian E. Coleman, Jr., *Understanding Today's Adults* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1982), 112.

[116] Ron Johnson, Joseph W. Hinkle, and Charles M. Lowry, *Oikos: A Practical Approach to Family Evangelism* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1982), 11.

2030)."[117] Our own misconceptions of the aging have created barriers for us in evangelizing older adults. Likewise, our modern "throwaway society" tends to overlap into this area. What we do with things, we ultimately do with people. Therefore, we tend to put older adults out of our minds and into institutions where they can be cared for "properly." Our friends from other nations are appalled at this practice. Lucjen Coleman has said that the real needs of older adults are "(1) a Positive self image, (2) physical and mental activity, (3) meaningful interests, (4) close personal relationships, (5) adequate income and housing, (6) health care, (7) a sense of fulfilled vocation."[118]

Once again we find that our gospel can be applied to the needs of a particular target group. The needs listed by Coleman can be addressed by the gospel of Jesus Christ: "Older people watch more critically for inconsistencies in the lives of church members. Some church member is the key to the heart's door of almost every unsaved adult."[119] Let us not be guilty of ignoring the older adults either as recipients of the gospel message or resources for Witness training.

Within our society there are groups of people who are unlike the majority because of their ethnic background, their religious persuasion, or their social status. Over two hundred ethnic groups, all Consisting of persons for whom Christ died, are represented in the United States. Other world religions have made their impact upon our culture, both by persons moving to our country and by native- born Americans Converting to these religions.

The poverty-stricken people in our nation form a special group with unique needs and unique opportunities for evangelism. According to William O'Hare, the number of persons in Poverty has grown by 37 percent from 25 million to 34 million.[120] Our approach must be one of understanding and cultivation and dialogue as well as proclamation. We must understand that these are people with pressures and problems, but there is an adequate procedure for bearing witness to these persons by the building of the right bridges and the communicating of the Spirit-filled message. The possibilities include not only the conversion of individuals but the opening of channels into groups of persons through these new converts.

Target-group evangelism takes work and creativity, but I am convinced that it will bear great rewards. The more appropriately you can adapt the gospel to the needs of the individual the better the opportunity of effective communication and the greater the possibility of positive response. As James Engle reminded us, "People will not listen to the gospel message and respond unless it speaks to felt needs."[121]

Demanding Effective Follow-up Within the Process

New Christians are not born into the spiritual family fully mature. As with physical birth and life, so spiritual birth and life require nurturing. "Follow-up then is spiritual pediatrics. It has to do

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[117] Timothy J. Keller, "Light in the Darkness," *Bulletin* (Philadelphia: Westminster Seminary), 6 (1986): 4.

[118] L. Coleman, 132.

[119] Leavell, 230.

[120] William O'Hare, "The Eight Myths of Poverty," *American Demographics,* May 1986.

[121] James Engle, *Contemporary Christian Communications* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1979), 217.

with the care and protection of the spiritual infant. It deals with spiritual development of new babies in Christ from the time of their new birth until they grow and provide for themselves."[122]

Perhaps the biggest weakness in the process is at this very point. Between the years of 1971 and 1981, Southern Baptist churches received 9 million new members (5 million by letter, transferring from other churches, and approximately 4 million by baptism). According to figures from The Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 87 percent of these new members were not involved in any kind of new-member orientation program. In light of these figures, is it any wonder that Southern Baptist Home Mission Board statistics indicate 265 Southern Baptists become Mormons every day? (Mormons admit that 231 Southern Baptists join them each day.) Evangelical denominations other than Baptists are experiencing the same loss of membership. When a plant has shallow roots that are not nurtured, is it any wonder that the plant can be uprooted by any "wind of doctrine" (Eph. 4:14)? Several years ago, Arthur C. Archibald estimated that "40 percent of evangelistic recruits are lost to the church within seven years."[123] More recently, Lyle Schaller estimated that "at least one-third and perhaps as many as one-half of all Protestant church members do not feel a sense of belonging to the congregation of which they are members."[124]

In a promotional letter advertising the "How to Close the Back Door" seminar, Win Ar president of the Institute for American Church Growth, Wrote:

> Every year over two million persons are taken *off* active membership and placed on inactive lists. In addition, studies show that the first six months are the most critical period for the new church member. In fact, 75% of those persons who become inactive do so in the first year of their church membership. If new members are not cared for. . . aren't quickly involved in meaningful church activities. . . aren't given the attention, care, and love they need, they soon leave.[125]

Speaking to this, Robert Coleman wrote, "This sense of belonging is especially crucial with new Converts. To make sure that it is not missed, Particularly on the personal level, every beginning pilgrim needs one or two Christian friends close by, to constantly encourage growth."[126]

New believers in Christ need: (I) clarification decision counseling, (2) affirmationpub1j display of support by the body of Christ and (3) indoctrinationfoJ1ow..up or discipleship. Proper follow-up may be done through several means, the most obvious of which is through Bible study. A new believer needs to be involved in studying what God has revealed to believers. This study may take the form of a Sunday School class, a home Bible study, or a one-on..one Bible study with some other Christian. Whatever the form of the Bible study, it is absolutely essential that the new believer be fed from the Word of God and then be taught how to feed himself from

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[122] Henrichsen, 79-80.

[123] Arthur C. Archibald, *Establishing the Converts* (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1952), 13.

[124] Lyle Schaller, *Assimilating New Members* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1978), 16.

[125] Quote is from an undated letter by Win Am promoting a "How to Close the Back Door of Your Church" seminar held in Anaheim, California, on January 19-21, 1988.

[126] Robert F. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Disc iplesh4',* (Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1987), 147.

the Word of God. One reason people leave is lack of food. When forced to feed themselves too soon, they either go somewhere else looking for food or stay and become malnourished.

Follow-up methods are currently available and are being used with great effectiveness. Among these are the *Survival Kit for New Christians*[127] and *MasterLife.*[128] Other follow-up materials are available from denominational and other sources.

Just as new babies physically need balanced nutrition, so new spiritual babies need balanced diet. Just as no thoughtful parent would feed a newborn baby a piece of sirloin steak cooked medium well, so no thoughtful believer should feed a new believer spiritual food that cannot be digested properly. New believers need "the pure milk of the word" (1 Pet. 2:2). Just as they need milk in the beginning, new believers need to move from milk to meat. The writer of Hebrews said, "Everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed of the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil" (Heb. 5:13-14).

New believers need to be taught what it means to be a part of the family of God—the body of Christ. They need to understand the diversity and the unity of that body and how to function as a part of the body. God has gifted them with special spiritual gifts that they need to understand and appropriate. New believers need to learn how to support the gifts of other believers in the body and to complement those gifts with their own.

Most importantly new believers need to be taught how to communicate their salvation experience. Perhaps the most effective witnesses are the persons who are freshly excited about their experience of conversion. Oftentimes they do not know how to verbalize this experience, so effective follow-up must begin early with witness training. More often than not, we wait until the initial excitement of the experience has waned and then offer witness training. When we finally train them to witness, they may have lost much of the impact they could have had, had they been trained early in their Christian pilgrimage. The admonition to "train up a child in the way he should go, Even when he is old he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6) obviously has to do with physical growth. Perhaps there is a spiritual application also. If we would train up new believers—children in the faith—in the way they should grow through follow-up and discipleship, perhaps as they mature in the faith they would not be so easily led astray by those outside the family of faith.

Conclusion

Broken ground and firm foundations are of little benefit if no building is built. Biblical principles related to the building and growth process are Sound and effective. The implementation of these Sound process principles upon solid biblical foundations will produce growth. The prospects for that growth are indeed exciting.

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[127] Ralph W. Neighbour, Jr., *Survival Kit for New Christians* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1979).
[128] Avery T. Willis, Jr., *MasterL(fe* (Nashville: The Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention 1980, 1982).

Chapter 5: The Prospects of Church Growth

Winston Churchill reportedly once described the game of golf as "an ineffectual attempt to direct an incontrollable sphere into an inaccessible hole with instruments ill adapted to that purpose." As a high-handicapped, yet avid golfer, I can appreciate the statement. As a student and teacher of church growth evangelism, I can clearly see the relationship between the difficulty described by Churchill in playing golf and the difficulty of the church in reaching its prospects with the gospel.

While serving as a national consultant with the Home Mission Board's Evangelism Section, I remember a particular month in which the difficulty of our task was illustrated vividly. During that month I attended an all-day strategy meeting on "how to reach the people of America with the gospel of Jesus Christ"; I drove the freeways of Los Angeles, walked the streets of Manhattan Island in New York, pushed my way onto an overcrowded subway in Atlanta, Georgia, led a conference for several hundred adults, and spoke on a major university campus. As I completed my report at the end of the month, I became strangely aware of the very whelming and sometimes seemingly impossible task that is before us. The question of how to reach the masses of people with the gospel weighed heavy on my mind.

The church proposes to take the good news of Jesus Christ to the people of the world. In the midst of that task, it seems at times that we work with "instruments ill adapted to that purpose." Yet the gospel is still to be presented to the people and the masses of people are still there. The prospect of reaching the prospects is worthy of our consideration.

The Biblical Base for the Prospects

The biblical base for identifying the prospects for church growth evangelism is found in Matthew's account of the statement of Jesus to "make disciples of all the nations" (Matt. 18:19) and in Luke's account of our Lord's instruction that proclamation of His name should be shared "to all the nations" (Luke 24:47). In considering "all the nations" R. C. H. Lenski said:

> What diversity exists among the nations of the earth: race, color, location, climate, traits, achievements; yet they are all included in this command, for all are sinners, all have souls, all need and are capable of salvation through the grace of God. Jesus did not overshoot the mark here, the nations that have been reached by the gospel prove it today.[129]

The general concept of "the nations" has been taken a step further by the modern church growth emphasis. It has been interpreted to mean taking the gospel to each language or people group.

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[129] R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), 1173.

"The meaning is intended to be universal to all people groups but is applied generally."[130] Still more specifically, Delos Miles comments that these "nations" are "various ethnic groups, such as families, castes, tribes, and the mosaic of different homogeneous units in society."[131] Concerning Luke's account of the Commission, H. D. M. Spence said, "This is more definitely expressed in Matthew 28:19 and Mark 16:15 where the universality of his message, here summarized, is found in the form of a definite command."[132]

According to Mark 16:15 the scope of church growth includes "all creation."

> In the corresponding passage of Mark 16:15 it is "go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creatures" The only difference is that in this passage the sphere in its worldwide compass and its universality of "objects" is more fully and definitely expressed in the command to "make disciples of all *nations.*"[133]

Thus the difference between "all the nations" in Matthew and Luke and "all creation" in Mark is minimal. The important fact to remember is "under this commission the field of the gospel is wherever the gospel can be received, and the place appointed for Christian labor is literally everywhere."[134]

> In the Acts account of the commission of our Lord, the prospects for growing churches are defined as being located in "the remotest part of the earth" (1:8). In this account of our Lord's commission to His disciples, "this was Jesus' last word, as he passed behind the clouds. They did not forget it. Most of them, tradition says, died as martyrs in distant lands."[135] The field is endless, as it encompasses all of humanity, both then and now. The continued urgency of reaching the prospects for the church was expressed by Albert Barnes when he wrote, "The uttermost parts of the earth have been given to the Savior, and the church Should not rest until He whose right it is shall come and reign."[136]

Resources for Prospect Discovery

In one of their recent publications, the Glenmary Research Center in Washington, D. C., developed a profile of the unchurched.

> National surveys. . confirm that (when compared to the population as a whole) the unchurched are more likely to be: males; young adults; unmarried persons; manual

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[130] A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1930), 1:245.

[131] Delos Miles, *Church Growth: A Mighty River* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1981), 58.

[132] H. D. M. Spence, *Luke, Pulpit Commentary* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co., N.D.), 2:267.

[133] Henry M. Booth and Sunderland Lewis, *A Homiletic Commentary on the Gospel According to Matthew, The Preacher's Complete Homiletic Commentary* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co., n. d.), 7:656.

[134] W. N. Clark, *The Book of Mark, An American Commentary on the New Testament,* ed. Alvah Hovey (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1881), 2:258.

[135] Henry H. Halley, *Halley's Bible Handbook* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1927), 56.

[136] Albert Barnes, *Barnes Notes on the New Testament, Acts and Romans* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1949), 6.

workers; those who are not high school graduates; those living in cities of over 50,000 people; and those living in the Pacific Coast states.[137]

Russell Hale has classified the unchurched in the following categories:

Type one: The anti-institutionalists
Type two: The boxed-in.
Type three: The burned-out.
Type four: The cop-outs.
Type five: The happy hedonists.
Type six: The locked-out.
Type seven: The nomads.
Type eight: The pilgrims.
Type nine: The publicans,
Type ten: The scandalized.
Type eleven: The true unbelievers.
Type twelve: The uncertain.[138]

The same group of unchurched is categorized by Robert Dale and Delos Miles as: "The left-outs, the drop-outs, the locked-outs, and the opt-outs." [139]

To have a vision of reaching all people with the gospel is to be in tune with the biblical mandate. To be able to identify who some of those people are is to be in touch with the practical application of that mandate. Speaking to the Urban Evangelism Fellowship at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary recently, Jim Queen, pastor of the Uptown Baptist Church in Chicago, said, "If you don't know your community, you have no idea how to witness to them or to adapt the gospel to them." Fortunately, there are ways of knowing some of the people who are prospects for the gospel.

Many of the tried and proven methods of discovering prospects are still valid.[140] One can still secure names of new persons in town from utility companies and school systems. One can still go to county courthouses and read census and demographic information related to the community in which ministry is to be conducted. One can still study development plans of housing authorities and urban planning leagues to anticipate new growth in the area. One of the oldest methods of discovering prospects is still one of the most effective methods; namely, door-to-door survey of a neighborhood.[141]

The door-to-door survey method of discovering prospects may find its most current "exhibit A" testimony of usefulness in the case of the Saddleback Community Church in Mission

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[137] David A. Roogen, *The Churched and the Unchurched in America* (Washington, D.C.: Gleninary Research Center, 1978), 2.

[138] J. Russell Hale, *Who Are the Churched?* (Washington, D.C: Glen- mary Research Center, 1977), 39-44.

[139] Robert D. Dale and Delos Miles, *Evangelizing the Hard-to-Reach* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1986), 14-16.

[140] One excellent resource for prospect discovery is *People Search Guide* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1973).

[141] For an excellent resource on evangelistic prospect discovery, see *Manualfor Discovery and Cultivation of Evangelistic Prospects* (Atlanta: Home Mission Board, SBC, 1986.)

Viejo, California, south of Los Angeles. Nine years ago, Rick Warren graduated from Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and drove to Southern California with a vision of starting a church. Targeting the Saddleback Valley, Rick conducted a door-to-door survey. Based on the response to that survey, a mass mail out announced the beginning of the new church. The church was almost immediately successful in reaching people and it has averaged an attendance of over 4,000 per week in worship and an annual baptism total of over 300. The far-reaching impact of this church is seen in Warren's commitment to starting new churches. A recent article stated: "When the church began in 1980, he proposed they start a church a year. To date they've started nine churches—eight of which have continued and grown to be self-supporting. They plan to start ten more churches during the next year."[142]

One of my responsibilities at Southwestern Seminary is to supervise the Home Mission Board's Summer Church Starting Praxis Program. Through this program approximately seventy seminary students spend ten weeks each summer attempting to start new churches. Students are interviewed, selected, oriented, and placed in areas where we have no Southern Baptist work. Armed many times with more zeal than knowledge, they survey the community to learn its needs and what the possibilities are of beginning a Southern Baptist church. The primary method of discovery is door-to-door visitation. Students have discovered that, while other methods of prospect discovery may be quicker, there is no substitute for face-to-face encounters with people. John T. Sisemore, one of Southern Baptists' most experienced Sunday School leaders, supports the prospect discovery method of door-to-door surveying:

> As the principles of growth are applied, all other steps may be taken, but without this step—continual visiting, going after new persons, following up on absentees—little or no growth can be expected. In Sunday School work, nothing produces more growth than making a crusade out of systematic, continual, and personal cultivation visitation by concerned Christians to the homes of persons not involved in regular Bible Study.[143]

Another means of prospect discovery is the use of the telephone. In the early 1960s Campus Crusade for Christ made significant use of the telephone as a part of their "I Found It" campaign. Media spots always included toll-free number or a local number where a person could call to find out more about the Christian life. Trained volunteers staffed telephone banks, taking incoming calls and witnessing for Christ. Prospect information secured from these calls was passed on to local churches.

In 1968 the Baptist General Convention of Texas was involved in an evangelistic program entitled "Good News Texas." At that time, I was director of Baptist Campus Ministry at the University of Texas. We designed our own "Good News (University of) Texas" campaign. Twenty-five telephones were installed in a large room, and 125 students were trained to use the phone to discover evangelistic prospects. At that time over 30,000 students were enrolled in the University of Texas (U. T.). Our goal was to call every student listed in the U. T. phone directory. We divided the phone book equally among the twenty-five telephones. For fifteen

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[142] "Saddleback Valley Community Church News," Monthly Newsletter of the Saddleback Valley Community Church, Mission Viejo, Calif., 4 (6 July 1987), 2.

[143] John T. Sisemore, "Understanding and Applying the Principles of Enlargement," *A Guide To Sunday School Enlargement,* comp. George W. Stuart (Nashville: Convention Press, 1968), 41.

days, twelve hours a day, students used the phone to call other students and ask if they had heard of "Living Proof." Other students were involved in direct follow-up of prospects who were identified through the telephone survey. While there were many telephone conversations that resulted in verbal professions of faith, we counted only those that we could confirm by personal follow-up. [n our campaign we made twenty-five thousand phone calls, actually/ sharing the Witness with ten thousand students, resulting in fifty confirmed professions of faith and over one hundred other decisions. These- new Christians were then contacted by Southern Baptist churches near the university.

Presently, each of my students in Church Growth Evangelism classes at Southwestern Seminary is required to be a part of a telephone survey of a selected area of Tarrant County. To date we have surveyed over three thousand persons located in eight sections of Tarrant County. Through this academic project, prospects are passed on to Southern Baptist churches in the community being surveyed.

Four questions are asked of the survey participants:
1. *Are you an active member of a local church?* We discovered a consistent decreasing of active church members from the inner city to the suburbs.
2. *In your opinion what is the greatest need in your area of the city/county?* We discovered the hopelessness of the inner city and the lack of awareness of the community demonstrated by those living in the suburbs. We also discovered that church members tended to spiritualize their answers to this question. It was easier to say that the greatest need in the area was a spiritual need than it was to give some visible need in the community, such as better law enforcement, better housing, or better youth activities. When people say the greatest need is spiritually related, the next step is to leave the answering of that need to the church. In many minds that tends to relieve one of personal responsibility. This may explain the tremendous number of unmet needs in our communities.
3. *In your opinion, why do most people not attend church?* A frequently heard answer is related to the word *hypocrite* but from these surveys we have discovered that this answer decreased as surveyors moved toward the suburbs. Perhaps this is because the level of church attendance, and thus awareness, decreased from the inner city to the suburbs. The answer of "too busy" tended to increase in the suburbs from the inner city.
   The fourth question was a split question. To those who had answered question I indicating they were an active member of a local church, we asked:
4. *What would your church need to do to be more appealing to nonchurc/j members?*
   On the other hand, to those who answered question 1 indicating they were not members of a local church, we asked:
5. *If you were looking for a church to attend, what would you look for?*

The contrast in answer to these two questions, while alarming, was in keeping with more professional, national surveys. The non- church members said they were looking for "friendliness" in a church. The church members rated "friendliness" very low. This one factor is more important than we think it is. It tends to increase in importance from the inner city to the suburbs where we discovered a greater sensitivity to needs.

The highest area of response from church members dealt with visitation and outreach (we are programmed to give this answer) and better programs. According to the nonchurch member answers, these areas are less important in outreach than we think they are. It is obviously important in the growth and maintenance of a church but less important in the initial evangelistic outreach. The nonchurch members seem to be saying, "Make your church a friendly church and be our friends and we will attend." On the other hand, church members are saying, "We want to improve our programs and come and visit you in your home." While better programs and more effective visitation are not bad methods of outreach, they must demonstrate a genuine sense of concern for persons and a willingness to be friends even if they don't attend our programs.

Apparently, the success of using the telephone in prospect discovery has been realized in larger cities. Just recently I received a very attractive brochure inviting me to attend a seminar in telemarketing for the local church. This seminar has resulted in the starting of hundreds of new churches according to the report in the *National and International Religion Report.* The plan, created by Norm Whan, Director of Church Planting for the Friends Church (Quakers), works something like this:

> Volunteers and hired students make 20,000 phone calls of 45 seconds or less to ascertain interest; about 2000 unchurched people are willing to receive mailed information; five mailings and final calls follow over four weeks; usually some 200 will attend the first service, and 100 will return the next week. A church started in Huntington Beach, California, with 56,000 calls pulled 502 people into two services on opening day.[144]

The members of First Baptist Church in Garland, Texas, and Baptist volunteers in Portland, Oregon, made more than 40,000 long distance phone calls to begin a church in Lake Oswego, Oregon, a suburb of Portland. Both groups used a crisscross directory. Out of these calls, a mailing list was developed. The total cost of the project was estimated to be $35,000—most of which was donated in the form of long distance phone calls. According to John Kramp, associate pastor at First Baptist Church in Garland and new pastor of the church in Lake Oswego, "the whole strategy here is we're trying to spend money up front to get a church to a self-sustaining level more quickly."[145] Did it work? On the first Sunday of the new church, 160 persons were in attendance, responding from a mailing list of 3,037 Lake Oswego residents. While the percentage of response was lower than the national average, the number present "rivaled the largest Baptist Church in Portland."[146]

According to Norm Whan, after three years of "The Phone is for You" (name of this telemarketing approach) more than 20 million telephone calls have been made, and approximately 2 million families have agreed to be placed on a church's mailing list. Over 200,000 people worshiped in new churches on their first Sunday of services. This program has been used by more than ninety different denominations in several countries.

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[144] "How to Start a New Church: Use Telemarketing and Direct Mail," *National and International Religion Report,* 2 (29 February 1988), 3. 115

[145] John Rutledge, "FBC Garland Reaches Out to Plant Church in Oregon," *Baptist Standard,* 2 February 1988, 8.

[146] Clay Renick, "Teleplanting Yields 160 in First Service," *Baptist Standard,* 23 March 1988, 12.

While very indirect in its approach, the method of telephone prospect discovery opens doors for more direct personal ministry and witness. I will never forget the evening in the midst of our "Good News (University of) Texas" telephone campaign when a student hung up the phone and began to weep. As we gathered around her, she regained her composure and shared with us the response to her questions. When she asked the person on the phone "Would you like for someone to come to your room and talk to you about Jesus Christ?" the response was, "I don't care what you talk about as long as someone comes to my room and talks. It would be the first time since *I* have been a student here that anyone has come to visit me about anything."

Modern technology has given us access to effective ways of discovering prospects. *Reside. The National Zip Code Encyclopedia is* a publication of Claritas, The Target Marketing Company, 201 N. Union Street, Alexandria, VA 22314. This encyclopedia of demographic information is an invaluable resource. While most churches would not be able to purchase such an encyclopedia (the last price available was just under $1,000 for the nine-volume encyclopedia), most major universities have such encyclopedias in their library holdings. A person may take any zip code in the United States, go to the *Reside* encyclopedias and discover 125 categories of demographic information related to that zip code. These categories include current Population as well as projected population, number of households, marital status, home values, and age distribution in that zip code. In addition to these, there are two rather creative categories. The first is a **"**ZQ rating" which stands for zip quality rating. This number indicates whether a zip is higher, lower, or equal to the Unites States quality norm. It is a highly sensitive category which distinguishes between lower-, middle-, and upper-class areas. It has four components which rate the socioeconomic status of the zip code. These components are household income, educational attainment, occupation, and home value.

The other creative demographic category is "Family Life Cycle Code" which gives the predominant patterns of families and non- family living arrangements within a certain zip code. These categories include prechild family, postchild family, childbearing family, early child-rearing family, late child-rearing family, child- launching family, young singles, and senior citizens.[147]

Another means of prospect discovery made possible by modern technology is illustrated by National Decision Systems. By paying a one-time membership fee one can order information from this agency as often as he likes. Selecting any intersection in the United States, the member can call National Decision System's toll-free number and ask for demographic information on this intersection ranging up to a ten-mile radius. Within twenty-four hours the company will send up to six pages of demographic information related to that intersection. The price varies depending on the amount of information desired and the number of radii wanted for the particular intersection. (Six pages of information on one radius from an intersection recently cost me $125.) Available information includes population and population estimates, number of households, estimated income per household, population by sex, population by age, population by household type, population by ethnic group, marital status, population by urban versus rural, population by students enrolled in schools, educational level, population by occupational

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[147] Information on *Reside. The National Zip Code Encyclopedia* may be secured by writing Claritas, The Target Marketing Company, 201 N. Union *Street,* Alexandria, VA 22314, or calling 1-800-3682063 Regional offices are located in Farmington, CT; New York City; Alexandria, VA; Chicago, IL; Santa Monica, FL.

position, estimated travel time to work, type of transportation used by families, household incomes, and years when housing units were built. A recent addition to their services provides a Vision Area Profile Report that describes the types of persons who live in a given area. While this method is a bit more expensive than older methods, it is certainly much faster and many times provides more accurate information.

One negative feature of both the *Reside Encyclopedia* and companies such as National Decision Systems is the fact that their demographic information is primarily based on Census Bureau facts, which means it needs to be updated every ten years. Obviously then, information gained from these sources in 1989 would be somewhat out of date, whereas information gained in 1992 would be extremely accurate.[148]

Various studies have shown the best prospects for church membership are those persons who visit in the church worship services. Other excellent prospects are persons who have recently moved into the area served by the church, persons in the church field who have felt needs to which the church can minister, and Close friends of present church members. Most of these prospects will live within an outreach radius—_the distance around the church facilities within which the church can realistically expect to reach people. This may not be a perfect circle due to various barriers that hinder church growth, such as highways, freeways, mountains, hills, bodies of water, railroad tracks, shopping malls, and large apartment complexes.

A national survey conducted for the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board showed the travel distance to church was as follows:

20% traveled one mile or less
40% traveled one to five miles
23% traveled five to ten miles
6% traveled ten to fifteen miles
5% traveled fifteen to twenty-five miles
3% traveled more than twenty-five miles
7% indicated they did not attend church.[149]

Prospect Case Studies

To know how to find prospects is well and good. To know what some churches have done with those prospects is even better. In this section I wish to share some very brief case studies from churches in the United States who have discovered their prospects and developed creative ways of reaching those prospects.

Bear Valley Baptist Church is located on a major Denver, Colorado, through street. Sandwiched between two other churches, it lacks the physical facilities to reach large numbers of people. Yet it is the operational base from which over 1,000 people carry on a remarkable

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[148] More information on National Decision Systems may be secured by writing National Decision Systems, Box 9007, Encitas, CA 92024, or National Decision Systems, 8618 Westwood Center Drive, Vienna, VA 22180 or by calling 1-800877556O

[149] "About Half of All Active Church Members Travel Four or More Miles to Church," *Research Digest* 9 (Sept. 1987), 1.

ministry in the city of Denver. In 1970 approximately 100 people were active in the church. In 1985 the church recorded 1,013 resident members with an average Sunday School attendance of 976. This growth occured in a church facility whose auditorium seats *275* persons. Pastor Frank Tillapaugh has successfully led the church to become involved in target group ministries, an approach which until recent years has been more identified with para-church groups. According to Tillapaugh, "In the church our choice is to either target group the city and get back in touch with the other two-thirds of the people or carry on business as usual with the shrinking middle class."[150] Because of this priority, Bear Valley Baptist Church has been successful in reaching into that "other two-thirds," which many times includes persons needing serious counseling, single adults, international students, senior adults, and street people. In his book *Unleashing the Church,* Tillapaugh devoted one chapter to each of these target groups.

To help students in Church Growth Evangelism classes, I use the demographic information available on Irving, Texas. Irving is located northwest of Dallas, Texas, and stretches all the way to the edge of Dallas-Fort Worth Airport. It is home to more than just the Dallas Cowboys! Students quickly learn that this suburban area has experienced a tremendous growth over the past 30 years. In 1985 the population of Irving was 139,387. The projected population for 1990 is *153,267,* indicating the city is continuing to experience significant growth. This growth is especially attributable to a large influx of young couples and single adults.[151]

As Irving began to expand outward from the old downtown area occupied by First Baptist Church (zip code 75060), Plymouth Park Baptist Church was begun (zip code 75061) and experienced a phenomenal amount of growth in its early years. It grew quickly past the 1,000 mark in Sunday School attendance by the mid 1960s. By that time, Irving had grown even further north beyond First Baptist Church and Plymouth Park Baptist Church. Yet another church had begun, MacArthur Blvd. Baptist Church which also experienced significant early growth (zip code 75062). Other churches, such as North Irving Baptist Church, were begun in this same general area. Irving continued to grow and develop into the Las Colinas community of exclusive neighborhoods and high property values—and little property available for churches (75038). Recently First Baptist Church purchased ten acres in the Las Colinas area and began to hold services in a business complex nearby in addition to holding services in the old location.

While Irving continues to grow in many areas, the most exciting recent growth has been even further north into the Valley Ranch area (75063). Here Southern Baptists started the Valley Ranch Baptist Church with twenty-eight charter members from the Park Cities Baptist Church in Dallas. The Valley Ranch Baptist Church grew to 150 members in eleven months. The nearest Southern Baptist Church is three miles away. The membership reflects the demography of Valley Ranch where the average age is 30, and 60 percent of the members are single. The Senior Adult Sunday Class is for those age thirty-six and over. Pastor Paul Basden described the church: "We have a high education profile, but we are not really 'Yuppies.' We are more like 'dinks' and 'dinkys'; i.e., dual income, no kids, and dual income, no kids yet."[152]

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[150] Frank R. Tillapaugh, *Unleashing the Church* (Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books, 1982), 46.

[151] All demographic information on *Irving,* Texas, secured from *Reside: The National Zip Code Encyclopedia* for zip codes 75060, 75061, 75062, 75038, and 75063.

[152] Nancy Caver, "Anatomy of a Start-up Church," *Las Colinas Weekly,* 2 April 1987, 13.

A recent article indicated, "Valley Ranch Baptist Church has outgrown its temporary location at the Valley Ranch La Petite Academy, now that the church boasts over 200 members. Paul Basden is moving his congregation to another temporary location at the Barbara S. Austin Elementary School."[153] With a goal to reach 1,000 in the next five years, this aggressive new church serves as a role model of church starting and church growth in a suburban area.

In the multiethnic city of San Francisco, California, the Nineteenth Avenue Baptist Church discovered ways of reaching this ethnic culture. In addition to the English speaking congregation, "Nineteenth Avenue has five ethnic congregations under its umbrella: Japanese, Arabic speaking, Vietnamese, Cantonese speaking, and Cambodian."[154] While each congregation is allowed to have its own leadership and develop its own outreach programs, Bill Smith, pastor of the English speaking congregation, serves as senior pastor for the entire church. In this kind of setting, evangelistic contacts come often through what Smith calls "faith counseling, dealing with the questions of seekers."[155]

First Baptist Church, Dallas, Texas, is the largest Southern Baptist church in the world. The buildings Occupy more than six city blocks valued at several hundred million dollars. The church has continued to grow in spite of its inner-city location. "In addition to the priority of the Sunday School for growth of First Baptist Church, the pastor attributes the increase to four other factors: (1) prayer, (2) visitation and personal soul winning, (3) meeting felt needs, and (4) preaching the Bible as the Word of God."[156]

The Allen Temple Baptist Church of Oakland, California, began in 1919 in an area that was predominantly white. Today the community surrounding Allen Temple is 90 percent black and best described as inner city and transitional. Yet' the church has experienced growth in every decade of its existence. During the twenties the church grew 76 percent; during the thirties, 119 percent; during the forties, 237 percent; during the fifties, 49 percent; during the sixties, 150 percent; and during the seventies, 144 percent.[157] The present membership is approximately three thousand. Pastor J. Alfred Smith attributes the growth of the church under his leadership to the ability of the church to relate to needs. Some of these needs are: education, health care, housing, employment and economic assistance, recreation, counseling, and citizenship development. "Since 1970 more than 100 persons each year have been baptized into the membership of Allen Temple. In 1981 for example there were 120 and in 1980 there were 110. Thus about 30% of all new members came through conversion and baptism."[158]

The key to growth of the Hyde Park Baptist Church in Austin, Texas, is described by pastor Ralph M. Smith as follows: "The Sunday School is the agency of the church designed to carry out the evangelistic and missionary purpose for which the church was founded."[159] The Sunday School at Hyde Park has an enrollment nearing six thousand with an average attendance

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[153] Kirk Dooley, "Valley Ranch Church," *Las Colinas Weekly, 4* February 1988, 2.

[154] "Nineteenth Avenue Baptist Church: Church of the Nations," *The Commission,* April 1986, 25-26.

[155] Ibid, 20.

[156] John N. Vaughan, *The World's Twenty Largest Churches* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), 130.

[157] G. Willis Bennett, *Guidelines for Effective Urban Church Ministry* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1983), 109.

[158] Ibid, 118

[159] Ralph M. Smith and Bob Edd Shotwell, *Helping Churches Grow* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1986), 9.

of approximately three thousand. Church membership has recently exceeded ten thousand. Located near the University of Texas, in one of the fastest growing cities in the South, Hyde Park Baptist Church has grown a Sunday School and thus a church through the use of nine growth principles. These principles described by minister of education and administration, Bob Edd Shotwell, are as follows:

Principle 1. Make a commitment to grow.
Principle 2. Identify and enroll prospects.
Principle 3. Expand the organizatjo
Principle 4. Enlist workers.
Principle 5. Train workers
Principle 6. Provide adequate space and equipment,
Principle 7. Conduct weekly workers meetings.
Principle 8. Promote outreach.
Principle 9. Teach the Bible to win the lost and develop the saved.[160]

Smoke Rise Baptist Church is located in rapidly growing Stone Mountain, Georgia. It is a good example of a church growing through transfer expansion. The area surrounding the church is primarily owner.occupjed housing, occupied by white, middle- class families whose average age is thirty. The median property value is in excess of sixty-five thousand dollars and 30 percent of the adult population have college degrees. More than half of the homes have been built since 1970, and the transition in the area is extremely high. Smoke Rise Baptist Church was recently listed by the Home Mission Board as one of the ten fastest growing churches in the Southern Baptist Convention. While the church has baptized more than fifty people per year for most of the past decade, the real growth has come through additions by letter. In the last few years those additions have exceeded two hundred per year. The church has experienced growth without spending its *resources* on media advertising or worship service broadcasts. The primary means of growth has come through word of mouth by satisfied members. In addition to this, the athletic program of the church (softball leagues, basketball leagues, golf tournaments) has been particularly appealing to the Young adults who move into the area.[161]

The Wyatt Park Baptist Church in Saint Joseph, Missouri, is in an "in-between" land. In many ways Saint Joseph resembles Bible-belt territory. From many other perspectives, it is new territory for evangelical work by Southern Baptists. In a recent study, Wyatt Park Baptist Church discovered mixed signals about the growth of the area. While demographic information showed the area to be declining, the Chamber of Commerce figures Showed it to be growing. Whatever the case, they realized that over one- third of the population was between the ages of thirty-five and fifty-four. Single adults made up 41 percent of the adult population of the town. As to the educational level, 63 percent of the adult population were high school graduates with another 24 percent having some college training. Yet in a town of some affluence and high education level, they also discovered that *35* percent of the households had incomes of less than ten thousand dollars per year. In this city of eighty-five thousand people, Wyatt Park Baptist Church seeks to reach out and grow.[162]

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[160] Ibid, 36-69.
[161] Demographic information on Stone Mountain, Georgia, secured from National Decision Systems, Vienna, Va.
[162] Demographic information on St. Joseph, Missouri, secured through National Decision Systems, Vienna, Va.

During the recent Southern Baptist "Good News America, God Loves You" simultaneous revival efforts, Wyatt Park Baptist Church decided to do it "right by the book." As a result of home visitation and prayer meetings before the revival, a significant number of persons united with the church. The attitude of "we are located in a prominent place in the city and if anyone wants us, they will call us" seemed to change to "we must be aggressive in reaching out to the needs of this city." To reach the city Pastor Jimmy Aibright led the church to be involved in civic activities, such as a city-wide corporate cup marathon relay. Wyatt Park Baptist Church not only entered the corporate cup but emerged the winner three years in succession. Pastor Aibright runs as a part of the marathon team, is a vital part of Chamber of Commerce activities, serves on various boards and agencies in the town, and teaches a course at Missouri Western State College in Saint Joseph. Identifying with the prospects may be one of the first steps in reaching those prospects.

Uptown Baptist Church in Chicago ministers in an area that is two miles from north to south and one mile from east to west. In this small geographical area, there are 120,000 people. Thirty- seven language groups are represented in the local high school. Nine languages are represented in the membership of Uptown Baptist Church. On a typical Sunday morning in worship service at least eighteen countries may be represented. Single parents make up *95* percent of the new members of Uptown Baptist Church. Adding to the diversity of the neighborhood is the fact that one mile to the east of this church territory is the Lakefront or "Gold Coast" area which is occupied by young adult, urban professionals.

Pastor Jim Queen, who grew up in the area, has led the church to minister actively to the needs of the people in the community. The church Sponsors a food program that serves 350 persons per *week,* including providing formula and cereal for infants. Furniture, clothes and medical assistance are supplied to families in need. The church provides shelter for forty homeless women. Along with other agencies, the church is involved in counseling, refugee sponsorship, and neighborho0 work release programs. To reach the people of this ethnically diverse community, the church has congregations for Koreans, Cambodians, Ethiopians, and Hispanics. Work is also beginning among the Russian people in the area. The Englishspeaking congregation has deacons from Jamaica, Nigeria, Mexico, and Belize.[163] Yet with all this social ministry, Pastor Queen recently told a group of students at Southwestern Seminary, "Everything a church does in ministries must have evangelism in it or it is not Christian."

Metro Baptist Church of New York City is located in what is referred to as "Hell's Kitchen." It is a neighborho0 of homeless, low to upper income groups, filled with drug problems and crime. Yet Pastor Gene Bolin feels it is a great place to have a church.

> My own sense of call is to reach people for Christ. If I am going fishing, I don't dig a hole, pour water in **it** and wait for the fish to come—I go where the fish are. If I am going to *reach* people, there is no greater concentration of them than here in our largest city.[164]

On Bolin's first Sunday as pastor of Metro Baptist Church in 1979, twelve people attended the

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[163] See also Kathy Choy, "The Cities: Models for Ministry, Jim Queen, Chicago," *Missions USA,* July-August 1987, 46.

[164] "The Cities: Models for Ministry, Gene Bolin, New York City," *Missions USA,* July-AugUst 1987, 47.

service. In seven years, attendance has grown to three hundred. To reach the lower income people, Metro reaches out through a clothes closet and a soup kitchen and works with other agencies to provide a women's shelter and a Head Start Program. To reach the aesthetic needs of the community Metro sponsors art exhibits and a theater group.

1 have chosen to cite churches with diverse methods of reaching prospects rather than highlight the fastest growing churches. Obviously, fast growing churches are using effective methods. According to John N. Vaughan:

> *57* American churches grew by 500 or more in worship attendance during 1986. Led by four Southern Baptist churches: Second Baptist in Houston, First Baptist in Houston, Brentwood Baptist in Houston and North Phoenix Baptist in Phoenix, these 57 churches were predominantly located in rapidly growing states. Eleven were in Texas, eight were in California, five were in Colorado (all in metropolitan Denver), and four were in Georgia (all in metropolitan Atlanta). Of these 57 churches 22 are independent congregations, while 13 are Southern Baptist and 7 are Assemblies of God.[165]

While their methods vary, they are all discovering and reaching prospects with great effectiveness.

Prospects to the Remotest Part of the Earth

More than a century ago, people concerned about reaching the world for Christ met and heard a call for the "evangelization of the world in this generation." At that time it was not clear how the job would be accomplished, but the enthusiastic response was overwhelming. By the time that meeting had ended, one hundred students had responded to the challenge of world evangelization. The seed of the Student Volunteer Mission Movement were planted.[166] Although the vision has grown dim at times, it appears to be growing clear once again. World evangelization must be more than just an impassioned plea or a distant vision. It must be a worthy goal and a present priority.

The world population has passed the five billion mark and continues to grow. The estimated births per 1,000 people in the world continues to increase year after year. Yet with this rapidly increasing world population, both the number and percent of Christians has shown only nominal increase. According to David Barrett, editor of the *World Christian Encyclopedia,* the number of Christians rose in 1986 to 1.64 billion up from 1.57 billion in *1985.* The same year showed an increase in the percentage of Christians from 32.4 percent to 32.9 percent.[167]

According to the *Annual Statistical Table on Global Mission: 1987,* China has become the fastest expanding nation for church growth:

> This year's surveys indicate that China has a total of at least 81,600 worship centers (churches, congregations, house groups) with 21,500,000 baptized adult believers, and a

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[165] John N. Vaughan, "America's 500 Fastest Growing Churches, Part 2," *Church Growth Today,* 2, 4:2-3.

[166] David J. Hasseigrave, "Major Trends and Issues in World Missions Today," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly,* July 1987, 300.

[167] "Number of Christians in World Reported Up in 1986," *The Dallas Morning News,* 30 May 1987, 37a.

total Christian community of 52,152,000 Christians affiliated to churches, including children.[168]

This increase of Christians in the world comes in spite of the fact that over 50 percent of all Protestant ministers reside within the United States. Again David Barrett estimates that "by the year 2000 there will be 4.3 billion Christians in the world who will be living where missionaries cannot go."[169] To reach people in the remotest part of the earth, more persons are going to have to hear and respond to God's call to more places.

What Are the Prospects?

Depending on the perspective one takes, the Prospects for evangelizing this world can seem either bright or dim, hopeful or hopeless, challenging or depressing. When one considers that of the 240,000,000 persons in the United States, 96,000,000 (40 percent) have no religious affiliation and another 73,000,000 (31 percent) are Christians "in name only," the prospects look dim.[170] When one considers that 80 to 85 percent of all churches in America are either plateaued or are declining, the prospects look dim.[171] When one considers that in 1900 there were twenty-seven churches for every 10,000 and in 1985 there were only twelve churches for 10,000 Americans, the prospects look dim.[172]

> Most of the world's largest cities are now in developing countries and they are growing to sizes never before experienced. The urban population is growing several times as fast as the rural areas, either through natural growth (the difference in numbers between births and deaths) or through migration from rural areas. . . More than 40% of the world population currently lives in the urban areas. This will increase to more than 50% shortly after the turn of the century.[173]

In light of this fact and the fact that evangelicals have been slow in reaching the major cities of the world, the prospects look dim. In light of the fact that "the churches are losing the cities at the rate of 80,900 new nonChristjan urban dwellers every day, or one every second,"[174] the prospects look dim.

In light of recent statements by David Barrett concerning the large number of persons who will Soon be living where missionaries cannot go, the prospects look dim.

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[168] David B. Barrett, "Annual Statistical Table on Global Mission: 1987," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research,* January 1987, 24.

[169] Harold C. Barnett, "My Prayer: That God Will Heal Our Peopie," *The Baptist Program,* April 1987, 11 (Article includes quote by David Barrett).

[170] "America—The Mission Field," *The Win Am Growth Report,* 13 (1986): 3.

[171] Ibid.

[172] Ibid.

[173] "Urban Problems Highlighted in 1986 State of the World Report," *World Population News Service Popline,* 8 (May 1986): 4.

[174] David B. Barrett, "Annual Statistical Table on Global Mission: 1986," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research,* January 1986, 22.

However, there is a bright side to the future. While one can become frustrated, and even defeated, in the dim darkness of what appears to be a future of hopelessness that same one can also turn on the light and become encouraged by the possibility of future hope.

When one thinks of creative programming like that done in Bear Valley Baptist Church in Denver, Colorado, the future looks bright.

When one thinks of the aggressiveness of new churches like Valley Ranch Baptist Church in Irving, Texas, the future looks bright.

When one thinks of the diversity of the Nineteenth Avenue Baptist Church in San Francisco, California, the future looks bright.

When one thinks of the stability of the First Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas, the future looks bright.

When one thinks of the ministry of the Allen Temple Baptist Church in Oakland, California, the future looks bright.

When one thinks of the growth of the Hyde Park Baptist Church in Austin, Texas, the future looks bright.

When one thinks of the youthfulness and energy of the Smoke Rise Baptist Church in Stone Mountain, Georgia, the future looks bright.

When one thinks of the community involvement of the Wyatt Park Baptist Church in Saint Joseph, Missouri, the future looks bright.

When one thinks of the spiritual toughness of the Uptown Baptist Church in Chicago, Illinois, the future looks bright.

When one thinks of the courage of the Metro Baptist Church in New York City, the future looks bright.

When one thinks of the rapidly growing Southern Baptist churches like Second Baptist, Houston; First Baptist, Houston; Brentwood Baptist, Houston; North Phoenix Baptist, Phoenix; Prestonwood Baptist, Dallas; Travis Avenue Baptist, Fort Worth; Roswell Street Baptist, Marietta, Georgia; First Baptist, Bossier City, Louisiana; First Baptist, Orlando, Florida; and Trinity Baptist, San Antonio, the future looks bright.

When one thinks of hundreds of churches across this nation and around this world who are creatively and sincerely reaching out to the non-Christian world, the future looks bright.

When one sits as often as I do on the chapel stage of an evangelical seminary and looks out into the faces of men and women called by God to special tasks, the future looks bright.

When one attends a missionary commissioning service and hears the testimonies of persons upon whom God has placed a very special responsibility, the future looks bright.

Howard Ramsey, director of personal evangelism for the Home Mission Board, recently calculated that there are eighty-five thousand ordained ministers and church staff members in the Southern Baptist Convention If each one of these were to lead five people to faith in Christ each year and see them followed up in believer's baptism, the Southern Baptist Convention would have over four hundred thousand baptisms per year—a figure that has been reached only a few times in history. In light of this possibility, the future looks bright.

Last, but perhaps most important of all, when one opens the Word of God and reads again the commissions of the risen Lord and is made aware of the promises of the presence of the Holy Spirit's power for world evangelizaj the future looks bright.

Conclusion

If we had to discover a prospect, bear a witness, or grow a church by ourselves, the task would be impossible. If we were only supported by each other in the tasks, the job would likewise be impossible. But "we are witnesses to these things we and the Holy Spirit" (Acts *5:32,* GNB). The task is not ours to attempt alone, either individually or corporately We are not smart enough. We are not creative enough. We are not innovative enough. We do not have enough strategy. We do not have enough human resources. But we are not alone. We do not attempt this task in our strength. We are promised and assured of the presence and the power of God Himself for the task of world evangelization. It is time now to look at a church growth word related to power.

Chapter 6: The Power for Church Growth

All persons desire power. Every issue of the daily newspaper and every television newscast proves that statement. Whether in politics or government or business or athletics or entertainment or in the home, power is a desired attainment. The road to achievement of power begins with the question, "Is the source of power within me, or is it located outside of me?" Once this question is answered, the next question concerns the implementation of power, whether within or without. Let me illustrate.

I began the preceding chapter with a quotation from Winston Churchill about the difficulty of the game of golf. Every golfer who read that quotation knew when I described myself as a "high handicapped, yet avid golfer" there would be a golf story before the book was finished. Golfers, wait no longer—here is my golf story. I am such an avid golfer that I often do not need a partner. If the desire to play golf is present, the time is available and a course is near, I will sometimes play alone. Such was the case earlier this year at a golf course near Ridgecrest, North Carolina. Since no partner was available and since the course was not busy that day, I

played two shots at each lie (a sort of one-man, best-ball tournament). Even with this added possibility of a low score, my game was horrible. It seemed the more I tried, the worse I got. Shots were flying to the right and to the left. I was hitting under the ball and on top of the ball and was becoming quite frustrated in all my attempts. Finally, I though of what I should have remembered on the first tee box, "Let the club do the work." Even though I learned this practical tip years ago, I seem to forget it when I take a club in my hand. With this tip remembered, suddenly the ball began to fly straighter and more accurately and with greater power. What was the secret? Did the fact that my game was suffering indicate that the real source of power was from within me and not being used properly? Or did the fact that my game improved drastically when the practical tip was remembered indicate that the real source of power was outside of me? The question is as easy to answer as another question, "Which came first—the chicken or the egg?" Just remembering to "let the clubs do the work" did not mean those clubs would do the work alone, I still had to hold the club correctly, swing properly, move my body weight at the right time, impact the ball at the right instant, and follow through fully. Once I did my part and relaxed in that discipline, the clubs began to do their part. Together the desired end was achieved.

There is a similar paradox between the power of God and the power of methods developed by persons. This past spring semester two pastors asked me to recommend someone for an additional staff member. The first pastor said, "My main concern is that he understand church growth methods. We will take care of the rest." The second pastor said of his prospective staff member, "Since only Christ can grow his church, we desire someone who primarily is willing to be faithful to Jesus Christ." Neither pastor was trying to be exclusive and unbalanced. This diversity represents the paradox under discussion. Does our real power come from our human ingenuity, creativity, and innovation? Or does our real power come from a source outside us—namely, the Holy Spirit of God—which we must tap for our own use? Herb Miller, an executive in the Disciples of Christ said:

> Which comes first—the chicken or the egg?. . . Actually, both come first. The egg is potential within the chicken. The chicken is potential within the egg. On the other hand, neither comes first. It is always God who comes first. He gives the power *for* life to both chicken and egg. "In the beginning, God" (Genesis 1:1) is likewise the answer to evangelism's God/method paradox.[175]

Paradox though it may be, let us consider the power for church growth evangelism.

The Biblical Base for the Power

The biblical base for this power is seen in the word *pneumatos* or spirit (Matt. 28:19; John 20:22; Acts l:8)—that "power from on high" (Luke 24:49). "The word *pneunzatog* for spirit in Matthew and John *(and Acts)* referred to the enabling power of God in the lives of man."[176] Concerning the use of this word n John's Gospel, James E. Carter said:

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[175] Herb Miller, *Evangelism's Open Secrets* (St. Louis: CPB Press, 1977), 78.

[176] Edward Schweiyer, "Preuma," *Theologiscijes Woerterbuch zum neuen Testament,* ed. Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart: Verlag von W. Kohl- hammer, 1956), 6:401.

Having commissioned them, Jesus also empowered them for the task he had called them to do. He breathed on them and said to them, Receiye the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22). The power they would need for the mission of revelation and redemption was through the Holy Spirit. Jesus had promised them his Spirit of holiness and power. Now he had both equipped and empowered them for their mission in the world.[177]

Jesus was *not* about to launch the church and give the instructions for its growth without also giving the power to facilitate that growth. "To witness for Christ involves the power to do it. Jesus promised His apostles that the Holy Spirit, the extension of God's personality within the community, was to be that power."[178] This dynamic Holy Spirit power would, according to A. T. Robertson, "enable them to grapple with the spread of the gospel in the world.[179]

When Luke wrote of the "power from on high" (Luke 24:49), he used the Greek word for power, *dunamis,* which has come across to us in English as the word *dynamite,* meaning a mighty force. Ray Summers wrote, "the power for witnessing found its Source in the clothing from on high. Speech would be under the controlling motivation of the power given to them by God."[180] The idea of this power being from on high, "reminded them of the source of all real power for evangelism."[181] This dynamite-like power which was, "promised by the Father is adequate to fulfill the task of witnessing.[182]

The Description of This Power

Added to the paradox of God's power versus human methods is the difficulty in describing the Holy Spirit. J. I. Packer offered this description:

> The Holy Spirit of God, the Lord, the Lifegiver, who hovered over the waters at creation and spoke in history by the prophets, was poured on Jesus Christ's disciples at Pentecost to fulfill the new Paraclete role that Jesus had defined for him. In his character as the second Paraclete, Jesus' deputy and representative agent in men's minds and hearts, the Spirit ministers today. *Paraclete (parakietos* in Greek) means "comforter, counselor, helper, advocate, strengthener, supporter." Jesus, the original Paraclete, continues his ministry to mankind through the work of the second Paraclete. As Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever, so is his Spirit; and in every age since Pentecost, wherever the gospel has gone, the Spirit has continued to do on a larger or smaller scale the things that Jesus promised he would do when sent in this new capacity.[183]

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[177] James E. Carter, *John, Layman* 's *Bible Book Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1984), 153.

[178] T. C. Smith, *Acts, The Broaa'man Commentary* (Nashville: Broad- man Press, 1970), 19.

[179] A. T. Robertson, *The Acts of the Apostles, Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1930), 3:10.

[180] Ray Summers, *Commentary on Luke* (Waco: Word Books, 1972), 336.

[181] Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to St. Luke, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979), 343.

[182] Virtus E. Gideon, *Luke: A Study Guide* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Co., 1967), 127.

[183] J. I. Packer, *Keep In Touch with the Spirit* (Old Tappan N.J.: Fleming H. Revel! Co., 1984), 9.

An earlier description of the Holy Spirit is as follows:

> The Holy Spirit is the animating force whereby Jesus, the Lord, builds up Christianity in the world as his Body, that is, as his own historical form of existence on earth; lets it grow, preserves and orders it as the community of his saints and so makes it fit to be the preliminary representation of the sanctifying of the whole human world that took place through him.[184]

Even with these rather technical descriptions of the Holy Spirit, we must agree that there are times when the Holy Spirit's power defies description. At times we must stand in awe of that power, unable to find words to describe it. Such was the case in 1908, according to the letter from some Presbyterian missionaries in Manchuria:

> A power has come into the church that we cannot control if we would. It is a miracle for stolid, self righteous John Chinaman to go out of his way to confess to sins that no torture of the Yamen could force from him; for a Chinaman to demean himself to crave, weeping, the prayers of his fellow believers is beyond all human explanation.
>
> Perhaps you will say it's a sort of religious hysteria. So did some of us. . . but here we are, about sixty Scottish and Irish Presbyterians who have seen it—all shades of temperament—and, much as many of us shrank from it at first, everyone who has seen and heard what we have, every day last week, is certain there is only one explanation that it is God's Holy Spirit manifesting himself.. . one clause of the creed that lives before us now in all its inevitable, awful solemnity is "1 believe in the Holy Ghost." [185]

The best description of the Holy Spirit may be personal. The Holy Spirit of God created life in me after His own image and breathed into me the breath of life (Gen. 2:7). When I by my own free choice alienated myself from God, the Holy Spirit restored me and put me back in right fellowship with God through conversion (John *3:5).* Through the Holy Spirit God called and commissioned me (Acts 1:8). God's Holy Spirit has taught and equipped me for the calling that God extended to me (Ps. 143:10). God's Spirit has been ever present with me to sustain me in the good and the bad experiences of life (Ps. 139:7). God's Spirit presently resides with in me to ultimately perfect me to the full image of His glory (2 Cor. 3:18). Only a power of infinite description could accomplish these things in my life.

Many times in the Scripture the words used for power are associated with the Holy Spirit of God. Biblical words for power are generally *dunamis* (from which comes the English word *dynamite),* sometimes *kratos,* and sometimes *ischus,* and sometimes *energeia.* When our Lord Commissioned His disciples, He told them to "stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49) and assured them that they would "receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you" (Acts 1:8). Simon Peter described Jesus as being anointed "with the Holy Spirit and with power" (Acts 10:38). The apostle Paul prayed that the Roman Christians would "abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Rom. *15:13).* He then told them that

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[184] Church Dogmatics IV, No. 2, translated and quoted by Kraemer in,A *Theology of the Laity,* 126.

[185] Jonathan Goforth, *By My Spirit* (Grand Rapids Zondervan Press, 1942), 17-18.

Jesus Christ had done some things through his own life "in the power of the Spirit" (Rom. *15:19)*. Paul wrote to the church at Thessalonjca that "our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit" (1 Thess. *1:5)*.

In my book *EvangeL fe,* I trace the ways that *energefa* is used in the New Testament First this word describes the awesome extent of God's power. *Energeja* also depicts Satan's attempts to abuse and misuse power. Finally, *energeia* is used to identify how humans receive and use God's power.

Whatever other descriptions may be given of the Holy Spirit, we may accurately describe Him as the power of God in both the life of the Christian and the ministry of the church. Truly what God planned through the Father and what God revealed through the Son, God empowers through the Holy Spirit.

What role does the Holy Spirit's power play in relationship to the witness of the individual Christian and the -witness of the church? We must agree with J. I. Packer that the Holy Spirit initiates and sustains both our worship and our witness. As Packer wrote, "The Christian life in all its aspects—intellectual and ethical, devotional and relational, upsurging in worship and outgoing in witness—is supernatural; only the Spirit can initiate and sustain it."[186]

The Work of the Holy Spirit's Power

Let us now look at the role of the power of the Holy Spirit in church growth evangelism. We must limit this discussion to the place of the Holy Spirit's power in church growth evangelism. The Holy Spirit saturates the entire spectrum of church growth evangelism. We must look first at the work of the Holy Spirit in the beginning stages of evangelism. The Holy Spirit *convicts.* In what one has referred to as the "last will and testament of Jesus," our Lord described this work of the Holy Spirit for His disciples when He said, "and He, when He comes, will *convict* the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment" (John 16:8). Since conviction must always precede conversion, the Holy Spirit takes the initiative in evangelism. Whenever we as churches or individual Christians attempt to fill the role of convicting agent, we find our selves out of place, the Holy Spirit displaced, and the power thwarted. Conviction of sin has been assigned only to the Holy Spirit of God. The only thing a human being can do in relationship to conviction, apart from the Holy Spirit, is to impose guilt upon the nonbeliever. Human-imposed guilt is human-relieved guilt. That which we can impose apart from the Holy Spirit on the non-Christian, another person can relieve in the life of that non- Christian. Only the Holy Spirit can impose genuine conviction of sin in the life of the nonbeliever.

However, the Holy Spirit does use the lives of Christians to assist in His role of conviction. The way Christians are used might be likened to light bulbs and electricity. Light bulbs have no power in themselves. Their power is only in relationship to the current which they touch. Likewise, with Christians, our power in convicting of sin is related to the activity of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes the Holy Spirit may not use a particular Christian because the light is too dim. Dim lights do not reveal much. They allow for oversight and mistakes. Likewise, if a light is too bright, it may not be used by the Holy Spirit to convict of sin. Bright lights tend to blind

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[186] Packer, 9.

and similarly create oversight and mistakes. When our light is too dim or too bright, when others see us as too "carnal" or too "spiritual," we may thwart the power of the Holy Spirit. Only when we are properly attached to the power current of the Holy Spirit can we illumine the convicting power of that Spirit.

In addition to conviction, the Holy Spirit works toward *con version* in the life of the nonbeliever. When talking with Nicodemus, Jesus underlined this activity of the Holy Spirit in evangelism when He said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:5-6).

How does the nonbeliever respond to this role of the Holy Spirit? As Lycurgus Starkey reminded us: "The response of the human spirit to the Holy Spirit's work *of* conversion is commitment. We believe the promises of God in Christ are true for us, but more than this we commit ourselves. We trust him."[187]

What is the activity of Christians in relation to this particular role of the Holy Spirit in evangelism? Christians are to be Spirit- filled examples of the results of conversion. Ralph M. Neighbour contrasted flesh-centered evangelism with Spirit-filled evangelism as follows:

> Spirit-filled evangelism is defined as "all Christ does, apart from my efforts." In this kind of evangelism, the Christ who dwells in us reveals himself to a lost world. It is the most significant evangelism in terms of building Christ's kingdom. It has one desire: to authentically relate people to Jesus Christ, not only through an initial "profession of faith," but also through the nurture of the baby Christians to observe all he has commanded.[188]

The Holy Spirit also occupies the place *of consecration* or sanctification in evangelism. After a brief description of the unrighteous, Paul told the Christians in Corinth "such were some of you; but you were washed, you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:11). When writing to the church at Thessalonica, Paul said he was thankful for this church because "God has chosen you from the beginning of salvation through sanctification by the Spirit" (2 Thess. 2:13). Simon Peter indicated that our obedience of Jesus Christ was through "the sanctifying work of the Spirit" (1 Pet. 1:2). Based on a study of these verses and others, I agree with Landrum P. Leavell, "A close study of the New Testament doctrine of sanctification leads us to the assurance that this is an experience formed by the power of God."[189]

We have seen that the place of the Holy Spirit in evangelism is one of conviction and that the Christian is used to illumine that for the non-Christian. We also have seen that the Holy Spirit's place in evangelism is conversion and that Christians are used as examples of the power of the Holy Spirit in conversion. Now we see that the Holy Spirit's place in evangelism is

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[187] Lycurgus, M. Starkey, Jr., *The Holy Spirit at Work in the Church* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1965), 46.
[188] Ralph W. Neighbour, Jr., *The Touch of the Spirit: The Spirit- Filled Approach to Witnessing* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1972), 128.
[189] Landrum P. Leavell, *God's Spirit in You* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1974), 29.

consecration. Starkey acknowledged the role of the Christian in relationship to consecration when he wrote, "His final work in us is consecration. As the Spirit works his harvest in us, he expects us to work to acknowledge him as Lord, and to be obedient to his commands."[190]

The power of the Holy Spirit applies to conviction, conversion, and consecration. The Holy Spirit functions in other areas of evangelism.

The Holy Spirit *clarifies* or guides us to the truth. In that last message to His disciples, Jesus reminded them that "when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth" (John 16:13). Due to a rather extensive weekend conference and revival ministry, I frequently find myself driving back to my home in Fort Worth, Texas, in the late night or early morning hours. Usually (especially if I have been away for several days and am experiencing some homesickness) I will set my car radio dial to WBAP 820 AM Fort Worth, Texas—a 50,000 watt "clear channel station." This not only gives me music and news "from home" but also gives it to me clearly—even hundreds of miles away. Being a "clear channel station" means that the transmitting power is great enough that one can hear the signal from a distance. When the weather is bad, I can get the station but it is sometimes clouded with static. Turbulent weather affects even a "clear channel station." The Holy Spirit clarifies or guides the nonbeliever to truth. To accomplish this task, the Holy Spirit uses Christian testimony and witness. In a world that is filled with turbulence and static, the non-Christian needs to hear the message of the Holy Spirit through the "clear channel" of a faithful Christian. If Christians allow their lives to be filled with the turbulence of the world, the Holy Spirit's message will be communicated in the midst of static to the nonbeliever. While the transmitting power of the message is based on the power of the Holy Spirit, its effectiveness is sometimes based on the clearness of the channel in the life of the believer or in the life of the church.

Related perhaps most closely to conviction is the fact that the Holy Spirit *climatizeg* (i.e., sets the climate and the surroundings in which the Christian and/or the church can bear witness effectively). We should learn a lesson from advertising. Advertisers are masters at setting an appropriate stage to catch the attention of potential customers. The advantage Christians have over the advertising world is that we are not solely responsible for creating the climate in which to witness. The Holy Spirit climatizes our surroundings for effective evangelism. If we as Christians, or the Christian church, live in touch with the work of the Holy Spirit, we will function in a climate that is conducive to bearing Witness.

The Holy Spirit *comforts.* Jesus told His disciples, "I will ask the Father and He will give you another Helper [comforterj, that He may be with you forever" (John 14:16). He was not referring specifically to evangelism. While there is comfort in knowing the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives as we bear witness, there is a tendency to become comfortable in evangelism. This is not what Jesus had in mind by leaving us a Comforter. Some churches take comfort in the presence of the power of the Holy Spirit in their witness; others have become so comfortable that they appear to be asleep. In some cases one wonders if the comfortable church is not sleeping the sleep of death. An abundance of comfort is a proper priority in the cemetery, but not in a church alive and on mission for Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit *compels* rather than repels (i.e., draws persons to Jesus Christ rather than pushing people away from Jesus Christ). When my son was twelve years old, he came home

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[190] Starkey, 147.

from summer camp and informed us that he had been rappeling. Before I could get his mother under control, he announced to us that he had done so well on the "man-made mountain" that in the final days of camp he had rappeled down a real seventy-foot mountain. This was almost more than we could stand. The thought of a twelve-year-old boy rappeling down a seventy-foot cliff was somewhat staggering. Rappeling is exciting, adventurous, and dangerous. Securing a rope at the top of a cliff and securing the other end around his body, he gently pushed himself away from the mountain over and over again as he slowly lowered himself to the bottom. The momentum swings one back to the mountain or compels one back to the mountain.

The comparison of rappeling to the place of the Holy Spirit is an interesting one. While our own human questions cause us to "bounce off" Jesus several times in the process of coming to know Him, the power of the Holy Spirit compels us back to the truth. Danger lies in repelling without being compelled. The role of the believer in this compelling work of the Holy Spirit is pointed out by Leavell:

> The power of the Holy Spirit is just like a current of electricity, which when properly applied to a bar of metal can turn lifeless metal into a magnet. .. . The Holy Spirit applied to lives of human beings like you and me can make us new creatures. The inevitable result of his power is that we will attract and not repel people.[191]

Finally, the Holy Spirit *charges* or energizes. We sometimes experience the Holy Spirit's power at the point of love and peace, as when we sing "Come, Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove."[192] However, we realize, particularly related to evangelism, that "the power of the Spirit is no vague emotion dignified with the name of love; it is a dynamic, energizing force."[193]

The apostle Paul realized this particular place of the Holy Spirit in his own ministry and wrote, "To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me" (Col. 1:29, NIV). Or, as *The Living Bible* so beautifully paraphrases, "This is my work, and I can do it only as Christ's mighty energy is at work within me."

Several Christmases ago I received a Dustbuster as a gift. This gadget enables one to vacuum in places where it is difficult to use a normal vacuum cleaner. The hint was overwhelmingly obvious—I needed to clean the trunk of the car, which was a task I had been putting off because it was so much trouble to take the vacuum cleaner out to the garage. As with most gifts requiring batteries or recharging, someone else in the family played with the gift before I got around to using it for its real purpose. While I was busy cleaning up those little bits and pieces of trash in the trunk, the Dust- buster made a slow, whirring, grinding sound and then stopped. I had at least two options. I could continue cleaning the carpet in the trunk of the car by using a magnifying glass, tweezers, and trash can. Or, I could take the Dustbuster back in the house, use the attachment provided with it to plug into an electrical outlet, and reenergize its power. If I chose that option, 1 could relax with a glass of iced tea during the time it would take

[191] Landrum P. Leavell, *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1983), 24.
[192] "Come, Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove," Isaac Watts, 1707. *Baptist Hymnal,* 1975 edition (Nashville: Convention Press, 1975), 134.
[193] Georgia Harkness, *The Fellowship of the Holy Spirit* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966), 90.

to recharge and then I could complete my job with relative ease. The options are ridiculous, and everyone knows which option is preferred. Unfortunately, in the spiritual realm, the options are not so easily chosen. This is especially true in the area of evangelism. Christians are prone to try to evangelize in their own power—even when that power runs low due to their lack of close relationship to the Holy Spirit. When we find ourselves running low on energy or power, we have the same two options. We can continue the work in our limited human power,or we can relax, get back in touch with the Source of power, and become reenergized for a fresh approach to the task of evangelism. Both individual Christians and churches run low on energy at times. The Holy Spirit wants us to allow Him to recharge us for the task of evangelism.

Time and space limit us in a fuller discussion of the work of the Holy Spirit in evangelism.[194] Powerless evangelism is a result of the Christian or the church losing the contact point with the power source, the Holy Spirit. Power-filled evangelism on the other hand is a result of the Christian and/or the church allowing the power of the Holy Spirit to function properly in the world.

The Opposition to This Power

This is a fact of life: When God has something good going, Satan will try to prostitute it. Satan's very existence 'suggests opposition to evangelism. Those who work this area must be prepared to encounter Satan and his forces on a consistent basis. Perhaps our failure to take our opponent seriously is the reason our evangelism has not been more successful. Years ago F. J. Huegel wrote:

> There is no doubt that our incapacity to match the hour and shatter the forces of evil so blatantly rampant today, hinge on the fact that we have not taken Jesus, our Lord, seriously in his definition of evil. . . . The church today is quite impotent in the face of the overpowering forces of evil, because she refuses to take seriously the word of her heavenly captain as regards the nature of the foe.[195]

What is the nature of this foe? A look at the New Testament descriptions of Satan confirms the statement by A. H. Strong, "There is a personal being of great power who carries on organized opposition to the divine government."[196] Actually, Scripture has very little to say about the origin and apostasy of Satan. Several hints and clues are given but very few categorical statements are made about his existence. The name *Satan,* meaning adversary, opposer, is the most common name for the opposition. Among its fifty-six uses in the Scriptures is the statement by Paul that "Satan thwarted us" (1 Thess. 2:18).

The Greek word *diabolos* is the New Testament word for "devil," meaning slanderer, accuser. It is used thirty-five times. Peter referred to "your adversary, the devil" (1 Pet. 5:8). Both names appear in Revelation 12:9 with the idea of the serpent: "the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan."

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[194] See also Dan R. Crawford, *EvangeLife: A Guide to Life-style Evangelism,* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1984), 45-48.

[195] F. 3. Huegel, *That Old Serpent—the Devil* (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1954), 14-15.

[196] A. J. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1893), 223.

The New Testament also describes Satan as an "angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:14); "the tempter" (1 Thess. 3:5); and a "beast" (Rev. 19:19).

Paul described Satan as "the prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2). According to William Hendriksen:

> According to the consistent doctrine of Scripture, the evil spirits must be somewhere, but not in the heaven of the redeemed, and if in this present age they cannot be restricted to hell, is it so strange that Ephesians 2:2 speaks about the prince of the domain of the air? Is it not rather natural that the prince of evil is able, as far as God in his overruling providence permits, to carry on his sinister work by sending his legions to our globe and its surrounding atmosphere,[197]

Paul also referred to Satan as a deceiver, (2 Cor. 11:3) or as Huegel stated, "Satan is a consummate artist who can dress up evil in such shining garments that it appears good."[198]

Once again Paul described Satan as "the god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4). Delos Miles reminded us that "evangelism, seen in that light and the light of the kingdom of God, is bruising the head of that old serpent, the devil. It is wresting territory from a pretender and usurper and restoring to its rightful owner and sovereign."[199]

Peter described Satan as "a roaring lion" (1 Pet. 5:8), and in keeping with that description Strong wrote, "Satan's cunning and daring seem to be on the increase from the first mention of him in Scripture to its end."[200]

A modern idea depicts Satan as old, decrepit, and crafty, This image hardly inspires fear. In fact, we tend to revere those who are elderly and to seek their wisdom. A portrayal of Satan in this light tends to make us drop our guard against him. James Kallas wrote:

> We talk much today about Satan, but in the very talking we make the mistake of holding him in too low an esteem. We limit him to archaic forms of the past, and we mistakenly assume that he reveals from the outset the tragedy of identification with him. We camouflage his cancer and fall victim to his power.[201]

Another modern image of Satan is that of the red creature with horns and a forked tail. Nonbelievers who think of Satan in this way may easily place him alongside the Easter bunny and the tooth fairy as figments of imagination. This ridiculous image has its base more in the works of Dante and Milton than in the Bible. If Satan can convince us that he does not exist, there is no need for defense. Where there is no defense, we are vulnerable to every attack.

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[197] William Hendriksen, *Epistle to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1966), 113.

[198] Huegel, 18.

[199] Delos Miles, *Introduction to Evangelism* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1983), 51.

[200] Strong, 5, 8, 9.

[201] James Kallas, *The RealSatan* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1975), 111.

Rather than picture Satan as a red creature with horns and tail, or as an old, decrepit, crafty creature, we would do better to portray him as young, attractive, and creative. In a culture that worships youth and vitality and energy and creativity and beauty, Satan takes on this form. Perhaps J. Oswald Sanders' description of Satan is the best: "the antithesis of the Holy Spirit in every way. . . a real person, implacably committed to draw men away from God and his salvation, and to thwart the progress of his gospel."[202]

In his book *Dealing with the Devil,* C. S. Lovett gave the following "anti-Satan defense system":
1) Believe what God has said about the enemy.
2) Learn how the enemy operates.
3) Know of the enemy's weaknesses and strengths.
4) Have a definite plan for resisting the enemy.
5) Know how to use your own resources in Christ.
6) Go into action at the first hint of Satanic suggestion. [203]

Resisting Satan is necessary for the church to grow evangelistically, for:

> Satan bitterly opposes men accepting Christ as their personal Savior. . . a victorious Christian filled with the Spirit, one who has blossomed into true Christlikeness and has fully apprehended that for which Christ apprehended him, is a terrible thing for the kingdom of darkness.[204]

Anyone who has been involved in a program of personal evangelism can agree with Delos Miles, who said, "The devil always tries to keep us from making witnessing visits."[205]

In personal evangelism we are confronted with the same response that Paul faced when he wrote, "The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Cor. 4:4).

J. Oswald Sanders helps us understand how Satan relates to nonbelievers. Sanders lists six activities of Satan that tend to "blind" the minds of the non-Christian:

To keep them lulled to sleep and in spiritual darkness, he feeds them wrong thoughts about God, fills their minds with prejudice, ensnares them in false philosophy, or simply occupies their minds with earthly things.

1) He snatches away the good seed of the Word (Matt. 13:19).
2) He lulls the unbeliever into a false sense of peace (Luke 11:21).
3) He lays snares for the unwary (2 Tim. 2:25-26).
4) He gains advantage over men by concealing his true and sinister purpose, by asquerading as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:13- 14).

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[202] J. Oswald Sanders, *Satan Is No Myth* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1975), 36.
[203] C. S. Lovett, *Dealing with the Devil* (Baldwin Park, Calif.: Personal Christianity, 1967), 84.
[204] Huegel, 85.
[205] Miles, 105.

5) He deceives those whose minds are not subject to the word of truth *(Rev.* 12:9; 1 Tim. 2:14).

6) He mixes truth with error (Matt.13:25,28)[206]

In addition to detesting personal evangelism, Satan is displeased with mass evangelism. As Mark Bubeck wrote:

> Satan hates the subject of revival more than any other burden of the church. Revivals have jarred and sent into retreat the kingdom of darkness as no other events ever have. Satan will do everything and anything he can to stop revival. If it should come, he will immediately begin to corrupt and divert the movement of the Spirit to God's great work.[207]

Christians involved in evangelism either personal or mass evangelism will discover that the energies of Satan have been focused on them. Sometimes it will be difficult to discern these satanic energies for they will often appear to be, in essence, good. In reality they will be designed to divert our attention, rearrange our priorities, and dilute our commitment. C. S. Lovett wrote:

> Satan uses exactly the same method as the Holy Spirit. His spirit bears witness with our Spirit. We don't see or hear the "god of this world" anymore than we see or hear the God of heaven, yet he can put his "amen" to anything in our unconscious. He too can activate and trigger material causing it to pop into awareness as an idea... the devil loves to saddle God's people with things which can hinder and drain their capacities for Christ.[208]

Any church which begins to experience evangelistic growth will also begin to experience a renewed sense of the presence of Satan. Indeed, "the most virulent Opposition of the devil is directed against the body of Christ. His fixed purpose is to annihilate the church or to neutralize its witness."[209]

But there will be no great evangelistic growth within the church unless there is an awakened sense of the reality of the enemy. Nothing excites or motivates a group anymore than a renewed awareness of the presence of the enemy. Likewise, the church will sense genuine evangelistic renewal to the same degree that it becomes aware of the presence and the power of the enemy as that enemy opposes the power of the Holy Spirit.

As we are awakened to the presence of the enemy, we must also be aware of the ultimate defeat of this enemy. Donald Grey Barn- house wrote:

> From the moment Christ died, the watching universe would see that Satan and his hosts were sentenced and that the present and future manifestations of his impotence and his complete despoiling would be carried out in accordance with principles so true, so

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[206] Sanders, 73-75.

[207] Mark I. Bubeck, *The Adversary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1975), 128.

[208] Lovett, *56.*

[209] Sanders, 81.

certain, so perfect, that there could never be a whisper raised—even in the lake of fire—against the fact or the method of the procedure.[210]

John assured us that "the beast was seized and. . . thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone" (Rev. 19:20). There has been, is now, and will be powerful opposition to the growth of an evangelistic church. Satan and all of his forces are opposed to that growth. However, the power of Satan is both limited and secondary to the power of the Holy Spirit. Ultimately, the Spirit's power will crush the power of Satan and the church will have triumphed for all eternity.

The Proof of This Power

When the authenticity of power is questioned, proof is necessary. Such was the case in the New Testament. Messengers from God were asked by those to whom they spoke to give "signs" to authenticate their credentials. The Pharisees demanded a sign from Jesus (Matt. 12:38). Jesus indicated "an evil and adulterous generation crave for a sign" (v. 39). On another occasion the Pharisees and Sadducees asked Jesus for a "sign from heaven" (Matt. 16:1). While "signs" might give authenticity to a person, Jesus indicated that it might also be used as deception. He said, "For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect" (Matt. 24:24). Jesus, understanding tradition, said on another occasion, "Unless you people see signs and wonders you simply will not believe" (John 4:48).

Yet, Jesus performed signs and wonders. James Stalker understood this when he wrote: "It was a stupendous claim which He had made on the faith of men when He announced Himself as the Messiah, and it would have been unreasonable to expect it to be conceded by a nation accustomed to miracles as signs of a Divine mission, if He had wrought none."[211]

Because of disbelieving Jews in Iconium, God allowed "signs and wonders" to be done by Paul (Acts 14:3). Paul acknowledged this tradition by writing "indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom" (1 Cor. 1:22). Because Jewish tradition demanded proof of power, the Holy Spirit's activity was accompanied by signs and wonders. Satan obviously was displeased with this show of power and, as he had done since the early days of history, attempted to overthrow or discredit the power.
Eddie Gibbs said:

> Such clashes between the power of God and the power of darkness are referred to as "power encounters." These have tended to occur more often on the frontiers of missionary activity and are associated with "heathen lands afar." But now that much of the Western World has entered a post Christian phase, there is an upsurge of interest in these areas and an increase in recorded occurrences. [212]

What shall we make of these "signs and wonders," these "proofs" which authenticate the Holy Spirit's power?

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[210] Donald Grey Barnhouse, *The Invisible War* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, *1965),* 224.

[211] James Stalker, *The Life of Jesus Christ* (Westwood, N.J.: Fleming H. Revel] Co., 1880), 62.

[212] Eddie Gibbs, "The Power Behind the Principles," *Church Growth. State of the Art,* ed. C. Peter Wagner (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishing, Inc., 1986), 195.

One of the current interpretations of "signs and wonders" may be found in The Vineyard Fellowship based in Anaheim, California. This church pastored by John Wimber has given birth to nearly two hundred other churches across the country. This church began with a Bible study group of fifty persons. *Now* it has over forty thousand members. John Wimber has written a book entitled *Power Evangelism* which he defines as, "a presentation of the gospel that is rational, but that also transcends the rational. The explanation of the gospel comes with a demonstration of God's power through signs and wonders."[213]

The emphasis of The Vineyard Fellowship is on power evangelism versus program evangelism, which Wimber has described as "usually characterized by message centered communicators who present the gospel primarily through rational arguments."[214] While both kinds of evangelism follow the command of Jesus to "go and make disciples," power evangelism is

> initiated by the Holy Spirit for a specific place, time, person, or group.. . . In programmatic evangelism, the attitude is that we do something and then God works. In power evangelism, God speaks and then we act.. . . Programmatic evangelism is often incomplete, lacking demonstration of the kingdom of God in signs and wonders.[215]

In his review of *Power Evangelism,* Walt Chantry in *Eternity Magazine* stated:

> So much is made of healing and tongues that little attention is given to the great work of God that we call regeneration. Attention is diverted from the inner person, where a work of grace is essential. . . . Isn't the frantic search for the "miraculous" related to a failure to quietly contemplate his loving care over each sparrow that falls, each hair that grows? It appears that too much attention to church growth statistics has led power evangelists away from the very theology the multitudes need. Anti-intellectualism is no antidote for cold orthodoxy.[216]

The problems of power evangelism are further discussed by Grant Wacker in *The Reformed Journal:*

> One is the absence of ethical and social concern. There is no evidence that hunger, poverty, or oppression play any role in Wimber's theology. Another problem is runaway pragmatism. Wimber's claims about the usefulness of signs and wonders is so raw, so unvarnished, one can scarcely tell where pragmatism ends and manipulation begins.[217]

In a paper prepared for Christian Research Institute, Elliott Miller and Robert M. Bowman, Jr., wrote:

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[213] John Wimber, *Power Evangelism* (San Francisco: Harper and Row Publishers, 1986), 35.
[214] Wimber, *45.*
[215] Ibid., 46-47.
[216] Walt Chantry, "Powerfully Misleading," *Eternity,* July-August 1987, 28-29.
[217] Grant Wacker, "Wimber and Wonders," *The Reformed Journal,* April 1987, 18.

While there is much teaching in The Vineyard on certain practical matters (marriage and family life, gifts of the Spirit, deliverance, etc.) there appears to be little emphasis on teaching the Bible per Se. . . . While Bible teaching is not emphasized enough, the role of experience in Christian life appears to be somewhat overemphasized. . . whatever transpires in their midst is from God.

experience far too often is their starting point.[218]

In addition to these weaknesses, Michael Green added:

Does Wimber exaggerate? Is there a triumphalism which stresses the power of the Resurrection but shuns the pain of the cross? Is there an excessive preoccupation with the demonic, particularly in Christians? Was there not diminishing emphasis on the miraculous in Jesus' own ministry as it unfolded?[219]

The controversial nature of this subject was seen early by Fuller Theological Seminary. The faculty council which created a course called "Signs, Wonders and Church Growth" cancelled it. According to *Christianity Today:*

Critics also questioned the academic integrity of the course's lectures. They said John Wimber, an adjunct faculty member who does not hold advanced degrees, used unpublished materials in his lectures that had not been tested in scholarly circles. Mel Roebeck, Fuller's assistant dean of theology, said mainline Protestants and Pentecostals alike questioned whether the course "raised spiritual gifts too high in the structure of biblical theology."[220]

As the movement has grown so has the controversy surrounding it. The conservative, evangelical Dallas Theological Seminary lost two professors and asked another to leave because of their support of "signs and wonders." Seminary president Donald Campbell said, "The problem is that at the forefront of the evangelical scene is the 'Signs and Wonders' movement, which is dividing churches throughout the country.[221]

Let us broaden the perspective from the example of The Vineyard Fellowship and *Power Evangelism* to the more general acceptance of "signs and wonders" as evidences of Holy Spirit power in the general charismatic movement. The proper order is stated well by James S. Stewart:

To begin with miracles and argue from them up to Christ is beginning at the wrong end. And in point of fact, that is not how we became believers. It was not by accepting the miracles that we grew convinced of Christ, but it was because we had already grown convinced of Christ along other lines that we can accept the miracles— a very different

[218] Elliott Miller and Robert M. Bowman, Jr., "The Vineyard," written for Christian Research Instjtut0, San Juan Capistrano, Calif., Feb. 1985.

[219] "Majoring on the Minor? Michael Green's Concern," *Renewal,* Feb.-Mar. *1986,* 22.

[220] Marjorie Lee Chandler, "Fuller Seminary Cancels Course on Signs and Wonders," *Christianity Today,* 21 February 1986.

[221] Diane Winston, "Seminary Professors Resign Over Beliefs," *Dallas Times Herald,* 18 December 1987, A-i.

thing. Let us keep our perspective right. The mighty works of Jesus must have had some other deeper motive than a mere demonstration and proof of power.[222]

Perhaps the most interesting commentary of all on the evidences of Holy Spirit power, particularly as they relate to modern Pentecostalism, was offered by Frederick D. Bruner in *A Theology of the Holy Spirit.* Bruner concluded, "The features most prominent in first century Corinthianism are found to correspond to a remarkable degree with the features most distinctively present in 20th Century Pentecostalism."[223] He discussed three characteristics which describe the Corinthian church of the New Testament days and modern Pentecostalism.

The first characteristic is *the quest for more.* In 2 Corinthians 11:3-4 Paul accused his opponents of wanting a theology with "another Jesus," "a different Spirit," and "a different gospel." The difference in the Jesus which the Jews believed and the Jesus which Paul was preaching was the difference between divine miracle worker and suffering servant.

The second characteristic of the Corinthian church similar to modern Pentecostalism is *the quest for power.* In Michael Green's discussion of Bruner's work at this point, he said:

> Paul knew all about the marks of an apostle, in signs, wonders, and mighty deeds (2 Cor. 12:12) but he knew that the power of an apostle, or of any other Christian, came from the patient endurance of suffering, such as he had with his thorn in the flesh, or the patient endurance of reviling and hardship such as he was submitted to in the course of his missionary work (1 Cor. 4). The charismatics had a theology of the resurrection and its power; they needed to learn afresh the secret of the cross and its shame . . . which yet produced the power of God (I Cor. l:18).[224]

The third characteristic of the Corinthian church which Bruner likened to modern Pentecostalism is *the quest for evidence.* Bruner wrote:

> The nature of the "documentation" sought of Paul by the Corinthians can only be surmised. Reasoning from the entire Corinthian context, we may Suppose that the evidence was Something striking, for the Striking manifestation was to the Corinthians the spiritual *par excellence..* . . Whatever the evidence, Paul would not supply the Corinthians the satisfaction of compliance; instead, he would prove Christ speaking through him by his apostolic severity against unrepented sin in Corinth (vv. 1-3).[225]

To insist that the power of the Holy Spirit be accompanied by specific signs and wonders is to limit the power of the Holy Spirit. Many years ago during a family Christmas celebration, I unwrapped a package from my aunt and handed the wrapping paper back to her. Jokingly I said, "Keep this and you can use it again next year." I was not all surprised the next Christmas to find my package wrapped in the same paper. This began a tradition that has lasted through many

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[222] James S. Stewart, *The Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ* (Nashville: Abingdon Press), 92.

[223] Frederick Dale Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1970), 318.

[224] Michael Green, *IBelieve in the Holy Spfrit* (Grand Rapids: Wni.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1985), 208.

[225] Bruner, 318.

years. The years have taken their toll on the paper, and each year my present seems to be smaller because of the increased wear on the wrapping. By insisting on the accompaniment (wrapping paper), I limited the ability of the giver. So it is with the power of the Holy Spirit. To insist on the accompaniment is to limit the power.

The question is whether our loyalty relates to the power of the Holy Spirit or to the accompanying signs and wonders—that which gives authenticity to the Spirit. F. J. Huegel said:

> The Lord Jesus did not put a high price upon his miracles. The final court of appeals was not his miracles, but the cross. . . . Miracles were only a means to attain his true objective, which was   the liberation of souls from the power of sin. He did not aim to draw souls to himself by means of miracles. His method was far more sublime, in keeping with his person. A loyalty based on signs and Wonders would be of little value.[226]

What then are we to make of signs and wonders? Never are they to take the central place in the gospel. They are "wrappings," accompaniments determined by the wisdom of God and authenticated by the Spirit of God. They do not prove the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit proves the validity of the signs and *wonders.* Perhaps the proper perspective is best stated by George El- don Ladd:

> At the heart of Christianity is a cross; and one of the most significant things about it is that it is an empty cross. Christians down the ages have been sure that his shameful death on that gallows was not the last word about Jesus. He rose from the tomb, and triumphed over death. This was the belief that turned heartbroken followers of a crucified rabbi into the courageous witnesses and martyrs of the early church. This was the one belief that separated the followers of Jesus from the Jews and turned them into the community of the resurrection. You could imprison them, flog them, kill them, but you could not make them deny their conviction that "on the third day he rose again." The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the cornerstone of Christianity.[227]

On the positive side, let us consider some of the contributions which the charismatic movement has made to evangelical Christianity, and particularly to church growth. Even Peter Wagner, a recent supporter of "signs and wonders" and friend of John Wimber, admitted the balance of church growth related to "signs and wonders" in an interview for *CommonLife* magazine:

> In some parts of the world, in some cases, there is substantial church growth and effective evangelism without supernatural signs and wonders. We're also finding that in some places there are spectacular signs and wonders, manifestations of the miraculous going on, with minimum church growth. And we're also finding that in many places there is a great amount of church growth going on accompanied by signs and wonders.[228]

As to the "strengths" of the charismatic movement, J. I. Packer described these as follows:

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[226] Huegel, 78.

[227] George Eldon Ladd, *I Believe in the Resurrection* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1975), 7.

[228] "The Third Wave," Interview by Kevin Springer, *Commonhift, 6,* 2:25.

The charismatic stress on faith in a living Lord, learning of God from God through Scripture, openness to the indwelling Spirit, close fellowship in prayer and praise, discernment and service of personal need, and expecting God actively to answer prayer and change things for the better, are tokens of true spiritual renewal from which all Christians should learn, despite associated oddities to which mistaken theology give rise.[229]

Michael Green was a little more colorful in his description of the "plus" that has come to us from the charismatic movement:

It has taught us to believe in God's reality and his ability to break into the even tenure of our lives with the invading power of his Spirit. It has taken the doctrine of the Spirit off the dusty shelf and put the person of the Spirit right in the heart of the living room. It has taken the formality, the stuffiness, the professional domination, the dreary predictability out of worship, and made it living, corporate, uplifting and joyful. It has recognized the variety of gifts God has given to his people, discovered some which had been forgotten for a long time, and increasingly insists on a structure of church life where these gifts can be exercised. It has brought together in intimate fellowship men and women of the most diverse backgrounds. It has driven the silent Christians into bearing joyous and courageous witness to their Lord. It has taken seriously the dark element of Satan and the demonic, and has revived among Christians the sense of spiritual battle. It has opened the floodgates to prayer and praise in many a heart run dry. In every generation, God raises up some counterpoise to the current weakness and abuses in his church. In our day he has raised up this remarkable movement which we call charismatic. It would be tragic if the church did not learn from it what God wants us to learn.[230]

The Holy Spirit is obviously at work in the church today authenticating His power through signs and wonders, not because He has to, but because He has chosen to, and not within the confines of the traditional charismatic list—healings, miracles, tongues, interpretations of tongues, and prophecy. We should have long ago learned that the Spirit of God always works in uniqueness. God does not use a copy machine. Just as individuals are created unique in God's image, so the Spirit of God works in uniqueness within the confines of the harmony of God's plan. Could we not consider the following as New Testament-based "signs" of the Holy Spirit's power and presence?

1) The renewing of the individual (Titus 3:5)
2) The indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:11)
3) The conferring of spiritual gifts upon believers (1 Cor. 12)
4) The fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22)
5) The provision of access to the Father (Eph. 2:18)
6) The making of intercession for us (Rom. 8:26)
7) Providing a means of fellowship (Phil. 2:1)
8) Providing a means of prayer (Eph. 6:18)

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[229] Packer, 229.
[230] Green, 209.

9) Providing a means of joy (1 Thess. 1:6)
10) Providing a means of worship (Phil. 3:3)
11) Assisting us in warring against the flesh (Gal. 5:17)
12) Quickening our bodies (Rom. 8:11)
13) Changing us into the image of our Lord (2 Cor. 3:18)
14) Accompanying the gospel as it is proclaimed (1 Pet. 1:12)
15) A medium of confession (1 Cor. 12:3)
16) Making us ministers of the gospel (2 Cor. 3:6)

Michael Green explained additional "marks of the Spirit" in beautiful language:

What marks of the Spirit's work shall we expect to see? We should ask ourselves where reconciliation is *being* effected; where unity is being guarded without crushing spontaneity; where fellowship is deep and honest; where worship is live and real, shared in by the whole body. We shall look to the place where evangelism has a high place among the priorities of the individual and the congregation alike—for the Lord, the Spirit is no less present in the conversion of the penitent than in the tongues of the charismatic. We shall expect to see the work of the Spirit in the interdependence of the church membership, where love controls attitudes, and where gifts are used for the good of the community, not for the gratification of the individual.[231]

Whereas signs and wonders, when properly interpreted, provide some personal proof for the power of the Holy Spirit, the fact that the Spirit is at work within the church provides corporate proof of the power of the Holy Spirit. Harry Boer wrote:

At Pentecost the Holy Spirit made the church as Body of Christ his dwelling place. . . . The church, moreover, became consciously aware of the presence of the Spirit in her midst and lives and acts in his power.[232]

When this power is lacking in the life of a church, no church growth principle will work with maximum effectiveness. When a church loses touch with the presence of the Holy Spirit, programs become powerless, methods become meaningless, creativity is crushed, energy is empty, and life is lacking. When the Holy Spirit is allowed to be active, the church comes alive and "through the charismatic gifts a church is equipped to function as a worshipping and witnessing community."[233]

Michael Green has said that when the Holy Spirit is functioning properly within the church, the following things happen:
1) The Spirit creates unity.
2) The Spirit brings reconciliation.
3) The Spirit makes fellowship.
4) The Spirit enables worship.
5) The Spirit inspires Scripture.
6) The Spirit speaks through preaching.

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[231] Ibid., 217.
[232] Harry R. Boer, *Pentecost and Missions* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. EerdmanS Publishing Co., 1961), 74.
[233] J. W. MacGorman, *The Gifts of the Spirit* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1974), 32.

7) The Spirit enlivens the sacraments.
8) The Spirit inaugurates mission.
9) The Spirit builds up the body in love.[234]

Conclusion

Christians and churches need to develop a perspective on the power of the Holy Spirit in church growth evangelism. The issue is not whether a person or church has all of the Holy Spirit. The issue is whether the Holy Spirit has all of a person or a church. When God's people are experiencing the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, they will have a fresh awareness of evangelistic and missionary outreach in and through the church that will result in new birth and new growth.

Chapter 7: The Perspective for Church Growth

Oftentimes the pluses and minuses, the pains and pleasures, of the present can be best interpreted by a proper perspective on the past and the future. This was "painfully" illustrated for me recently. I had a 7 PM appointment to visit my dentist. There are few things I detest more than a trip to the dentist's office. Actually, I only detest the shot that deadens my mouth. Once the shot has been given, I can endure the rest. My dread of the visit to the dentist was further complicated by a sore on the end of my nose that refused to heal. For some reason I decided to go to the dermatologist to be sure there was nothing wrong with my nose the same day as my dentist appointment. Much to my surprise the dermatologist decided to take a skin specimen to determine whether it was a skin cancer. This was the first time I had had a biopsy. I was unprepared for the size of the needle the dermatologist used to inject the deadening substance into my nose. As I lay flat on my back and looked up, the needle seemed much larger than it was. When the dermatologist inserted it into the end of my nose through the open sore, there were not words to describe the pain I felt. I kept silent but the tears which eased out of the side of my eyes spoke for me. Later that day, as I eased myself into the dentist's chair, the thought suddenly occurred to me that my previous fear of the dental needle had subsided. I told the dentist about my experience earlier that day and confessed to him my distaste for his deadening needle. I promised him that, in light of the shot in the end of my nose, I would never again complain about coming to see him. Now I could see things from a different perspective. Oftentimes the pain or pleasure of the present can be best interpreted through proper perspective.

We have looked at some church growth words from the Risen Lord. Specifically, we have talked about the platform, principles, priority, process, prospects, and power. It is time to view all of this in perspective.

The Biblical Base for Perspective

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[234] Green, 100-122.

Jesus concluded His commission to His disciples by giving them not only the promise of His presence but also the perspective of all history. Matthew recorded that concluding statement as, "I am with you always [literally 'all the days'], even to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:20). At the beginning of Matthew's Gospel account, emphasis is placed on the fact that Jesus had come to be "Immanuel, which translated means, God with us" (Matt. 1:23). That emphasis on God's presence is repeated at the end of the Gospel account. "These words express the experiences of Christians through the ages."[235] The English word "always," translates a Greek expression found only here in the New Testament. It means "strictly, the whole of everyday. . . . Not just the horizon is in view, but each day as we live it.[236] Frank Stagg's comment helps us understand the feelings involved in the perspective of the history of the church: "Included in this time span is the suggestion of all kinds of days: days filled with joy and with sorrow, victory intermingled with defeat, accomplishments alongside of disappointments."[237] While the disciples could take comfort in the fact that the church which they were seeing inaugurated would continue beyond their days, their efforts would not be in vain; their ministry not be futile for "Jesus here makes a promise that extends far beyond the lifetime of all who were present before him that day. It is as though he were speaking also to us. His words imply that his church will continue to the end of time."[238]

Luke also made reference to time and the perspective of history when he quoted Jesus as saying, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by his own authority" (Acts 1:7). The idea of "times or epochs" or "times and seasons" is clarified when we remember that *"chronos* means a stretch over a period of time. *Kairos* means a period possessed of certain characteristics."[239] As we will see in this chapter, not only is Jesus present in every age working within and through His church but He is also present in unique characteristics of each time or age. Curtis Vaughan helped clarify the difference when he wrote, "The Greek word for 'times' is quantitative denoting something like the English 'era'; i.e., it *marks* the general period of an event. The latter word speaks of the precise time of an occurrence."[240] History has shown us that whatever the time, either general or unique, God has been present in the person of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. In this chapter, we shall see that presence demonstrated from the period of the apostles to the present day and even to the future.

The Perspective of the Period of the Apostles

Imagine this scene in a locker room in a football stadium. The players, dressed in clean uniforms, are seated around the coach. The chalkboard covered with x's and o' s**,** is in the background. Over the chalkboard is a sign which reads, "When the going gets tough, the tough get going."

[235] A. Carr, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew, Cambridge Bible Commentary* (Cambridge: University Press, 1898), 222.

[236] D. A. Carson, "Matthew," *Matthew, Mark, Luke* in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary,* ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 8:599.

[237] Frank Stagg," General Articles; Matthew-Mark," *The Broadman Commentary,* ed. Clifton J. Allen (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1969) 8:252.

[238] R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), 1180.

[239] W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Old Tappan, N. *3.:* Fleming H. Revell Co., 1966), 333.

[240] Curtis Vaughan, *Acts in Bible Study Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1974), 14.

The coach is delivering his final pep talk to the team. As he encourages and implores and challenges his players, you can feel the anticipation and excitement building. They are ready to charge out the door at that moment rather than hear the rest of the speech. With the team **SO** excited and motivated, the coach suddenly says, "Stay in the locker room *until* the time is right." Having said that, he walks out and shuts the door behind him. The emotion in that locker room would be similar to the emotion felt by the disciples when Jesus told them "to stay in the city." Yet, the time the disciples waited was a *time of empowering and preparation* When the Waiting was over, church growth evangelism had begun.

The period of the apostles was characterized by an *explosion* of the Holy Spirit. The record says, "When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent, rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting" (Acts 2:1-2). The wind was often used as a symbol for the Holy Spirit. At creation "the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters" (Gen. 1:2). Ezekiel stood in the midst of what once had been a valley of dry bones and called for "the four winds" (Ezek. 37:9). Nicodemus was challenged by Jesus to consider the wind (John 3:8).

I lived on the Texas Gulf Coast long enough to learn something Church Growth Words from the Risen Lord about hurricanes from firsthand experience. I learned that they were caused when a fresh, warm mass of air encountered a cool, stale mass of air. In the case of the hurricane this happens over tropical waters and intensifies to winds of 74-100 mph or more. The winds move counterclockwise around an eye which is calm. When this same phenomena happens over dry land, it results in tornadoes, cyclones, turbulence of all kinds. I learned that any time fresh air meets stale air, turbulence results. So it was in the days of the New Testament. When the fresh wind of the Holy Spirit encountered the stale air of Jewish tradition, there was turbulence. There was, in fact, an explosion of the Holy Spirit. The events of Acts 2 speak of the turbulence that whirled around the peaceful center.

Likewise, the period of the apostles was characterized by *deep conviction about Jesus Christ.* The New Testament records the depth of the conviction of the apostles. The Book of Acts tells us, "There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved" (4:12). Paul wrote:

> Therefore also God highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:9-11).

In the writings of John we read: "Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

These early Christians firmly believed that Jesus Christ was everything He said He was. They believed He was the long-awaited and prophesied, virgin-born Son of God who lived a sinless life and died a substitutionary death. They believed He had been resurrected bodily from the grave and ascended to be with the Father, awaiting the time of His return to claim His own for all eternity. Based on that theological foundation, the church began to grow.

The period of the apostles was characterized by *modeling the methods of the Master.* Believers did what they had seen Jesus do or what they had heard of Him doing. They gave of what they had, and they healed those who needed healing (Acts 3:6). They did great things in the midst of the people (Acts 6:8). They were so successful that nonbeijevers said of them, "These men who have upset the world have come here also" (Acts 17:6). Christians proclaimed the gospel and taught the truths of it "publicly and *from* house to house" (Acts' 20:20), just as Jesus had done.

A final characteristic of this period is that it involved *a plan that included all.* This new church believed what Paul *wrote,* "All have Sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). They believed that "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2:21). They believed that the work of their Lord did "purchase for God. . . men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.. . to be a kingdom and priests to our God" (Rev. *5:9-10).* In their modeling of Jesus, they model for us an evangelis tic, growing church.

The Perspective Through the Reformation

To gain a proper perspective on church growth evangelism from the past, One must turn from the period of the apostles to evangelism in the Mediterranean World. From the Close of the New Testament era until the early part of the fourth century, *Med iterranean evangelism* was lived out in the midst of severe persecution. Jesus had warned of this persecution Persecution came under several Roman leaders, including Emperor Trajan (98-117). Severe persecution in the Roman Empire was the order of the day for Deejus (249-251) and Valerjan *(253.260)* Under Diocletian (284- 305) churches were destroyed, bishops jailed, and Christians *killed.*

One means of communicating the gospel during this period was through literature. Edificatory literature, or writings that were intended to edify the church, included *The Epistle of Barnabas, The Shepherd of Hermas* and the writings of Ignatius. In addition to literature of edification, there was also literature that defended the faith. Origen (185-254) and Cyprian *(195-258)* contributed to this area. Other apologists included Justin Martyr, who wrote *Dialogue with Trypho, the Jew* and *Apology,* Ireneaus (130-202), who wrote *Five Books Against Heresies,* and Tertullian (160-220), who wrote against Gnosticism.

Some of the apologetic literature defended the faith against legalism. Other writings defended the faith against gnosticism, a system of thought which said that matter was evil. A good God could not have created an evil world, so He created a subordinate being who created the world, thus Christ was not human. Because of the literature and the unity of Christians that was brought about through severe persecution, Christians were effective in reaching people during this period of time. In spite of the effectiveness of Christians, there was much corruption in the church at this time. At the end of the apostolic period, evangelism declined for three major reasons: the union of church and state; the infiltration of paganism; and doctrinal changes, particularly concerning the doctrines of faith and the church's ordinances.

The most significant personalities in Christianity during the Mediterranean period included Constantine (AD 272-337), the Roman emperor who was the father of the unscriptural method of bringing persons into church membership by governmental decree. In one year alone

twelve thousand men, plus women and children, were baptized. In AD 324 Constantine promised every convert to Christianity twenty pieces of gold and a white robe in which to be baptized. Yet he himself was not baptized until three days prior to his death. While governmental decree was an illegitimate method of church growth, there is no reason to doubt that God enabled many persons to experience a personal relationship with Him through Christ, in spite of the system.

The second significant personality during the Mediterranean period of evangelism was Augustine (AD 354-430), the bishop of Hippo. Augustine is one of Christianity's outstanding examples of the power of the written word as a means of evangelism. Augustine's writings influenced both Roman Catholic and Protestant theology. His famous statement, "Thou hast made us for thyself, 0 God, and our souls are restless until they find their rest in thee," has been used by evangelicals in many denominations throughout history. The best-known work of Augustine is *The Confessions of Augustine.* In Milan, Italy, while studying with Ambrose, Augustine overheard a neighbor girl say, "Take and read." He assumed the words meant for him to read the Scripture. When he opened it, his eyes fell on Romans 13:13-14 and he read, "Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not i sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lust." The conversion of Augustine *was* vivid and completely transforming. He showed significant power of both pulpit and pen. Some of his 360 sermons are still in existence today. He wrote hundreds of books and tracts. John A. Broadus said of him, "What we call Calvinism is the doctrine of Paul developed by Augustine and Systematized by Calvin."

The third significant personality during the Mediterranean period of evangelism was Ulfilas (318-388), a missionary to the barbarian Visigoths, a people located north of the Danube River in Eastern Europe. Ulfilas translated a large portion of the Bible into the Gothic tongue. One other significant personality was Patrick (390-490), a missionary to Ireland. At the age of sixteen, Patrick was kidnapped and taken to Ireland. After six years of captivity, Patrick escaped and eventually returned home. He became convinced that he had to go back to Ireland and evangelize the people. During his lifetime, it is said that he established *365* churches and led 120,000 to faith in Jesus Christ.

In addition to these significant people, at least three significant movements developed during the Mediterranean period of evangelism. The first of these movements was Montanism, which protest-. ed the laxity of the established church. It was led by Montanus, who referred to himself as the "Mouthpiece" of the Holy Spirit. Followers revolted against low morals in the church and continuously announced that the end of the age was at hand.

A second significant movement was that of Novatianism under the leadership of Novatian, a man who was converted late in life and zealously tried to make up for lost time and wasted years. *Novatianism* came to symbolize protest against worldly conformity by the church. A third significant group during the Mediterranean period of evangelism were the Donatists who were led by Bishop Donatus. Donatus accused the church of tolerating those who were evil and stressed the sharing of Christ with all mankind.

Between the years of 500-1500 there was a *decline in biblical evangelism* related primarily to the doctrine of conversion. Conversion became a mass exercise. When Clovis, king of the Franks, baptized an entire army, mass conversions became a pattern. Papal authority expanded with the expansion of the church.

Some missionary enterprises resulted in territorial gains during the decline. Evangelism was done by missionaries. Pope Gregory I (590-604) sent missionaries to England. At the synod of Whitby (664), Roman Catholicism was made the official religion of England. Benedict started the Benedictine monastic order in 529 and sent monks out as missionaries. Boniface of England went to Northern Europe. Anskar went to Denmark and Sweden. Charlemagne (771-814) took Catholicism to the territories he conquered and in 800 was crowned by the pope as the head of the Holy Roman Empire.

There were significant personalities within the church during this period of decline in biblical evangelism. Claudius of Tourian rejected salvation through ritual and preached that man had direct access to God.

A second significant person within the church was Bernard of Clairvaux (1091-1165), a monk with a warm love for Jesus Christ. Bernard has been called the mightiest preacher of the Middle Ages. He proclaimed justification by faith and forgiveness by grace. He also wrote "Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee."

Francis of Assisi (1182-1226), a son of a wealthy textile merchant, is another significant person from this period. He lived a carefree life until he heard of Jesus sending out the disciples (Matt. 10). After accepting the call of Christ, Francis gave himself to a life of poverty and preaching to the poor. Traveling by two's, his student-evangelists were commissioned to proclaim peace, repentance, and forgiveness to all persons. His personal ministry was characterized by self-sacrifice and song.

Yet another significant person of the period was John Tauler (1300?-1361). He has been called the most successful evangelist of his generation. His converts formed prayer groups rather than churches. He is representative of evangelism through mysticism and prayer.

Berthold von Regensburg (d. 1272) was a Franciscan and a popular preacher. On tours to other countries, he often preached to crowds too large for the size of the churches. He summoned the masses to repentance. Some historians have called him "the Whitefield of the thirteenth century."

John Wycliffe (1320-1384) furthered the cause of biblical and lay evangelism. He was an Oxford scholar who challenged the established church and began a translation of the Bible into English. He sent his followers out as itinerant lay preachers. After his death, his followers Completed the translation of the Bible.

A final significant person of the period was Girolamo Savonaro Ia (1452l498) who called the church to repentance He represented evangelism by denunciation and reform. As a Catholic evangelist, he taught people to read the Scriptures and maintained that the Scriptures led people to Christ. He is also known for having memorized the Bible.

During the decline of biblical evangelism, there were significant movements Outside the church. These groups claimed to represent pure religion. Among the groups were the Petrobrusians, who derived their name from Peter DeBruys, a Frenchman and a Catholic priest who preached the grace of God.

Another group was the Henricjans, named after Henry of Cazon, their leader. They came out of the Petrobrusians and preached salvation by faith alone.

The Arnoldists founded by Arnold of]3rescia, and the Waldensians, founded by Peter Waldo, were other significant groups outside the church, as were the Bohemian Brethren, whose spiritual father was Peter Chelcicky.

The years 1500-1730 marked the period of *resurgence in biblical evangelism* Probably there has never been a revolutionary change as dramatic as this reformation. This resurgence was character ized by protest against the doctrines and practices of the Roman Catholic Church.

The reform in Germany was led by Martin Luther (1483-1546). In 1505, caught out in a violent thunderstorm, Luther vowed to become a monk if he Survived. In July of that year, he entered an Augustinja monastery. Unable to find peace, Luther began a spiritual quest that reached a turning point when he came to understand Romans 1:17, "The just shall live by faith." Luther found salvation was a gift from God by faith. On October 31, 1517, he nailed his Ninety-five Theses on the cathedral door. This was the customary way to request a debate on an issue. The theses centered in (1) the traffic of indulgences, (2) the power of the pope to forgive guilt, and (3) the character of the church treasury. The contributions of Martin Luther centered around his preaching, teaching, writing, translating of the Scriptures, and music. "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" is one of Luther's hymns. The Lutheran denomination today bears his name.

The Reformation in Eastern Switzerland began under the influence of Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531). Zwingli was well educated in European schools and taught at the University of Basel (1502- 1506) until he was appointed a priest in 1506. He began to preach expository sermons on Scripture in the language of the people. After his conversion he began a reform in his parish—eliminating relics, images, and observance of the mass. Zwingli tried to join forces with Luther, but they could not agree on the meaning of the Lord's Supper. Luther contended that the body of Christ was present; Zwingli contended Christ's body can be everywhere, thus the bread was symbolic. Zwingli accepted infant baptism for political reasons because the city council of Zurich had all been baptized as infants. The contributions of Ulrich Zwingli consist of his expository preaching, especially from Matthew, his doctrine of free grace, the removal of relics and images from the church, and the institution of the Lord's Supper in place of the mass. The resurgence of biblical evangelism in Western Switzerland and France came under the influence of John Calvin *(1509-1564).* He was born in France, was educated at the University of Paris, and received a law degree from Orleans. Calvin embraced Reformation ideas, and because of persecution, he fled to Basel, where he published the first edition of his *Institutes.* Calvin taught there were four offices within the church: pastor, teacher, elder, and deacon. The contributions of John Calvin include a strong emphasis on doctrine with biblical base, an emphasis on the sovereignty of God, predestination, election and grace, and strong preaching mixed with prolific writing.

The resurgence of biblical evangelism in Scotland was led by John Knox (1505-1572). Knox turned to Protestantism in 1546 and later studied with Calvin in Geneva (1554). Knox returned to Scotland at a time when many were *trying* to reestablish Catholicism. The queen declared him an outlaw, but he continued to preach and lead Scottish reform. John Knox preached eloquently, with deep conviction He Was a master of delivery, force, and earnestness. He laid spiritual foundations still followed in Scotland today. All of his Preaching and writing was based on solid biblical foundation.

During this period of reform, a significant contribution was made by the Anabaptists, who received their name from their insistence on immersion for those who were sprinkled *Ana* means "again," thus *Anabaptist* means "again baptized." These people were severely persecuted; many of them were martyred. Conrad Grebel, a student of Zwinglj, was known as the "father of Anabaptists." Grebel and others broke with Zwingli over the issue of infant baptism.

Another significant Anabaptist was Balthasar Rubmajer (1481-1528), who was converted under the Preaching of Wilhelm Rueblin in 1525. Hubmaier soon became Germany's most prominent Anabaptist. He had at one time been a Roman Catholic priest. Tradition says that he baptized six thousand persons in one year. Hubmaier was burned at the stake in *1528.*

Menno Simons (1496-156 1) Was also a leader in the Anabaptist movement Simons was born in the Netherlands. He was a well- educated Catholic priest who converted to the Anabaptist Position in 1536. He was a prolific Writer and strong biblical preacher.

In summary, the contributions of these reformers included the return to the belief that the Bible is the sole authority, the emphasis on salvation by faith alone, the emphasis on the priesthood of every believer, and a legacy of evangelistic literature. [241]

The Perspective Since the Reformation

The years 1730-1900 could easily be described as the time of *The Great Awakenings/Revivals.* It began with the evangelical revival in England in the early l700s. Prior to the revival, "the nobility expressed disdain for religion, the citizenry indifference the lower class of mostly industrial workers were ignorant of and totally untouched by any and all religious influences"[242] By 1736 real, genuine revival Was evident in England, as "crowds gathered to hear the 21 year old George Whitefield, the first of the Oxford Methodists, preaching rebirth and justification by faith."[243]

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[241] While no attempt was made to document each date in fact, the following works should be consulted for further reference and documentation: Earle E. Cairns, *An Endless Line of Splendor* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1986); Roland Q. Leavell, *Evangelism: Christ's Imperative Commission* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1979); Paulus Scharpif, *History of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964).

[242] Scharpff, 65.

[243] Ibid., *65.*

Whitefield (1714-1770) was "the first evangelist of the English church who recognized the need for aggressive evangelism."[244] Worthy of note concerning Whitefield is the fact that "even though Whitefield was a staunch Calvinist, one of his contributions was to effectively demonstrate that a firm belief in the doctrines of predestination and election in no way hinders the powerful effect of preaching the gospel.[245]

The Oxford Methodists included John Wesley (1703-1791), who "aroused the established church from its slumbers and changed the spiritual climate of England."[246] Charles Wesley (1707-1788) "wrote literally hundreds of songs for one purpose only: to bring people to God through Jesus Christ. He attempted to call uneducated people, ignorant of the gospel to repentance and faith through the medium of hymn singing."[247]

Countess Celina Huntingdon (1707-1791) contributed to the evangelization of England during this period:

> Filled with a glowing love to save souls, she made it her special responsibility to spread the gospel in the higher social circles. She gave herself, her social standing, her resources—about 2,000,000 shillings (She founded a preachers' school at Trevecca in Wales that offered three years of training at no expense.)—her time and all her energies for the cause of Christ.[248]

Musicians other than the Wesleys, were actively involved in this awakening. Isaac Watts (1674-1748), William Cowper (1731- 1800), Phillip Doddridge 1702-1751), and Augustus Toplady (1740-1778) composed hymns that were evangelistic and are still being sung today.

The major contribution of this revival in England was the development of

> Evangelistic methods that were novel for their day but that have become standard methods of modern evangelism. Because of the efforts of Charles and John Wesley and George Whitefield, field preaching became the number one method of Eighteenth Century evangelism.[249]

The First Great Awakening in America took place from 1734 to 1770. Prior to this awakening, "the *first* three decades of the Eighteenth Century are said to have been the darkest days of moral and spiritual decline Since the Dark Ages."[250] The statement that "not one in twenty persons claimed to be a Christian"[251] paints a bleak Picture of America. However, in answer to the prayers of God's people in America and simultaneous with the evangelical awakening in England, revival came to *New* England.

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[244] Francis Gerald Ensley, *John Wesley, Evangelist* (Methodist Evangelistic Materials, 1958), 8-9.

[245] Mabel Richmond Bradsford, *A Tale of Two Brothers* (London: Richard Clay and Company, 1954), 141.

[246] Scharpff, 73-74.

[247] Edwin N. Hardy, *George Whitefield, The Matchless Soulwinner* (New York: American Tract Society, 1928), 171.

[248] Scharpif, 79 or for further information, see, *Ljfe and Times of Celina, Countess of Huntingdon* (London: Shirley and Hastings, 1941).

[249] Mendell Taylor, *Exploring Evangelism* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1964), 259.

[250] Roland Q. Leavell, *Evangelism: Christ's Imperative Commission* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1979), 14.

[251] Robert L. Ekiund, *Spiritual Awakening* (Dallas: Baptist General Convention of Texas, Evangelism Division), 8.

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) was one of the leaders of the First Great Awakening. His contributions to evangelism were his laborious efforts in preaching and writing. These were confirmed with many conversions as well as setting the precedent for the content of the messages of American revivals and evangelism in his days.[252]

While Edwards was active among the Theodore J. Frelinghuys (1691-1748) was active among the Dutch Reformed Frelinghuysen may be said to have begun this Great Awakening in America, that is, as a general movement. There had been isolated revivals before his arrival in 1720.[253]

Other religious groups were involved in evangelization during this time. William Tennent and his four Sons (Gilbert, William Jr., John, and Charles) were active among the Presbyterians Shubal Stearns and Daniel Marshall were active among Baptists. The results of this First Great Awakening in America included 150,000 people converted, 50,000 in New England alone; the beginning of 150 new Congregations Separatist, Baptist, and Presbyterian churches; and the establishing of 51 of the first 100 colleges in America.[254] During this time, David Brainerd began his great missionary career among the Indians (1743).[255]

The Second Great Awakening in America (1785-1812) occurred in the midst of deplorable conditions.

> The condition of America for the 15 years preceding the Second Great Awakening was pathetic. There was a low ebb tide for Christianity in America. There was such extensive unbelief that one historian concluded that during the two decades after the War of Independence American Christianity had less vitality than at any other time in history.[256]

Issac Backus may have contributed to the revival's beginnings when he:

> gathered together a number of other ministers in New England. They wrote a circular letter and sent it out to preaching points all over the Eastern seaboard calling on believers to pray for awakening. In response to these calls, prayer groups sprang up all over New England.[257]

The victories of this revival ranged from college campuses, such as Hampton-Sidney College in Virginia to Yale University where Timothy Dwight served as president) to the camp meetings on the frontiers under the leadership of James McGready and others. Through the missionary emphasis in local churches, the American foreign missions movement began with the "Haystack

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[252] Jonathan Edwards, *The Select Works of Jonathan Edwards* (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1958), 1:46-47.

[253] Monroe Sterns, *The Great A wakening.. 1720-1760* (New York: Franklin Watts, Inc., 1970), 1 (see also, 3-9).

[254] George Worrell, *America Great Awakenings* (Dallas: Baptist General Convention of Texas, Church Training *Department)* 8.

[255] Ekiund, 11.

[256] Ibid.

[257] Ibid., 17.

Group"— Samuel J. Mills, James Richards, Francis Robbins, Harvey Loms, Gordon Hall, and Luther Rice.

The prayer revival of 1858 served as a significant religious awakening in America. Like the other awakenings, it was preceded by religious stagnation and losses in church membership.

> In the midst of spiritual deadness the laymans' prayer movement began quietly at noon Wednesday, September 23, 1857 at the Old North Dutch Church, located at the corner of Fulton and Williams Streets in the inner city of New York. The organizer . . . was Jeremiah C. Lamphier. . . a Presbyterian businessman.[258]

Lamphier had been praying alone for at least a half hour when he heard another person walking up the stairs. Before the hour was over, six people had come to pray together. As the days passed, the group continued to increase until

> on October 14 there were over 100 at the prayer meeting. On this day the economic bubble burst and the nation was thrown into economic depression. Within five weeks every room in the Dutch Reformed church was filled with praying businessmen. Within six months 150 daily prayer meetings of this nature were being held in New York City with 50,000 New Yorkers attending. Before long prayer meetings began all over the nation.[259]

The results of this great prayer revival were obvious: "In the thirty years after the 1858 Awakening more than 5,000 young adults volunteered for full-time mission service. Among other locations 1,078 went to India and *1,615* went to China."[260] This was in addition to the thousands of persons who were converted during the two years following the beginning of the great prayer revival.

Charles G. Finney (1792-1875) was an important Personality in this revival movement. Perhaps the greatest innovation that Finney wrought was the adaptation of the revival to an urban environment. He also used door-to-door visitation and involved women in his crusades. Approximately 50,000 were added to the kingdom as a result of Finney's ministry.[261]

Another significant leader during this time was Dwight L. Moody (1837-1899).

> Moody's strategy was based on his belief that the gospel saves and he expected people to be saved as a result of his Preaching. He preached as if there would never be another meeting and got Christians involved in work after the meetings and personal evangelism.

> Moody and his musician, Ira Sankey, believed also in the power of the sacred song and

used it effectively in evangelism.[262] Also involved in evangelism during this period of time was

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[258] Worrell, 23.

[259] Ibid.

[260] EkIund, 18-19.

[261] Winthrop Hudson, *Religion in America,* 3d ed. (New York: Charles Scrjbner and Sons, 1981), 143.

[262] William Moody, *The L(fe of D. L. Moody* (Murfreesboro: Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1900), 167-168, 172.

Sam Jones (1847-1906). "After Moody's death, Jones was the most popular evangelist in America. His quick wit helped to draw vast crowds to hear him."[263]

In England at this time, Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892) was leading revivals. He was

> a man who took life by the hand and then romped with it. Simple, humble, sincere, a fountain of good English after the style of John Bunyan; a person who like another was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief a strange and irritating enigma to some who thought education creates genius but an open secret to all who understood the hiding of power; a spiritual giant who moved across the fields of life, battered down ancient strongholds with no other weapons than a blameless life and a boundless faith. [264]

The Perspective of the Twentieth Century and Beyond

Shortly after the beginning of the twentieth century, revival came to the world. Unlike earlier revivals, this revival of 1904- 1905 did not come as a result of apathy and spiritual decline in the world; it came when Christianity was beginning to compromise its beliefs with humanism. The establishment of prayer meetings was intensified by the emphases of the Moody Bible Institute and the Keswick Convention and the fact that Methodist bishops called on every Methodist to pray for revival. Other denominations did likewise.

Revival continued in America through the preaching of R. A. Torrey, Wilbur Chapman, and Billy Sunday. One example of the revival was the fact that "the ministers of Atlantic City, New Jersey reported that out of 50,000 people there were only 50 adults left unconverted."[265]

Revival swept Wales, primarily because of the preaching of Evan Roberts. "Within three months 100,000 converts had been added to the Church of Wales."[266]

The impact on the world in general was significant. "By 1906, 11,000 were enrolled [in missionary studies and. . . 300 top college students were sailing for foreign mission fields every year."[267]

Significant leaders in evangelism emerged in the twentieth century. Early in the century, George W. Truett (1867-1944) was described as "modern Christianity's outstanding example of evangelism through denominational leadership."[268] Billy Graham (b. 1918) has been described as "the most influential single individual in evangelism in America during this period.[269]

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[263] Leavell, 100.

[264] Lynn E. May, Jr., "The Impact of One Life: Charles Haddon Spurgeon," *Baptist History and Heritage,* 19, 4 (October 1984): 13.

[265] Ekluncl, 21.

[266] Dan Bayes, *Fireseeds of Spiritual Awakening* (San Bernadino, Calif.: Here's Life Publishers, 1983), 36.

[267] Eklund, 21.

[268] Leavell, 102.

[269] Scharpif, 322.

The twentieth century has seen the rise of such organizations as Campus Crusade for Christ, devoted solely to evangelistic purposes. Mass crusade evangelism and media evangelism have intensified. Mini-awakenings have come, such as the one which began with Billy Graham's Los Angeles Crusade. There have been campus revivals such as the one produced by the Wheaton Prayer Meeting. There have been simultaneous crusades and strong emphases on Sunday School and Bible study. In the late sixties, the Jesus Revolution, according to Roy Fish of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, "represented a combination of the rebellious status of youth and old time religion. The Holy Spirit took charge of a rebellious spirit in youth and channeled it."

Beginning in the early sixties a revival began to break out in Korea.

Time Magazine's May 3, 1982 issue reports that the most dramatic Christian revival in the world today is in the country of Korea. The church is growing at a rate of 6.6% per year, mostly through conversions. It is projected that by the year 2000 42% of Koreans will be Christian. This is all the more amazing because in 1971 only 10% of Korea was considered Christian.[270]

The Church Growth Movement "took root in the mind and ministry of Donald McGavran while he was serving as a third generation missionary to India over a period of 30 years."[271] But McGavran said: "While God has granted me a part in the process, I neither invented church growth nor am I solely responsible for it. Indeed I owe my interest in church growth to a great Methodist bishop, Jerrefi Waskom Pickett. in 1934 he kindled my concern that the church grow."[272]

After publishing two books, *Bridges of God* in 1955 and *How Churches Grow* also in *1955,* McGavran founded The institute of Church Growth at Northwest Christian College in Eugene, Oregon. in 1965 it moved to Pasadena, California, and became a part of Fuller Theological Seminary. Thus began an new emphasis in the history of church growth evangelism. emphasis on church growth per se.

Others have followed in this line, such as the institute for American Church Growth founded by Win Am and the inclusion of departme5 schools, and centers for the emphasis of church growth within theological education. The publication of books on evangelism and church growth is an indication of the increasing interest. This interest began Primarily with Donald McGavran and his desire for the church to experience growth.

A rather recent phenomena in twentieth century evangelism is the emergence of television evangelists. While many of these personalities call themselves "evangelists," their contribution to church growth evangelism is questionable. A recent Associated Press report said:

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[270] Hayes, 89.

[271] C. Peter Wagner, *Your Church Can Grow* (Ventura, Calif.: Regal Press, 1976), 13.

[272] Donald McGavran and George C. Hunter III, *Church Growth Strategies That Will Work* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1980), 14.

As prime instance, most of the noted figures of what is called the "electronic church" are not evangelists, per se, meaning those with a special ministry of eliciting conversions to Christianity. Instead, they mostly are television preachers or ministers, largely devoted to instructing their followers, mostly regular audiences, rather than primarily summoning the religious indifferent to faith. That task— drawing the skeptics and apathetic to Christianity—is the particular role of the evangelist.[273]

But what of the latter part of the twentieth century and beyond? In a document entitled "Bold Mission Thrust: Planning for the 1990's" the Inter-agency Council for the Southern Baptist Convention revealed the following facts and trends:

1) While the population in the United States will increase from 214 million to 268 million (25%) between 1975 anl 2000, the increase in Latin America and Africa will more than double. Asia and Oceania will increase from 2.25 billion to 3.6 billion (60%).
2) While the average age of persons in the United States and Europe is getting higher, the population in the nonwestern world is getting younger. The average age in Mexico is now 16 years old, while the average age in the United States is more than double that figure.
3) By the year 2000 the ten largest cities in the world may be in the Third World. Projections call for Mexico City to have a population of nearly 32 million. Calcutta and Bombay will each have over 19 million.
4) The world has been described as a global village. World communications continue to intensify with satellite communications informing all continents of news moments after an event.
5) The information era is accelerating. A recent example is that of the space program in the United States. On a recent trip by space shuttle, Challenger, there was enough information provided to print 44,000 books.
6) A greater educational gap among the nations is being created.
7) A significant shift of wealth from the western world to the Arab states has occurred as a result of oil production.
8) In the United States a majority of wealth has belonged to women but managed by men. The trend is for women to be more active in managing their wealth.
9) It is estimated that 50% of college graduates in America are going into jobs that did not exist when they were born.
10) The shrinking middle class is creating a counter trend in the United States. The present middle class generation is the first in the United States to face the strong possibility of downward mobility.
11) With modern medical advances, death is being Postponed for a *significa* number of years.
12) Technology does not deal with the most significant *part of* human experience, the inner person. Many persons are turning to nontraditional religions to satisfy the need for spiritual experience in a technological world.

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[273] George W. Cornell, "Most TV Ministers Don't Qualify As Evangelists," Associated Press, *Ft. Worth Star Telegram,* 4 April 1987: 9E.

13) Changes in government programs and high interest rates make it more difficult for families to *buy* homes and maintain family farms.
14) There are fewer "greats" who dominate the scene of the World.
15) Divorce rates will likely continue at present levels but *will* rise in the age group 55 and older.
16) The learning environment of children is moving from verbal to multisensory. They are becoming more media nurtured and computer literate.
17) With the aging Population in the United States, the older Population will continue to exercise Political rower. Gray Power will be a growing force in the United States during the next decade.
18) A new emphasis on Spirituality is heightened by the charismatic movement. Spiritual formation and faith development are recent emphases *in* this area.
19) Third world countries are now sending out 15,000 missionaries.
20) Many denominations are moving up the socioeconomic scale. The vacuum may be filled by cults and Pentecostal sects.
21) The conservative movement in Society will be increasingly seen in religion.
22) More than half the scientists who ever lived are alive today.[274]

Each of these facts and trends form important items on the agenda of the future church. Church growth evangelism must be aware of what is going on around it and within it.

In a book entitled *Foresight. Ten Major Trends that Will Dramatically Affect the Future of Christians and the Church,* Howard A. Snyder and Daniel V. Runyon have listed ten trends that they anticipate in the future of the church. They are:

1) From regional churches to world church.
2) From Scattered growth to broad revival.
3) From Communist China to Christian China.
4) From institutional tradition to kingdom theology.
5) From clergy/laity to community of ministers.
6) From male leadership to male/female partnership.
7) From secularization to religious relativism.
8) From nuclear family to family diversity.
9) From church/state separation to Christian political activism.
10) From safe planet to threatened planet.[275]

As we approach the year 2000, David Barrett reminds us:

The last 100 years have seen an unprecedented rash of new publicly announced plans, proposals, and strategies for accomplishing and completing world evangelization. The

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[274] "Bold Mission Thrust: Planning for the l990's" A Cooperative Project of the Inter-agency Councj of the Southern Baptist Convention and Southern Baptist State Conventions (Nashville: Directions 2000 Workgroup, Southern Baptist Convention).

[275] Howard A. Snyder and Daniel V. Runyon, "Ten Major Trends Facing the Church," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research,* April 1987, 67-70.

grand total of these since AD 30 now stands at over 680 distinct and separate plans. Four hundred of these 680 had fizzled out by the year 1960, but 250 are still in existence today, though 100 of them are clearly moribund and about to fizzle out.[276]

With all this, we have not yet evangelized our world. That is why I share a formula toward the end of each semester in my church growth evangelism classes at Southwestern Seminary. To these future church leaders, I say that church growth evangelism in the latter part of the twentieth century belongs to those who will claim this formula:

Sound biblical theology
+
sensitive awareness to community and world needs
+
creative evangelism methodology
+
Holy Spirit Power called forth through intense prayer
+
hard work
=
church growth.

Conclusion

Perhaps the most important perspective of all as we think of the twentieth century and beyond is the "beyond"—the perspective of eternity. The facts of death, judgment, heaven, and hell add a serious dimension to evangelism and church growth. They impress upon us the eternal importance of human lives and the urgency of the day as we anticipate the return of the Lord.

The "all-ness" of Revelation affirms the Great Commission's "all-ness." Jesus commissioned His disciples then and now to go to all people, all nations, the ends of the earth. The Book of Revelation tells us that someday in eternity a group will gather around the throne "from every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (Rev. 5:9). Further it will be". . . a great multitude, which no One could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb" (Rev. 7:9).

This great multitude representative of all God's creatures:

sang the song of Moses the bondservant of God and the song of the Lamb, saying:

Great and marvelous are Thy works,
0 Lord God, the Almighty;
Righteous and true are thy ways,
Thou King of the nations.

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[276] David B. Barrett, "Annual Statistical Table on Global Mission: 1988," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research,* January 1988, 16.

Who will not fear, 0 Lord, and glorify Thy name?
For thou alone art holy;
For all the nations will come and worship before thee
For thy righteous acts have been revealed. (Rev. 15:3-4).

The only way to get a proper perspective on church growth evangelism is to move beyond it and above it. In a real sense we can't see it up close. We need a heavenly perspective.

History both church and secular—is moving toward eternity when the "all-ness" of our commission becomes the "all-ness" of God's heaven. Attempting to take the good news of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth is our assignment Anything Unrelated to this task is an exercise in futility, for someday we will join with that innumerable multitude from across the ages to honor Him who sent us on mission. We will honor Him not because of His sending ability or our response ability, but because He is worthy. Unless we are able to see this perspective, we will grow Weary in well doing.

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