

CHAPTER 29

Visitation Initiative— Toward a Local Church Evangelism Strategy

Introduction:

Diagnostic Questions for Local Church Analysis:

- a. When do the unsaved hear the Gospel in our local church ministry?
 - 1) How do you know that those who are reached are unsaved?
 - 2) Is there a concerted effort to reach the unsaved through this ministry?
- b. When are the lost given an opportunity to commit their lives to Jesus Christ?
 - 1) Do they have the opportunity to receive salvation in Christ?
 - 2) How is their commitment confirmed?
 - 3) Are there solid avenues for the follow-up (and discipleship) of new converts?
- c. Are Christians being trained in personal evangelism through our church ministry?
 - 1) Does the church have a systematic training program for those interested?
 - 2) Are they given opportunities to share their faith and apply what they learn?
- d. Does our church have any type of accountability structure to encourage believers to continue in evangelism?
 - 1) How are they held accountable?
 - 2) Are there support groups in place to encourage the weary?

Are the above questions valid?

- a) If so, is the church accomplishing its first priority?
 - 1) If it is not accomplishing its first priority, why not?
- b) What needs to be done to help it accomplish its first priority?
 - 1) The following are some general points of encouragement

The next section seeks to answer two questions:

Why do we emphasize evangelism?

How do we emphasize evangelism?

I. Some Emphasis in Ministry Verses:

1. Emphasis Outward:
 - a. At least three of the five Great Commission emphasize proclamational evangelism, pointing the church outward to a lost world
 - b. Ephesians 4:11 includes three current ministers (if apostles and prophets are considered ceased gifts):
 - 1) Evangelists—outward focus
 - 2) Pastors—inward shepherding focus
 - 3) Teachers—inward teaching focus
 - c. The Great Commission forces us to look out. Of the three leaders provided to the church, the evangelist is the leader with an outward focus.
 - d. Like the evangelist Paul was encouraged by God to look outwardly:

Acts 18:9-10, “And the Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, ‘Do not be afraid *any longer*, but go on speaking and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city.’”

2. Emphasis Inward:
 - a. “Make disciples” in the Matthew 28 Great Commission passage can be made to have an almost exclusive inward emphasis, whereas, “teaching them to obey” in Matt 28:20 certainly does focus inwardly
 - b. Two of the three leaders in Ephesians 4:11 have an inward focus: pastors and teachers
 - c. Pastors are called to “shepherd the flock of God,” Acts 20:28, 1 Peter 5:1-4
 - d. Other verses point to the importance of relationships within the local church:
 - 1) The priority of relationship among believers, Galatians 6:10
 - 2) The 62 “one another” commands focus on relationships within the fellowship of the local church
3. Inward emphasis or outward emphasis? How can this apparent conflict be solved in the ministry of the local church? Can they both be in operation simultaneously?
 - a. A look at the evangelistic strategy of the apostle Paul:
 - 1) Acts 17:16-17—in the synagogue (1) Jews, (2) Gentiles, and in the marketplace (3) whoever happened to be present
 - 2) Rom 1:14-17—to the Jew first, and also to the Greek
 - 3) But then, you say, that was the evangelistic strategy, not the church ministry strategy ...
 - b. When churches were founded in cities, Paul visited the churches and ministered:

Acts 11:20-26, “But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and *began* speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord. And the news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch. Then when he had come and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and *began* to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain *true* to the Lord; for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord. And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul; and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And it came about that for an entire year they met with the church, and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch”

Acts 14:21-23, “...They returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and *saying*, ‘Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.’ And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed”

Acts 15:41; 16:5, “And he was traveling through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches ... So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily”

Acts 16:40, “And they went out of the prison and entered *the house of* Lydia, and when they saw the brethren, they encouraged them and departed”

Acts 19:1, “He found some disciples [in Ephesus]”

Acts 20:7, “On the first day of the week, we assembled to break bread”

Acts 20:17-38 [Address to Ephesian elders]

Acts 21:4, “So we found some disciples, and stayed there [Tyre] seven days”

Acts 21:7, “We reached Ptolemais where we greeted the brothers and stayed with them one day”

Acts 28:14, “There we found believers and were invited to stay with them for seven days”
 - c. Did the apostle continue evangelizing cities after churches were already founded there?
 - 1) While this leads to a certain argument from silence, certain hints are found toward the end of the Book of Acts (including Acts 18:9-10), along with material on Paul’s ministry in the epistles (e.g. 1 Corinthians 9; 2 Corinthians 5-6; Colossians 1, etc.)
 - 2) e.g. Appolos evangelized the Jews in Ephesus, though it seemed that a church was already founded there—although the church may not yet have separated from the synagogue in that town, Acts 18:28 (cf. Acts 19:8-9).
 - 3) Paul evangelized in Rome (Acts 28:30-31), although a church was already founded in that town, as the believers from that church (or the churches) met Paul at the Appii Forum and the Three Taverns (Acts 28:14-15).
 - 4) Rom 1:15, “Thus, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you [or “evangelize with you”] also who are in Rome”

To whom is any congregation ministering?

The Following are ideas based on knowledge of six distinct groups of people that a congregation should minister to (placed in order of importance, as long as all are being ministered to):

1. Absentees, Luke 15
2. Shut-ins, 1 Thess 5:14
3. Members, Acts 20:28
4. Regulars, Acts 20:28
5. Visitors, 1 Cor 14:22—could not this verse describe visitors?
6. Community outreach, Acts 17:16-17
Including groups, such as schoolteachers, the police, firemen, and other public authorities

The following notes have combined these six groups into four:

Absentee and visitor names can be tabulated from a Friendship Register or from a form that every attendee fills out every Sunday morning. Those that are ushering, on nursery duty, in choir, or on the platform may be left out, depending on when and how the form is filled in and collected.

It is recommended that Absentee names (kept by family last name) be collected in groups, such as A-1 (absent one Sunday), A-2 (absent two Sundays in a row), A-3 (absent three Sundays in a row), and A-4+ (absent four or more Sundays in a row). A similar procedure may be used for Visitors: V-1 (first time guest), V-2 (second time guest), V-3 (third time guest), and V-4 (fourth time guest). There are computer software packages available to assist churches in keeping these type of records. The following is based on a church having these names available for ministry.

I. Absentee Care-Giving, Luke 15:4-7; I Thessalonians 5:14:

- A. Goal: To nurture those who have been absent from our fellowship and minister to the needs of those who may be drifting
- B. Who? The Church Secretary, the Shepherding Team (Pastors & Deacons) & the Care Giving Team
- C. What? Some ideas—these need to be decided upon by church leadership:
 1. Following the First Absence (A-1): Information Ministry (send them a bulletin with a handwritten note from someone), Telephone Contact (to see if there is a health or some other need)
 2. Following the *Second Absence* (A-2): Information Ministry Care-Giving Ministry (a team of trained Care-Givers visit all A-2s)
 3. Following the *Third Absence* (A-3): Information Ministry.

II. Member and Regular Care-Giving, Acts 20:28:

- A. Goal: To visit in the homes of members and regulars every year
- B. Who? The Church Secretary and the Shepherding Team (Pastor and trained deacons)
- C. What? Someone from Shepherding Team visits the homes of all members and regulars once every 6 months.

III. Guest Evangelism and Enfolding, John 13:34-35:

- A. Goal: To lovingly reach out with the Gospel to those who have come to us and enfold them into our fellowship.
- B. Who? The Church Secretary, the Senior Pastor, the Intercessory Team, the Cookie Coordinator, the Care-Giving Team, the Hospitality Team and the Prayer Chain Ministry Leader.

- C. What? (again, these need to be decided upon and tweaked by church leaders)
1. Following 1st Sunday morning visit (V-1):
 - a. Personal Handwritten Note from Pastor, Deacon, or Sunday School teacher;
 - b. Intercessory Prayer Team: Designated intercessors begin to pray for names;
 - c. Cookie/Muffin/Coffee Mug Ministry brings something to the home;
 - d. Care-Giving Ministry: Trained care-givers visit the home and meet spiritual need encountered (if a decision is made for Christ in any of the Care-Giving visits, this moves them into another category not dealt with in this material).
 2. Following 2nd Sunday morning visit (V-2):
 - a. Small Group [or Sunday School] Ministry. They are contacted and invited by an age-appropriate Sunday School class
 - b. Hospitality Ministry: Someone is prepared to invite 2nd time visitors to lunch—the Sunday School is a good mechanism for this ministry
 3. Following 3rd Sunday morning visit (V-3):
 - a. Engraved New Testament: They are given an engraved New Testament with their initials and receive a second Care-Giving Visit
 4. Following 4th Sunday Morning Visit (V-4):
 - a. Prayer Chain Ministry: If they are saved, they are invited to consider being placed on a prayer chain (preferably with their Sunday School class or Small Group)
 - b. Directory Ministry: A church directory is brought to their house, and their names are recorded for future editions of the Directory if they are interested.

IV. Community Outreach, Matthew 22:9; Acts 1:8; 17:17:¹⁴⁵³

- A. Goal: To have a **weekly** program geared to reaching the lost in our community with the Gospel, through any and every method available—care giving visitation and/or door-to-door visitation are encouraged here.
1. This weekly program is not meant to replace or supersede annual special events (Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, or Easter), revivals, Vacation Bible School, or other such events.
 2. This weekly program is designed to assist Block Parties, Servant Evangelism projects, etc.
 3. Community outreach is designed to assure that a weekly evangelism thrust is taking place into the community.
- B. Who? The Care Giving Team—they are dividing their time with the Guest Evangelism and Enfolding—or another team can be set up.
- C. What? Three sample approaches:
1. Door-to-door with a needs-type questionnaire, getting into the Gospel
 2. “Welcome Wagon” type of ministry—to new water hook-ups in the area (these names are available from the Water Company, but do not give information on apartment dwellers)
 3. Street evangelism
 4. Jail ministry
 5. Brainstorms by Care-Giving Team à la *Conspiracy of Kindness* by Steve Sjogren.

¹⁴⁵³Mark Mittelberg’s *Building a Contagious Church* (2000) not only contains numerous ideas for community outreach, it also provides the organizational structure to do it in the local church.

V. Discussion Items for Evangelism:

- A. Should not the pastors, elders, and/or deacons work together in care-giving as a *Shepherding Team*?
- B. Should the regular care-giving responsibilities of the congregation be equally divided between pastors and deacons?
- C. Given that one person can have vital contact within a group of no more than 80 people, if the church is larger, how should the congregation be divided?
 1. Along relational lines
 2. By geographical situation
 3. By ministry or age (e.g. Sunday School classes)
 4. In some other way?
- D. The bigger question is: As a church grows, how is it best divided – by ministry ages (Sunday School), by cell-group or in geographical format?
- E. Should non-members be allowed to be a part of our church’s visitation teams?

VI. Making It Happen in the Local Church:

Introduction: The three “Es” mentioned by Darrell Robinson need to be kept in mind:¹⁴⁵⁴

Exaltation
Edification
Evangelism

Implimentation: “Flake’s Formula” for local church implimentation should be remembered here:

1. Discover the prospects
2. Expand the organization
3. Train the workers
4. Provide the space
5. Go get the people.¹⁴⁵⁵

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¹⁴⁵⁴See Darrell Robinson, *Total Church Life* (Nashville: Broadman, 1997).

¹⁴⁵⁵See Charles Kelley, *How Did They Do It? The Story of Southern Baptist Evangelism* (New Orleans: Insight, 1993), 93.

Chapter 29 Appendixes

Church Evangelism: Schedules and Timing

There are times and seasons in the life of a church. The wise pastor will know how to lead his congregation into maximum effectiveness without burning them out. The following are ideas for the timing of various outreach programs in the local church, allowing perennial programs of evangelism with different levels of commitment and involvement. They are ideas that have been used in churches and do work.

Local Church Evangelism Strategies

A. Weekly Outreach Ideas:

1. Weekly Visitation: Many churches find that a weekly visitation program is very effective in allowing for perennial evangelism. The implication is that the same thing is done every week. These are usually divided into two types of evangelism:

- a. Visiting visitors;
- b. Door-to-door visitation.

This type of visitation normally involves the pastor, deacons, and/or other church leaders, as well as other interested people.

2. Varied Weekly Visitation: I have found that many urban churches will have different visitation programs on different Saturdays of the month, for example:

- a. First Saturday of the month: visit the local prison or jail;
- b. Second Saturday of the month: door-to-door visitation in the neighborhood of the church;
- c. Third Saturday of the month: visit the local nursing home;
- d. Fourth Saturday of the month: visit and assist at the homeless shelter;
- e. Fifth Saturday of the month: gather for training and prayer.

Often, one person from each adult Sunday School class is designated as the evangelist to represent the class in these varied activities.

3. Considering days of the week:

Sundays: Due to Sunday services no special meetings related to weekly evangelism:

However, some churches have planned door-to-door outreach on Sunday evening, since most people are home on Sunday evenings;

Monday evenings: C. H Spurgeon met on Monday evenings to encourage street preachers (“open air preachers”);¹⁴⁵⁶

Tuesday evenings: For many churches weekly visitation takes place on Tuesday evenings. This includes visiting visitors, as well as door-to-door evangelism;

Wednesday evenings: Due to Wednesday evening activities, no special meetings related to weekly evangelism;

Thursday evenings: Thursday evenings may be an option for visitation; so also Home Evangelistic Bible Studies may take place on Thursday evenings;

Friday evenings: In some urban churches Friday evenings provides an evangelistic alternative to the night life on Friday evenings;

¹⁴⁵⁶Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *The Soul Winner* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), 11.

Saturdays: Being a day wherein a schedule may be more open for people, Saturday mornings are good for weekly evangelistic training and visitation.

B. Monthly, Quarterly, or Seasonal Evangelism Events:¹⁴⁵⁷

Quarterly one-day evangelism event:

- One-day block parties;
- Wild Game Night;
- Women's Night Out.

Seasonal evangelistic events:

- Super Bowl Party;
- Easter Egg Hunt;
- Passover Ceder;
- Fall Festival;
- Christmas Pageant.

Depending on the size, interest, and location of the church, these events can be run on an annual or quarterly basis—with care given not to burn out the people involved.

C. Planning a High Impact Event/Revival (once a year or twice a year):

In order to prepare for a host a High Impact Revival, preparation is of ultimate importance. Properly publicizing within the congregation and within the community can make a big difference. Inviting a God-called evangelist is also very important.¹⁴⁵⁸

1. Plan for the revival at least one year in advance (if possible). This way you can often find an evangelist before he is booked up:

The length of the revival needs to be decided in advance:

One Day: generally a Saturday or a Sunday (2 services or so)

Three Day: Friday night to Sunday morning (3 services)

Half-Week:

Sunday morning through Wednesday night (5 services);

Sunday evening through Wednesday night (4 services);

Wednesday through Sunday night (6 services, can include a Sunday night Baptismal service);

Wednesday through Sunday morning (5 services);

Full Week: Sunday to Sunday (can be 10 services if both Sunday nights are included);

Two additional points:

It is helpful to choose different evenings for different impact points to help the church in publicizing and also to guide the leaders as to where they can fit in: youth night, children's night, men's night, women's night, etc.

Amazingly, if a tent is used, it takes about a week for interest to begin building, whether through seeing the tent or word of mouth in the town.

¹⁴⁵⁷For a number of examples see: *High Impact Events* (Alpharetta, GA: North American Mission Board, 2008).

¹⁴⁵⁸See Keith Fordham and Tom Johnston, *The Worth and Work of the Evangelist* (Liberty, MO: Evangelism Unlimited, 2013).

It may be helpful to change around the revivals year-by-year or twice-a-year by using different venues and emphases:

- Tent revival;
- Youth revival;
- One-day revival;
- Sunday-to-Sunday revival;
- Association-wide revival.

Remember to check the various civic calendars when planning a revival. If there is a major school event (school graduation or senior prom), or something like the Super Bowl or County Fair, these may negatively impact attendance. Your people should know about the important events in their town.

2. Six months before the revival, call together a special committee to head up the revival. Follow the Revival Preparation Manual provided by the evangelist, and make use of his publicity at the appropriate time;

3. Three months before the revival:

Prepare the congregation by helping them focus on prayer for lost souls and prayer for the evangelist;

Committees should be active in preparing various aspects of the revival: venue details, publicity details, working committees planning their role.

4. Host the evangelist, giving him time to prepare his heart for preaching.

5. Expect great things:

Plan for a baptismal service on the closing night, while the evangelist is there. It will really encourage him!

A follow-up committee should be in place to follow-up all contacts within 2 or 3 days of the end of the revival services.

D. Recommendations for a Calendar Year of Outreach:

June-July-August: designating summer months of the year for certain types of evangelism:

- a. The summer months (June, July, August) for door-to-door visitation (outdoors): e.g. one Saturday a month in June and July, every Saturday in August;
- b. The fall, winter, and spring months for member and regular visitation (indoors).

This idea:

Takes the weather into consideration, allowing for ongoing evangelism when the weather is usually best for being outside;

It also allows the church to meet new people who moved into the community during the summer months;

Further, it feeds a new members initiative in the fall of the year.

September through November: designating the fall months for new member assimilation:

- a. September for new member recruitment (resulting from Summer outreaches):
- b. October and November for new member classes.

November and December: Christmas activities and events

January: January Bible Conference

February through May: revival or special evangelism event preparation:

February: prayer emphasis;

March: training in personal evangelism;

April: canvas neighborhoods and publicize the revival or special event;

May: host the revival and/or implement the special event

Associational Evangelism Ideas

Originally designed not just for fellowship between like-minded churches, the main purpose of church associations is the furthering of the Great Commission in and through the church association. There are three elements to the fulfilling of the Great Commission through associational missionaries and their associations:

1. Fostering, developing, and facilitating evangelism through the ministry of the association;
2. The multiplication of churches in the association; and
3. The revitalization of churches that already exist.

Association-wide evangelism efforts can be conducted in a number of ways. Two of them are simultaneous revivals and area crusades.

A. Personal evangelism training:

1. Preparation:
 - a. Select an open date on the calendar (such as a Saturday without conflicting community events or holidays)
 - b. Choose a central location, both where people are apt to come for training, as well as where participants can go out in door-to-door or street evangelism
2. Style of evangelism:
 - a. Choose an evangelist to work in training
 - b. Work with the evangelist to choose an appropriate gospel plan (e.g. Roman Road)
3. Publicize the event 3 months prior, so that churches can get it on their calendar and in their bulletins
4. Personally invite evangelistic members of different associational churches for workshops (children's evangelism, women's evangelism, youth evangelism, etc.)
5. Print or purchase necessary tracts and informational literature for the day of outreach
6. Prepare maps for 1 hour of door-to-door (as needed) 1 hour = roughly 20 doors.
7. Invite all associational churches for fervent prayer for the event.
8. Work the plan!

B. Simultaneous revivals:

Working with willing churches to plan and time a simultaneous revival two years into the future. The most important thing is to get buy in from the pastors of several churches, and to set a date that fits with the schedule of the churches and communities in question.

In a simultaneous revival, all the participating churches will have their revival at exactly the same time. Publicity will be coordinated centrally, publicizing all the participating churches, their pastors, and their evangelists.¹⁴⁵⁹ Often, the closing session of the simultaneous meeting can be in a larger civic auditorium and bring together people from all the participating churches.

¹⁴⁵⁹An excellent example and introduction to the simultaneous revival can be found in C. E. Matthews' two books: *The Department of Evangelism and the Simultaneous Revival Program* (Dallas: Baptist General Convention of Texas, 1946) and *The Southern Baptist Program of Evangelism* (Atlanta: Home Mission Board, SBC, 1949). It must be kept in mind that the simultaneous tent meetings was first used by Evangelist J. Wilbur Chapman in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, in 1904. In 1908 the "Chapman-Alexander Simultaneous Campaign" launched its first simultaneous campaign in Philadelphia with great success. He divided the city of Philadelphia into 42 zones, worked with 21 evangelists, holding the simultaneous revival in half the city one week, had one week break in between, and held a simultaneous revival in the other half of the city in week three. The simultaneous revival method was also used by Billy Graham throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s.

C. Area crusades:

Area crusades are also organized to reach whole communities for Christ. Perhaps more difficult than the simultaneous revivals to get buy-in, these area-wide crusades take several years of planning in order to be effective.

Decisions must be made such as:

- a. Who should be invited as a musician or evangelist to draw a crowd?
- b. What churches will we invite to participate, and what churches will we not invite?
- c. What venue will we use, and how much will it cost? Can we handle the cost?

D. Church planting:

Associational missionaries can be targeting needy areas in his association for church planting. He can then direct local churches in his association to concentrate their home evangelism strategies in seeding these areas with the gospel in order to prepare for a church plant. A revival can be planned in the designated area to kick-off the church plant, and begin to develop the synergy of people needed to start an evangelistic church.

Six-month associational proposed church planting strategy:

- a. First month: designate location for church plant, with the help of the Evangelism Committee of the association;
- b. Second month:
 - 1) With the help of the Evangelism Committee, select a church planting pastor to head up the operation;
 - 2) Choose a name for the church plant; and
 - 3) Divide up evangelism initiatives in Months 3-5 between local associational churches, having them take one-week time slots for a select evangelism effort.
- c. Third through fifth months:
 - 1) Saturate the designated area with: prayer walking, door-to-door evangelism, and special events, all in the name of the new church plant; and
 - 2) The task of the church planter during this time will be to direct and oversee the evangelism efforts and the immediate follow-up of converts and contacts.
- d. During month six, the focus will change to the revival meetings:
 - 1) Evangelism efforts will include the revival meeting evangelist, dates, and venue; and
 - 2) The church planting pastor will focus his energies on assuring that the revival is a success, and the all contacts up to date attend the revival.
- e. Host a week-long, Sunday to Sunday revival meeting in the name of the local church within the designated area, using a God-called evangelist:
 - 1) The evangelist will introduce the pastor in the final Sunday morning service;
 - 2) The new pastor will baptize converts from the revival service on Sunday evening; and
 - 3) A new church will be well into its early stages of development.

E. Church revitalization:

Sponsoring, organizing, and implementing revivals in declining churches;

Hosting training clinics in declining churches, using books such as:

Chuck Lawless, *Disciplined Warriors*; or

Arnold C. Cook, *Must My Church Die?*

Training and sending traveling praise teams and preachers from other associational churches.

Denominational Evangelism Ideas

A. Communication in the technological age:

Communication is changing very quickly. These ongoing changes impact how we publicize and how we make information and materials available to churches, pastors, and leaders.

It also changes the timelines for evangelism planning efforts. Some timelines can be reduced by more than half because of the ease of instant communications, Internet video conferencing, and the speed of transportation—if necessary.

B. A 5-year Denominational Evangelism Effort:

Year One—Developing the Plan:

Planning and denominational leadership buy-in; and

Cooperation from every denominational agency, including the distribution of tasks and efforts.

Year Two—Formalizing the Plan:

Leadership recruitment for denominational effort;

Promotion to state leadership; and

Literature preparation.

Year Three—Communication and Leadership Recruitment:

Further promotion of effort to state leaders;

Promotion to associational leaders, and pastors;

Promotion to pastors and church leaders;

Sign-up and recruitment of grassroots leaders.

Year Four—Sunday School Recruitment:

Grassroots recruitment of whole churches, whole associations, whole state conventions

Inviting people to Sunday School and/or church¹⁴⁶⁰

E.g. “A Million More in ’54.

Year Five—Harvest:

Harvest revivals

E.g. simultaneous revivals in 1955.

¹⁴⁶⁰Many will come if they are only invited!

George Vasser's Church Planting (1537)

From: Thieleman J. van Braght, *The Bloody Theater or Martyrs Mirror of the Defenseless Christians Who Baptized Only Upon the Confession of Faith, and Who Suffered and Died for the Testimony of Jesus, Their Savior, From the Time of Christ to the Year A.D. 1660*, trans from the Dutch by Joseph Sohm, 2nd English edition (1660; 1837; 1886; Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 2007), 446.

“George Vasser, and Leonhard Sailer, A.D. 1536

“In this year, Goerge Vasser, a minister of the Lord and His church, and Brother Leonard Sailer, his companion, were apprehended in Neudorf, in Austria, where they were passing through, and put in the stocks there. The next day, the Judge of Metling, and the whole council, as also other people with them, came and asked them on what account they were imprisoned there. They replied: ‘For the faith of Christ, and the divine truth.’

“They then took them, and brought them into the market town of Metling, a distance of several furlongs from Neudorf, and two leagues from Vienna. On the whole way they testified with great boldness to the truth, and with many words declared to them the judgment of God, so that the Judge and all the others were amazed and dared not say a single word against it. Thereupon they put them into the common prison, in which they met all manner of ungodly and shameful impropriety on the part of their fellow prisoners, which daily caused them great sorrow of heart, so that they would rather have been cast into an offensive dungeon where they would not have been obliged to listen to this impiety.

“During their imprisonment they were much questioned with regard to infant baptism, the sacrament, and that we call them all ungodly and unbelieving; but they told them, that, as regards infant baptism, they were entirely welcome to it, and also said: “Because they call themselves Christians, but falsely bore the name of Christ, and did not move with a finger the least in Christ’s commandments; therefore they should know that they were of the devil (John 8:44); and if they would not repent of their sins, God would destroy their false boast, so that they, along with the whole world, and the rich man would be cast into the abyss of hell, which would certainly come to pass, though they now did not believe it. Having been in prison nearly a whole year, and being fully prepared for death; yea, of good courage and cheer, and joyful in the Lord, they prayed that the Lord, the gracious God, would deliver them from this mortal tabernacle, and this wicked blind world; for they had a good hope and a great joy and a sincere desire to depart, and expected every hour, to die manfully and boldly, through the help and power of God, for the divine truth, and for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, notwithstanding the pain and suffering, which might be inflicted upon them.

“However, through a special providence of God, they were wonderfully liberated, unharmed in their consciences, and came in peace to the church at Trasenhofen, and were joyfully received in the spirit, as good, worthy and beloved brethren.

“Further account of George Vaser, A.D. 1537

“In the following year, at the request of some of the zealous, the above mentioned George Vaser, was sent to Pechstall, in Austria, where he gladly began to teach the Word of God, notwithstanding he had just come out of prison in Metling. He gathered a group of believers, and established a church, according to the command of God. But he could not escape a certain deceiver, a genuine tool of all treachery, who, under a false appearance, pretended to learn the grounds of the truth of him as a minister, but, in the meantime appointed many servants, commanding them at a suitable time to apprehend George Vaser, which they faithfully did.

“He was then subjected to much cruel torturing, and while in prison was tempted in manifold ways; but he remained steadfast and faithfully followed unto death Him whom he had proclaimed in the faith; thus testifying with his blood (being executed with the sword), to the faith and the truth of God.”

Recommendations from the Past

Gilbert Tennent's 1740, "The Danger of an Unconverted Ministry"

Source: Rev. Gilbert Tennent (1703-1764), "The Danger of an Unconverted Ministry" (from the *Soli Deo Gloria* title *Sermons of the Log College*, now out of print) (online); available at: http://www.sounddoctrine.net/Classic_Sermons/Gilbert%20Tennent/danger_of_unconverted.htm; accessed 20 Oct 2008; Internet.

"And Jesus, when He came out, saw much people and was moved with compassion towards them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd." Mark 6:34

As a faithful ministry is a great ornament, blessing, and comfort, to the church of God (even the feet of such messengers are beautiful), so, on the contrary, an ungodly ministry is a great curse and judgment. These caterpillars labor to devour every green thing.

There is nothing that may more justly call forth our saddest sorrows, and make all our powers and passions mourn in the most doleful accents, the most incessant, insatiable, and deploring agonies, than the melancholy case of such who have no faithful ministry! This truth is set before our minds in a strong light in the words that I have chosen now to insist upon, in which we have an account of our Lord's grief with the causes of it.

We are informed that our dear Redeemer was moved with compassion towards them. The original word signifies the strongest and most vehement pity, issuing from the innermost bowels. But what was the cause of this great and compassionate commotion in the heart of Christ? It was because He saw much people as sheep having no shepherd. Why, had the people then no teachers? O yes! They had heaps of Pharisee-teachers that came out, no doubt, after they had been at the feet of Gamaliel the usual time, and according to the acts, canons, and traditions of the Jewish church. But, notwithstanding the great crowds of these orthodox, letter-learned, and regular Pharisees, our Lord laments the unhappy case of that great number of people who, in the days of His flesh, had no letter guides, because those were as good as none (in many respects), in our Savior's judgment. For all them, the people were as sheep without a Shepherd.

From the words of our text, the following proposition offers itself to our consideration: that the case of such is much to be pitied who have no other but Pharisee-shepherds, or unconverted teachers.

[and so began this powerful First Great Awakening sermon that called believers to leave churches with unconverted preachers, to join under the ministry of a converted preacher, preached by the son of William Tennent, founder of the Log Cabin School, which became Princeton College, and later Princeton University. Here are some further excerpts:]

They often strengthen the hands of the wicked by promising him life. They comfort people before they convince them, sow before they plow, and are busy in raising a fabric before they lay a foundation. These foolish builders do but strengthen men's carnal security by their soft, selfish, cowardly discourses. They do not have the courage or honesty to thrust the nail of terror into sleeping souls.

Nay, sometimes they strive with all their might to fasten terror into the hearts of the righteous, and so to make those sad whom God would not have made sad! And this happens when pious people begin to suspect their hypocrisy, for which they have good reason, I may add that, inasmuch as Pharisee-teachers seek after righteousness, as it were, by the works of the law themselves, they therefore do not distinguish as they ought between Law and Gospel in their discourses to others. ...

And isn't this the reason why a work of conviction and conversion has been so rarely heard of for a long time in the churches till of late, that the bulk of her spiritual guides were stone-blind and stone-dead?

4. The ministry of natural men is dangerous, both in respect of the doctrines and practice of piety. The doctrines of original sin, justification by faith alone, and the other points of Calvinism, are very cross to the grain of unrenewed nature. And though men, by the influence of a good education and hopes of preferment, may have the edge of their natural enmity against them blunted, yet it's far from being broken or removed. It's only the saving grace of God that can give us a true relish for those nature-humbling doctrines; and so effectually secure us from being infected by the contrary. Is not the carnality of the ministry one great cause of the general spread of Arminianism, Socinianism, Arianism, and Deism, at this day through the world?

And alas! What poor guides are natural ministers to those who are under spiritual trouble? They either slight such distress altogether and call it “melancholy,” or “madness,” or daub those that are under it with untempered mortar. Our Lord assures us that the salt which has lost its savor is good for nothing. Some say, “It genders worms and vermin.” Now, what savor have Pharisee-ministers? In truth, a very stinking one, both in the nostrils of God and good men. “Be these moral Negroes never so white in the mouth (as one expresses it), yet will they hinder instead of helping others in at the strait gate.” Hence is that threatening of our Lord against them in Matthew 23:13: “Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye shut up the Kingdom of Heaven against men; for ye neither go in yourselves, nor suffer those that are entering to go in.”...

And indeed, my brethren, we should join our endeavors to our prayers. The most likely method to stock the church with a faithful ministry, in the present situation of things, the public academies being so much corrupted and abused generally, is to encourage private schools, or seminaries of learning, which are under the care of skilful and experienced Christians; in which those only should be admitted who, upon strict examination have, in the judgment of a reasonable charity, the plain evidences of experimental religion. Pious and experienced youths, who have a good natural capacity, and great desires after the ministerial work, from good motives, might be sought for, and found up and down in the country, and put to private schools of the Prophets, especially in such places where the public ones are not. ...

4. If the ministry of natural men is as it has been represented, then it is both lawful and expedient to go from them to hear godly persons; yea, it's so far from being sinful to do this that one who lives under a pious minister of lesser gifts, after having honestly endeavored to get benefit by his ministry, and yet gets little or none, but finds real benefit elsewhere, I say, he may lawfully go, and that frequently, where he gets most good to his precious soul. He may do this after regular application to the pastor where he lives for his consent, proposing the reasons thereof when this is done in the spirit of love and meekness, without contempt of any, and also without rash anger or vain curiosity. ...

Must we leave off every duty that is the occasion of contention or division? Then we must quit powerful religion altogether, for he who will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution. And particularly, we must carefully avoid faithful preaching, for that is wont to occasion disturbances and divisions, especially when accompanied with divine power. 1 Thessalonians 1:5–6: “Our gospel came not unto you in Word only, but in power,” and then it is added that they “received the Word in much affliction.” And, the Apostle Paul informs us in 1 Corinthians 16:9 that a great door, and an effectual one, was opened unto him, and that there were many adversaries. Blessed Paul was accounted a common disturber of the peace as well as Elijah long before him, and yet he left not off preaching for all that. Yea, our blessed Lord informs us that He came not to send peace on earth, but rather a sword, variance, fire, and division, and that even among relations (Matthew 10:34–36; Luke 12:49, 51–53). And also, while the strong man armed keeps the house, all the goods are in peace.

It is true, the power of the gospel is not the proper cause of those divisions, but the innocent occasion only. No, the proper and selfish lusts are the proper cause of those divisions. And very often natural men, who are the proper causes of the divisions aforesaid, are wont to deal with God's servants as Potiphar's wife did by Joseph; they lay all the blame of their own wickedness at their doors, and make a loud cry! ...

Again, it may be objected that the aforesaid practice tends to grieve our parish-minister, and to break congregations in pieces.

I answer, if our parish-minister is grieved at our greater good, or prefers his credit before it, then he has good cause to grieve over his own rottenness and hypocrisy. And as for breaking congregations to pieces upon the account of people's going from place to place to hear the Word with a view to getting greater good, that spiritual blindness and death that so generally prevails will put this out of danger. It is but a very few that have gotten any spiritual relish. The most will venture their souls with any formalist, and be will satisfied with the sapless discourses of such dead drones. ...

I beseech you, my dear brethren, to consider that there is no probability of your getting good by the ministry of Pharisees, for they are no shepherds (no faithful ones) in Christ's account. They are as good as none, nay, worse than none upon some account. For take them first and last, and they generally do more hurt than good. They strive to keep better out of the places where they live; nay, when the life of piety comes near their quarters, they rise up in arms against it, consult, contrive, and combine in their conclaves against it as a common enemy that reveals and condemns their craft and hypocrisy. And with what art, rhetoric, and appearances of piety, will they varnish their opposition of Christ's kingdom? As the magicians imitated the works of Moses, so do false apostles, and deceitful workers imitate the apostles of Christ.

I shall conclude the discourse with the words of the Apostle Paul from 2 Corinthians 11:14–15: “And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light: Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.”

Charles Spurgeon's 1856 "Gospel Missions"

"Gospel Missions, by C. H. Spurgeon" (online); available at: <http://www.wholesomewords.org/etexts/spurgeon/chsmis.html>; accessed: 5 Nov 2008; Internet. [preached when Spurgeon was 22 years old]

"And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region." Acts 13:49

I SHALL not confine myself to the text. It being an old custom to take texts when we preach, I have taken one, but I shall address you, at large, upon a subject which I am sure will occupy your attention, and has done for many days and years past — the subject of gospel missions. We feel persuaded that all of you are of one mind in this matter, that it is the absolute duty as well as the eminent privilege of the Church to proclaim the gospel to the world. We do not conceive that God will do his own work without instruments, but that, as he has always employed means in the work of the regeneration of this world, he will still continue to do the same, and that it becomes the Church to do its utmost to spread the truth wherever it can reach the ear of man. We have not two opinions on that point. Some churches may have, but we have not. Our doctrines, although they are supposed to lead to apathy and sloth, have always proved themselves to be eminently practical; the fathers of the mission were all zealous lovers of the doctrines of the grace of God; and we believe, the great supporters of missionary enterprise, if it is to be successful, must always come from those who hold God's truth firmly and boldly, and yet have fire and zeal with it, and desire to spread it everywhere. But there is a point on which we have great division of opinion, and that is as to the reason why we have had so little success in our missionary labours. There may be some who say the success has been proportionate to the agency, and that we could not have been more successful. I am far from being of their opinion, and I do not think they themselves would express it on their knees before Almighty God. We have not been successful to the extent we might have expected, certainly not to an apostolic extent, certainly with nothing like the success of Paul or Peter, or even of those imminent men who have preceded us in modern times, and who were able to evangelize whole countries, turning thousands to God. Now, what is the reason of this? Perhaps we may turn our eyes on high, and think we find that reason in the sovereignty of God, which hath withholden his Spirit, and hath not poured out his grace as aforetime. I shall be prepared to grant all men may say on that point, for I believe in the ordination of everything by Almighty God. I believe in a present God in our defeats as well as in our successes; a God as well in the motionless air as in the careering tempest; a God of ebbs as well as a God of floods. But still we must look at home for the cause. When Zion travails, she brings forth children; when Zion is in earnest, God is in earnest about his work; when Zion is prayerful, God blesses her. We must not, therefore, arbitrarily look for the cause of our failure in the will of God, but we must also see what is the difference between ourselves and the men of Apostolic times, and what it is that renders our success so trifling in comparison with the tremendous results of Apostolic preaching. I think I shall be able to show one or two reasons why our holy faith is not so prosperous as it was then. In the first place, *we have not Apostolic men*; in the second place, they *do not set about their work in an Apostolic style*; in the third place, we have *not Apostolic churches* to back them up; and in the fourth place, we have not *the Apostolic influence of the Holy Ghost* in the measure which they had it in ancient times.

I. First, WE HAVE FEW APOSTOLIC MEN IN THESE TIMES.

II. In the second place, WE DO NOT GO ABOUT OUR WORK IN AN APOSTOLIC STYLE.

... I have one more remark to make here with regard to the style in which we go to work. I fear that we have not enough of the divine method of *itinerancy*. Paul was a great itinerant: he preached in one place, and there were twelve converted there; he made a church at once; he did not stop till he had five hundred; but when he had twelve, he went off to another place. A holy woman takes him in; she has a son and daughter; they are saved and baptized — there is another church. Then he goes on; wherever he goes the people believe and are baptized, wherever he meets a family who believe, he or his companion baptizes all the house, and goes about his way still forming churches and appointing elders over them. We, now-a-days, go and settle in a place, make a station of it, and work around it by little and little, and think that is the way to succeed. No, no! ravage a continent; attempt great things and great things shall be done. But they say if you just pass over a place it will be forgotten like the summer shower, which moistens all, but satisfies none. Yes, but you do not know how many of God's elect may be there; you have no business to stop in one place; go straight on; God's elect are everywhere. I protest if I could not itinerate this country of England, I could not bear to preach. If I preached *here* always, many of you would become gospel hardened. I love to go ranging here, there, and everywhere. *My highest ambition is this, that I may be found going through the entire land, as well as holding my head quarters in one position. I do hold that itinerancy is God's great plan. There should be fixed ministers and pastors, but those who are like apostles should itinerate far more than they do.*

III. But I have a third thing to say which will strike home to some of us: that is, that WE HAVE NOT APOSTOLIC CHURCHES.

IV. But lastly, as the result of the other things which have gone before, and perhaps partly as the cause of them too, WE HAVE NOT THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THAT MEASURE WHICH ATTENDED THE APOSTLES.

Charles Thwing's 1888 *The Working Church*

Charles F. Thwing [D.D.], *The Working Church* (New York: Baker and Taylor, 1888, 1889), 125-26.

Note. – In answer to the question “What can the ordinary church do to reach the masses?” the Rev. Dr. D. A. Reed (Proceedings of the Second Convention of Christian Workers in the United States and Canada, Sept. 21-28, 1887, p.32) has suggested these methods: - “In concluding, let me summarize: ‘What can the ordinary church do to reach the masses?’

- “(1) Let the services of the church be simple, pleasing, and attractive.
- “(2) Have special evangelistic services in the evening, with good music.
- “(3) Have a well-manned Sunday-school, with building suitable for class-rooms for a large number of adult classes; also where classes can meet during the week for literary and social purposes.
- “(4) Have educational classes, and lectures on certain evenings, on the great burning questions of the day, by live, earnest men.
- “(5) Where a church numbers over three hundred, have two pastors, or a pastor and a trained assistant, devoting his whole time to the work, under the direction of the pastor or supplementing him.
- “(6) Make much of personal work, the efforts of individuals whose hearts are full of love for souls. Have a band of men and women trained in the Bible, who shall know how to use it and love to use it, ready to work in all meetings of an evangelistic character in the inquiry-room, ready to go and see individuals and converse with them about their spiritual needs, wise to win souls.
- “(7) Have the parish districted, and find out where the people attend church, if possible; and if they do not attend, go for them and invite them, not once but many times.
- “(8) Have branch chapels or cottage prayer-meetings, or both, in the districts where fewest people attend church. They will often go into these places when they will not go into the church.
- “(9) Have a sufficient number of visitors for each district, so that too many families will not be given to any one.
- “(10) Have classes into which those who are converted can enter and be instructed in the great doctrines of Christianity, and taught how to study the Bible with profit and pleasure, and how to engage in some form of Christian work.
- “(11) Set the converts to work, watching, directing, encouraging them until they get to love it and consecrate themselves to it. Show them, by the teaching and example of pastor and older Christians, that the great aim of the church is to bear true witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ and save men. Show each Christian that he or she has a personal work to do with persons; that money and prayers are not sufficient; that sympathy and love and personal solicitude for the comfort and salvation of men are what the masses need.
- “(12) Money, brains, consecration, and the aid of the Holy Spirit will enable any ordinary church to win the masses.”

Toward Becoming an Evangelistic Pastor

Introduction:

Not having arrived myself, but in constant need of rejuvenating an evangelistic spirit, I write these notes as a pastor to pastors.

The following notes are suggestions for the pastor to develop and/or maintain an evangelistic heart. It is very likely that pastors can and will become embroiled in the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desire for greater things, just as any other Christian. Therefore, comes the question, are there tangible ways to develop or maintain an evangelistic spirit? Please consider the following suggestions based on John 4:35.

John 4:35, "Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are already white for harvest."

The question becomes, how do we lift up our eyes and look on the fields to see that they are white for harvest?

1. "Behold, I say to you":

- a. Begin by asking God for a heart for the lost
- b. Memorize and meditate on key verses on evangelism, such as John 4:35-38, 1 Cor 9:16-23, and 2 Cor 5:20-6:2, to put them on your tongue and in your heart that you may do them (cf. Deut 30:14)
- c. Notice the example of the Apostle Paul in Athens, who shared the Gospel daily:
Acts 17:16-17, "Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was being provoked within him as he was beholding the city full of idols. So he was reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles, and in the market place every day with those who happened to be present."
Is this an example that you should follow? Ask God to give you the will and the opportunity.
- d. Also memorize 1 Cor 15:10 and Eph 5:15-16, as well as the Great Commission passages: Matt 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:44-49; John 20:21; and Acts 1:8

2. "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields":

- a. Begin a program of door-to-door visitation to meet people in your church field who have nothing to do with your church, but are still your responsibility to reach:
 - 1) Starting from the neighborhood of the church, begin a systematic plan of door-to-door visitation of every home [saturation evangelism]
 - 2) Be sure to seek to share the Gospel in every home, to gauge people's responsiveness to the Gospel, which is the whole purpose of the exercise
 - 3) Be sure to pray with the people for their needs, even if they are not responsive to the Gospel
 - 4) Even one hour of door-to-door visitation can be a life-changing experience!
- b. Begin a prayer list of lost people you encounter in your church field—its length over time will break your heart, and show you the white harvest in a very short time!
- c. If you say, "door-to-door will not work in my area," then you have already negated a wonderful methodology through which you can actually meet and reach some of the people in your church field. Just because you are going door-to-door does not mean that you have to be nasty about it. Be loving, gracious, respectful, and bold.

3. "That they are already white for harvest":

- a. By faith expect people to be receptive to the Gospel the first time you speak with them; God has prepared them for you to "go and tell"
- b. By faith, always include a presentation of the simple Gospel in every sermon, along with an invitation to receive Christ
- c. Use stories of your actual evangelism opportunities in your sermons to encourage the saints in fulfilling the Great Commission

- d. Begin organizing interested church members to join you in door-to-door visitation, they will provide you with fellowship and accountability in the work of the evangelist
- e. Invite an evangelist to your church:
 - 1) To help make evangelism the main focus of the church
 - 2) To lead lost people to Christ and encourage the saints
 - 3) To jump start a ministry of evangelism
 - 4) To learn about the harvest from this gifted man.
- f. Invite an evangelist on your staff or begin supporting an evangelist, and let your people hear how God is using this man in evangelism.

Conclusion: If you do these things, you will be well on your way to developing and maintaining a heart for the lost, which, by the way, needs to be continually nurtured throughout your ministry! You will quickly become obedient to God's command for all pastors: "Do the work of an evangelist!" (2 Tim 4:5).

Evangelism and the Lord's Supper

Introduction: Communion provides an interesting touch-stone to a theology of conversion and evangelism. A progression is delineated in the Chart below that exemplifies a slide that can take place in a theology of the Lord's Supper as it is related to evangelism. In this regard, one may recall the struggles related to Solomon Stoddard's "Half-way Covenant."

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Communion only for those properly baptized				Communion only for those who are born again				Communion as an evangelistic tool		Communion as a sanctifying tool	
Baptized within a particular church	Baptized within a particular church association	Baptized as a believer (by immersion only)	Water baptized (may include infant baptism)	Open to all believers, regardless of baptism				Communion open to all regardless of conversion		Communion is an act leading to conversion	
Always giving a warning	Always giving a warning	Always giving a warning	Always giving a warning	Always giving a warning	Sometimes giving a warning	Framing the warning in a positive sense	Never giving a warning	Participation in Communion as a type of proclamation of the Gospel to the lost	Participation in Communion as a way to connect with God	Participation in Communion as a way to receive grace from God	Participation in Communion as a way to cooperate with the grace of God
Close-Close	Close*	Close/Open	Open**	Open	Open	Open	Open	Open	Open	Open	Open
Conversionistic						Non-Conversionistic				Salvific	
Particular Atonement						General Atonement					
Memorial						Presence				Con-substantiation	Tran-substantiation

*Close refers to "Close Communion," meaning that the Lord's Supper is limited to Christians, Baptized as indicated.

**Open refers to "Open Communion," meaning that the Lord's Supper is given more openly or generally, within the specified limitations.

Some further questions on the Lord's Supper:

Does it matter when the warning of 1 Cor 11:27-32 is not spoken at the celebration of the Lord's Supper?

Can the warning of 1 Cor 11:27-32 be restated in a positive way only, and yet still remain a warning?

Does it matter when the distinction between the saved and the lost is no longer made when giving/taking the Lord's Supper?

Is conversion really that important in taking the Lord's Supper?

Can the Lord's Supper rightly be given to lost people as a "proclamation of the Gospel" (cf. 1 Cor 11:26)?

Can the words of Paul in 1 Cor 11:27-32 be overruled by a higher purpose, that being:

- (1) Taking the opportunity to proclaim the Gospel, or
- (2) Providing the opportunity to infuse some level of grace [or the Holy Spirit, or Christ Himself] into the [dead?] soul of the lost person?

What is the implication to a theology of conversion if the Gospel can be savingly communicated to lost souls through giving them a piece of bread [and some juice]?

Or, is it the words of the Gospel proclaimed prior to giving lost people the bread and the cup that communicates the Gospel?

Is the warning of 1 Cor 11:27-32 always to be stated when giving the Lord's Supper?

Is the Lord's Supper for believer's only?

Is the Lord's Supper for baptized believer's only?

Where have our Baptist forefathers stood on this issue?

Where they right to take this stand?

Was this stand cultural or biblical-derived?

