



WINNING OUR HARVEST FIELD:

What Really Matters

Acknowledgements

First of all, I would like to thank the leadership of the Tennessee Baptist Mission Board (TBMB) for allowing me the opportunity to put this book together. My many years of service in various roles at TBMB has equipped me to see the true needs necessary to win Tennessee for Christ. This resource focuses on how to assist our churches in this process.

I am fortunate to personally know the pastors listed below. Their years of service makes them uniquely qualified to share their invaluable wisdom in this book to help all pastors, bi-vocational pastors, and anyone in church leadership to understand that there are basic principles every church could follow to more effectively WinTn for Jesus

It is my sincere prayer that everyone who reads this book will feel reenergized and ready to do the work to share the Gospel!

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FORWARD

Dr. Randy Davis

A Compelling Calling Personally

In 2010, the Lord radically changed the direction of the ministry that Jeanne and I had been involved in for 34 years, that of the local pastorate. We loved the calling that God had placed on our lives and had been blessed to serve four great churches. We were preparing to start our tenth year at First Baptist Church of Sevierville when the Executive Director Search Committee of the Executive Board of the Tennessee Baptist Convention asked me to pray about succeeding Dr. Jim Porch. It was one of the most difficult decisions I had faced as a follower of Christ. More than anything, we yearned to discover His perfect will, and once discovered, to follow.

During this season of intense prayer, we asked God for a clear call and a compelling reason to leave the wonderful church and community we served to move into a role for which I felt very ill equipped. But “where God guides, God provides”. The call was overwhelmingly clear to us. We were flooded with peace to step down as pastor of First Baptist Church of Sevierville and become servant-leader of Tennessee’s Baptist Mission Board.

A Compelling Reality in Our State

It was only weeks after we moved to the Nashville area that I learned that the number of people saved and baptized by Tennessee Baptist churches had declined by over 30% since 1950. From 1950 to 2010, the population of the state more than doubled. This compelling reality imbued an understanding of my call to this work. Through many sleepless nights I grappled with a brand-new burden placed upon my heart by the Holy Spirit. An alarm needed to be sounded. It was a call for Tennessee Baptists to realize and engage Tennessee as the mission field our beloved state had become.

In 2014 we created a scoreboard of Five Objectives that would guide our work for the next decade. These objectives were adopted by the Tennessee Baptist Convention Meeting in Brentwood:

1. Seeing at least 50,000 Tennesseans annually saved, baptized, and set on the road to discipleship by 2024.
2. Having at least 500 Tennessee Baptist churches revitalized by 2024.
3. Planting and strategically engaging at least 1,000 new churches by 2024.
4. Realizing an increase in annual church giving through the Cooperative Program that reaches at least 10 percent by 2024.
5. Realizing an increase in annual giving for the Golden Offering for Tennessee Missions that reaches at least \$3 million by 2024.

Of course, Objective 1 is the scoreboard of scoreboards. If we don’t see lives transformed by the gospel, it doesn’t matter how many churches are planted or revitalized or how much money is raised to support these efforts. Eternity hangs in the balance. We must utilize every tool possible to reach the spiritually lost of Tennessee. During 2019, I visited

21 different areas of our state to simply listen to pastors and ministry leaders about the opportunities they saw, the burdens they carried, and the needs they could articulate. One of the common themes, throughout these listening sessions, centered around the need of effective tools to evangelize and disciple the people in their communities. I heard this question consistently: “How can we equip our people to reach our communities, especially the next generation?”

This book that you hold in your hands attempts to answer that passionate plea for assistance in the areas of that single two-sided coin of evangelism and discipleship.

Mark Miller, veteran of state convention work and local church ministry, has done an excellent job in bringing together some of the best ministry practitioners that Tennessee has to offer. These leaders and our team members would be glad to serve you any way they can.

Mark assembled a Christ-centered, field-focused, and user-friendly guide to reaching the spiritually lost and discipling the saved. This work can and should be used to equip fully devoted followers of Christ to win our Tennessee neighbors to Jesus. Let’s get busy!



Gregory C. Davis

INTRODUCTION

Dr. Roc Collins

Winning Tennessee Matters!

Tennessee is a beautiful state! I love Tennessee from Mountain City to Memphis and all points in between. From the Mississippi River to the Smokies, there is something special about Tennessee. Our history gave us our name as Volunteers, and that legacy is still a characteristic of the citizens of Tennessee who are willing to volunteer in service to their neighbors.

I could go on and on about all of the good to be found in our beloved Tennessee. However, the sad truth is that many in Tennessee are lost without Jesus. We boast a population of nearly seven million in our state, and our most recent statistics tell us that nearly four million do not have a relationship with Jesus Christ. My heart breaks as I consider the lostness around us.

WinTN is not just a slogan or a theme but it is a necessity. **This is an urgent call!** Our neighbors all across the state are dying without Jesus Christ. **How will we WinTN?**

The Tennessee Baptist Mission Board is unapologetically seeking to win Tennessee for Jesus. Our number one objective is to see at least 50,000 Tennesseans saved, baptized, and set on the road to discipleship annually. Since we have a population of nearly seven million people, we have plenty of prospects. Having plenty of prospects means there are opportunities but our challenge is to witness, win, baptize, and disciple. We can talk about it, but the stark truth is that the number of Tennesseans we are baptizing each year is in the low to mid 20,000 on an annual basis. We must do more!

The steps necessary will be discussed at length in this book. In fact, these are the same steps I took as a pastor to see people saved, baptized, disciplined, and mobilized to fulfill the Great Commission. **These steps represent a church-based strategy to WinTN.** The task is great, but these are a few simple actions we can take to see Tennessee won for Jesus.

STEP 1

Harness the Power of Prayer

First, Pray! In chapter one, David Evans, Pastor of Springfield Baptist Church in Springfield, Tennessee, challenges every church and every pastor to “Harness the Power of Prayer.” If we are to win Tennessee, we must begin with prayer and end with prayer. Pray the Lord of the harvest to raise up laborers for the task. Pray for the convicting power of the Holy Spirit to draw people unto Himself. Pray that we will be burdened, broken, and willing to be His witnesses.

STEP 2

Intensify Efforts to Identify and Reach People

Second, Connect! Step two focuses on connection. We need to be intentional in creating relationships with people who need Jesus. To simply stay locked within our four walls with “our” people is not an option. We must seek the lost. Jesus was accused of and criticized for eating with sinners. Let it be said of us too! In chapter two, Clay Hallmark, Pastor of the First Baptist Church in Lexington, Tennessee, demonstrates the necessity of intensifying our efforts to identify and reach people, as well as, some practical actions for getting it done. Before we can win four million lost Tennesseans, we must identify them and connect.

STEP 3

Boost Involvement in Worship and Groups

Third, Invite! Churches across Tennessee must be open to whosoever. Inviting the lost to church and lovingly welcoming them to a fellowship of believers. Tennessee churches must be a place where everyone can come and find hope and help in Jesus and be loved through the process of discipleship. We cannot just sit on our comfortable pews, enjoy the fellowship with our friends, and rest in the salvation we’ve been given while the people all around us are slipping into eternity with no hope in Christ.

In chapter three, Mark Caldwell, Pastor of New Providence Baptist Church in Loudon, Tennessee, encourages every church to boost involvement in worship and groups. The focus is on relationships. And groups and worship are the primary relational strategies in every church. Connection begins with identifying people and discovering prospects but culminates by inviting people into a relationship: a relationship with Jesus and His church.

STEP 4

Heighten Personal Evangelism through Group and Member Involvement

Fourth, Witness! Intentionality in evangelism is absolutely necessary to win Tennessee to Jesus. There must be an intentional drive to witness to people. We cannot afford to just wait and see if there is an opportunity to witness but under the power of the Holy Spirit we must seek out those occasions and make the most of them. In the words of Charles Spurgeon, “Every Christian is either a missionary or an impostor.”

In chapter four, Sam Greer, Pastor of the Red Bank Baptist Church in Chattanooga, Tennessee shares the importance of challenging every member to have a gospel conversation every month.

STEP 5

Implement Actions to Serve Your Community

Fifth, Serve! We must serve our communities if we are to win Tennessee. Matthew Greer, Pastor of Missionary Grove Baptist Church in Camden, Tennessee, tells how his church was transformed when they began to serve their community. The fields are white unto harvest. We must see Tennessee and tell Tennessee. Such actions open doors to share Jesus with people.

STEP 6

Build a Disciple Making Culture

Sixth, Disciple! Winning people to Jesus is only the first step in disciple making. Growing new believers into multiplying disciples is the second step. Both steps are essential to win Tennessee.

In chapter six, Tim Key, Associational Missions Strategist for the New Duck River Baptist Association in Shelbyville, Tennessee, offers helpful direction to build a disciple making culture. As a pastor, research shows that we must challenge every member to read their Bible daily and to get involved in a group.

STEP 7

Strengthen Next-Generational Ministries to Reach and Disciple Preschool, Elementary, Middle and High school Students and their Families

Finally, Multiply! The next generation is at stake. There has never been a more critical time to do all we can to reach the current and next generation for Jesus! We must multiply.

Eric Nichols, Pastor of Connection Church in Columbia, Tennessee, shares his personal experience and how your church can reach preschool, elementary, middle and high school students, and their families. Take note of the words and their families. To win Tennessee, we must not only reach the kids but their parents. To win Tennessee and revitalize our churches we must reach adults.

Let us not grow weary but rather be invigorated to WinTN! The following pages of this book will be a blessing to you and a guide for how we can Win Tennessee for Jesus.

CHAPTER 1

PRAYER MATTERS

David Evans



Prayer and Evangelism are Linked

Lack of prayer is one of the ways that modern Christianity has stunted evangelism as a natural and easy process. A prayerless Christian is a non-evangelistic Christian. Andrew Murray stated, “The sin of prayerlessness is a proof for the ordinary Christian or minister, that the life of God in the soul is in deadly sickness and weakness.”¹

When a believer stops praying, the posture of the believer changes in a way that they will no longer be evangelistic. A prayerless Christian life is pointed more at the creation rather than the Creator. Before we stop sharing faith with people, we have long ago stopped interceding for others, repenting, seeking for holiness and/or praying unselfishly.

We enter a life of evangelism through effective prayer. Prayer and evangelism are linked. A believer that is not sharing faith is more than likely speaking little to no prayer with little to no selfless purpose and power.

For this chapter, we will examine the conditions and implementation of prayer as it mostly relates to evangelism.

Evangelistic Intercession Doesn't Just Happen

Three conditions for evangelistic intercession are sincerity, persistence, and repentance.

First, prayer must occur through a sincere heart. Roy Zuck stated, “Jesus pointed out the error of the Gentiles who thought length made their prayers more effective (Matthew 6:7, CSB). They were guilty of meaningless repetition. Our prayers should be the expressions of a sincere heart, not mindless recitation by rote memory.”² Mindless repetition of words does not make a prayer sincere.

Oh, how I love to hear a new convert pray, for they have not been influenced to care about what other people think. New converts tend to pray from a sincere heart with their unregenerate life still in view. They do not know that some Christians use fancy theological words to sound mature as to receive accolades from their fellow believers. A new convert is not worried about accolades but are so honored and joyful that God would love them so much.

A sincere prayer has no intention to manipulate God. The purpose of prayer is to align the believer with the Creator. A sincere prayer attempts to discover the mind of God (Isaiah 55:8). Larry Richards stated, “One of the most significant elements of Old Testament prose prayer is that these spontaneous expressions are fervent and sincere. They come from the

¹*Heritage of Great Evangelical Teaching : Featuring the Best of Martin Luther, John Wesley, Dwight L. Moody, C.H. Spurgeon, and Others.* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997), Chapter 27.

²Charles R. Swindoll and Roy B. Zuck, *Understanding Christian Theology* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2003), 274

heart. There is no attempt to manipulate God—no reliance on formal, crafted appeals. Instead, these prayers are characterized by openness and a lack of guile.”³

The goal of a sincere prayer is not to manipulate God but to match the heart and mind of the believer with God. When a heart is divided (Matthew 7: 15-20; James 3:9-12), there can be no sincerity; therefore, the goal will not be met.

Second, prayer must be persistent. The mandate and example of persistent prayer is seen several times throughout Scripture (1 Samuel 1:20; 7:8; Psalm 123:2; Ephesians 1:15-16; 6:18; Philippians 4:6). Persistent praying is commanded by Scripture but does not come naturally. Continuous prayer is a discipline for the believer to attain.

A lifestyle of prayer will equip the believer with the spiritual awareness and acumen to be evangelistically sensitive. In moments where the believer is strategically placed to be the salt and light of Christ, prayer will heighten the spiritual senses of the believer to be more accommodating to the movement of the Holy Spirit and thus be used evangelistically. Prayer creates the spiritual construct for the believer to be aware and utilized in moments that God has placed them. Someone once stated, “Living a life without prayer is like building a house without nails.”⁴

Third, prayer must occur in the spirit of repentance. Long before a believer stops sharing their faith, they stop repenting. The posture of repentance causes the believer to do two things: (1) be reminded of their personal need for a Savior, thus other’s need for a Savior, and (2) be reminded of the nasty nature of sin, thus other’s struggle with the nasty nature of sin.⁵

Walter Elwell and Barry Beitzel stated, “Biblical prayer is shot through with recognition of the distance between the Creator and the creature, of human sin and of God’s grace. The basis of a person’s approach to God in prayer is never simply “man’s search for God” but God’s gracious initiative, the establishing of the covenant, and the promise of help and deliverance on the basis of that covenant.”⁶

The act of repentance causes the believer to obediently step into the correct posture with God while sympathizing with those that are not in the correct posture.

Repentance is a lifestyle for the believer and not just one moment in the salvation process. John wrote, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9, NASB). John wrote to

³Larry Richards, *Every Prayer in the Bible* (Nashville: T. Nelson, 1998), 46–47.

⁴Kenneth W. Osbeck, *Amazing Grace: 366 Inspiring Hymn Stories for Daily Devotions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1996), 18.

⁵For more information check out, David Evans, “Evangelistic Inches,” Great Commission Living, August 21, 2018, <https://www.davidevansblog.org/blog/2018/8/21/evangelistic-inches-part-4?rq=inches>.

⁶Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, “Prayer,” *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 1745.

believers. The context of the passage is not focused on salvation—rather it is for right standing for the existing believer in Jesus. The believer is responsible to be repentant and thus turn away from the disgusting life of sin once carried.

Evangelistic Intercession Requires Action

The implementation of evangelistic intercession for individual and church effectiveness involves actions in three areas: (1) Adoption, (2) Intentionality, and (3) Training.

First, adoption involves identifying specific people and committing a scheduled prayer life for their spiritual welfare. Identifying people to pray for is key for evangelistic effectiveness (as noted by the Evangelism Measurement and Metric Assessment Scale).⁷ What a joy and honor that we have to pray for people by name. Obtaining people's name to specifically pray is life changing for the person praying and the person receiving prayer.

Two methods of obtaining lists of names to pray for are currently at the tips of the fingers of believers:

- **Prayer list generated by a local church**

Many churches collect names to pray over. Adopting this method of prayer is time tested and traditional but can serve the wonderful purpose of transforming lives.

- **Bless Every Home strategy⁸**

The Tennessee Baptist Mission Board's strategy is called Pray4TN and it utilizes the software Bless Every Home to adopt households throughout Tennessee for evangelistic prayer.

The software collects data much in the same way that fast food restaurants collect data to know where to place restaurants. The data is collected from a free domain source that is published for public record. The software collects the demographic information and arranges for the church to strategically pray for specific people by neighborhood. For the most part the software is free, much like its data, and utilizes e-mail to send the daily information for prayer.

⁷Jody Dean and Hal Stewart, *Together We Equip: Integrating Discipleship and Ministry Leadership for Holistic Spiritual Formation* (Bloomington, IN: WestBow Press, 2018), 38.

⁸The Tennessee Baptist Mission Board's strategy (<http://www.pray4tn.com>) is a movement focused across Tennessee to adopt every household in Tennessee for evangelistic prayer.

Second, evangelistic intercession must be intentional. We have come to a point where “I will pray for you” is more of a conversation ender rather than a conversation starter. Your prayer life may be full of unkept promises to people when you told them that you would pray for them. We can either pray as soon as we get the concern from someone, which can be utterly life changing, or we can obtain a specific list of names to pray.

Lives are changed when someone shares a concern in a public area and the believer stops then and there to pray for them by name.

Intentionality involves an unselfish life. We are all busy and focused. When someone “interrupts” the rhythm of our day to share a concern, our selfish heart tends to end the conversation, commit to pray later and move on. An unselfish heart stops in the moment and prays for the hurting soul that is sharing the concern.

J. Vernon McGee stated, “Many of us tend to only pray for the things of our life and we do not intentionally pray for others. We know that it is not the Love of God that saves people, but the Grace of God that is the saving characteristic of God. If love saved people, then all people would be saved (John 3: 16) and we know that not all people will turn to the saving grace of God through Jesus Christ. God never saved the world by love, which is the mistaken thinking of today. It doesn’t say that God’s love saved the world, because the love of God could never save a sinner. God does not save by love, friends. God saves by grace! ‘For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast’ (Eph. 2:8–9).”⁹

Third, evangelistic intercession involves training. Our sin nature gives us a selfish tendency that drenches every facet of our life. Learning to make prayer about other people and specifically for their salvation involves training. Training may look like one-on-one mentoring, formal discipling or corporate teaching. Training involves educating and modeling evangelistic intercession for other people.

Please note that training others in evangelistic intercession is a demanding task. Thomas Lea stated, “The verb translated as trained (gumnazo) was used frequently to describe athletic training. Athletic training produces pain and exhaustion which are necessary to build stamina in champion athletes. Spiritual training develops spiritual stamina and produces righteousness and peace in those who learn from it.”¹⁰ The benefits of training are clearer to those that understand the strain of training. Those that can relate to the weariness of the efforts of training can see the benefits of the training better. After the fight that training includes, the peace from the righteousness obtained is much sweeter a victory.

⁹J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible Commentary*, electronic ed., vol. 4 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997), 385.

¹⁰Thomas D. Lea, *Hebrews, James*, vol. 10, *Holman New Testament Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 228.

Evangelistic Intercession—A Vital Beginning

Evangelistic intercession is key when making disciples. The lack of evangelistic intercession has caused the modern Christian church to be debilitated. John Piper stated, “One of the great uses of Twitter and Facebook will be to prove at the Last Day that prayerlessness was not from a lack of time.”¹¹ The discipline of the believer to spend time evangelistically interceding for others and training others to do so will come with a reward that the entire church will enjoy. As one believer grows in righteousness, the entire church benefits.

Prayer and intercession allow us to communicate with the One who provided the salvation we are to share. Without that personal communication, we are powerless, purposeless, and pointless. For believers to exhibit a healthy walk with Christ, we must be willing to share our faith. The sharing of that faith must be bathed in prayer and intercession.

¹¹John Piper on Twitter as @JohnPiper, October 20, 2009.

QUESTIONS

to Guide Your Group's Discussion

What does this chapter say about my prayer life?

What does this chapter tell us about God?

What does this chapter call me to do?

How does this chapter change the way I relate to people?
(How can you use this information this week at work or with friends and neighbors?)

Who are the people in my life I need to intentionally pray for to come to a saving relationship with Christ?

CHAPTER 2

PEOPLE MATTER

Clay Hallmark



PEOPLE MATTER!

Read that again. Now say it out loud. Do you realize that you just said out loud the very heart of the gospel of Jesus Christ? People do matter. People matter to Jesus. People should matter to His church. People better matter to you and to me. Let me tell you one more time that PEOPLE MATTER!

You have now read it, and you have now said it out loud. So, let me ask the all-important question of the moment: Do people matter to you? Do they really matter? Most people who answer that question will say, “Well, of course people matter to me.” But do they really matter to you? Do all people matter to you?

Let’s think about this issue for a few moments in some concrete terms or specifics. These are questions we need to ask of ourselves as believers, as pastors, and our church.

- Do people of every ethnicity matter to you?
- Do poor people matter to you?
- Do white collar workers matter to you?
- Do people who are battling addiction or depression matter to you?
- Does that single mom or dad matter to you?
- What about the recent divorcee living within a rock’s throw from your house or church?
- What about that couple who cannot have children or the lady who had an abortion?
- Do the children who go to bed hungry matter to you?
- How about that widow or widower in your neighborhood?
- What about the senior adults who have kids living in other states?
- Does that person who walks the streets of your town who is dirty, smelly, and homeless matter?
- What about that schoolteacher, football coach, band director, or staff member at your local school?
- How about those people who do not attend the same church you attend or who are from a different denomination?
- Does the young student who waited on your table, took your order at the drive-thru, handed you the prescription, washed your car, or cut your lawn matter to you?

You see, when it comes to people, either all of them matter to us as followers of Jesus, or we are simply not following the example and command of Jesus. We read in 1 John 4:7-11, *“⁷ Dear friends, let us love one another, because love is from God, and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ God’s love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his one and only Son into the world so that we might live through him. ¹⁰ Love consists in this: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹ Dear friends, if God loved us in this way, we also must love one another (CSB).”*

We, as the churches of the Tennessee Baptist Convention, have clearly stated that we have five objectives that are the focus of our cooperation and work. Objective one states that as Tennessee Baptists, we want to see “*at least 50,000 Tennesseans annually saved, baptized, and set on the road to discipleship by 2024.*” While the population of the State of Tennessee is surging each year, Tennessee Baptist churches are far from reaching this first objective. In our last statistical year, annual church profiles indicated that we only baptized 19,268 people in Tennessee. While we praise the Lord for each one of these precious souls, I am fully convinced that we can do better. In fact, I know we can do better to win Tennessee.

How can your church and my church, your leaders and my leaders, your association and my association *intensify efforts to identify and reach people*? Far too many pastors and church leaders believe there is a “silver bullet” method, an easy path, a new methodology, or a magic formula for success. As a result, pastors and church leaders continually move from program to program seeking answers. They invest a lot of time, energy, and resources into methods and philosophies that often yield little to no results.

We have a tendency to become frustrated, discouraged, worn out, and ready to quit. Many pastors and church leaders are filled with guilt as they continually compare themselves to the mega-church down the street, in the next town, or the new non-denominational start up on the next corner. We attend conferences, buy books, listen to sermons and podcasts, and fill our brains with lots of good solid principles, but with little or no practical ways to put those principles to work. Some of you are reading this with your hand in the air right now saying, “You are describing my life, my ministry, and my church!”

What I am hoping to do over these next few pages is avoid giving you a lot of principles, platitudes, and empty promises. What I am going to do is give you some simple practices and processes that will help you *intensify efforts to identify and reach people* right where you live. However, I must warn you that what I am going to share with you is simple, but the work is not easy. The work is often times going to be hard. I would even tell you that you cannot do the work alone. You are going to have to enlist and equip others to help you. If I could make you one promise, it would be this: People all around you are worth the work because PEOPLE MATTER!

I want you to see how PEOPLE MATTER **by discovering three key truths that we must wrestle with, come to understand, and put into practice.** These three truths, when put into practice at your church, will revolutionize how you do ministry, the effectiveness of your ministry, and the way church members will come to see the people who are all around them every day.

Prioritize People

First, for Tennessee Baptist churches and leaders to *intensify efforts to identify and reach people*, we must PRIORITIZE PEOPLE. In all my years that I have pastored Baptist churches, led in State Conventions, and have preached around the country, I have met very few pastors and have gone in very few churches who would not boldly proclaim, “People matter to our church.” However, when you spend much time with these church leaders or in these churches, you cannot help but question such a bold proclamation.

Statistically, worship attendance, baptisms, and Sunday School (open small groups) attendance are declining each year both in the Southern Baptist Convention and the Tennessee Baptist Convention. The concepts of organized outreach, evangelism, visitation, and follow up have almost gone the way of the dinosaur in a large majority of our churches. There has been an ever-decreasing intentional effort of training soul-winners, evangelism teams, visitation teams, or even having focused evangelistic events in our Tennessee Baptist churches.

Now is the time for our churches and our church leaders to prioritize people. People are a priority to Jesus.

- Peter said it this way in 1 Peter 3:18, *“For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring you to God (CSB).”*
- Furthermore, we read in Titus 2:14, that *“He gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to cleanse for himself a people for his own possession, eager to do good works (CSB).”*
- One of the greatest examples of Jesus prioritizing people is found in Luke 23:43, as Jesus hung on the cross for our sins and still had time for a dying criminal as He said to him, *“Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise (CSB).”*

We need to begin to see people the way Jesus saw people. He took His time walking through the crowds. He touched the untouchable and talked with those who were outcasts. Listen to the way Matthew described how Jesus saw people in Matthew 9:36-37, when he said of Jesus, *“When he saw the crowds, he felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dejected, like sheep without a shepherd.”*³⁷ *Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is abundant, but the workers are few’ (CSB).”*

If people are a priority of Jesus, then they should be the priority of our churches and our lives. Now if you are not willing to genuinely make people a priority of your own personal life and if your church is not willing to make people a priority in its ministry and mission efforts, then perhaps now is the time to close this book and put it on the shelf.

To prioritize people, we as church leaders are going to have to rethink our preconceived notions as to why our churches exist. We are going to have to be honest about where our churches are and have a willingness to make changes. We are going to

have to reflect the priority of people in our church budget, ministries, focus, training, outreach, mission projects, worship, and Sunday School. Unless there is a paradigm shift in how our churches see the people around them, we will never have much of an impact in people's lives with the gospel of Jesus Christ, nor will we be setting very many new people on the road to discipleship.

Prioritizing people begins with the church's pastor and key leaders. One of the greatest leadership truths I have learned through the years as a pastor is this: *The leader is the lesson!* Generally speaking, people in our churches follow their leaders. Whatever the leaders prioritize will in time become the priority of many people within the church. Wherever the leaders show enthusiasm, the people in the church have a greater sense of enthusiasm.

The way church leaders come to view people outside the walls of the church will usually become the predominant way that the people inside the walls of the church view those people. So, you as a church leader must decide today whether or not PEOPLE MATTER to you personally in the way that you lead, pray, preach, train, talk, mentor, and live. Why? *The leader is the lesson!*

Pursue People

Second, for Tennessee Baptist churches and leaders to *intensify efforts to identify and reach people*, we must PURSUE PEOPLE. In Luke 19:10, Jesus clearly stated His mission purpose when He said, "*For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost (CSB).*" Just like Jesus prioritized people, He also pursued people. If this is the mission of Jesus, should this not also be the mission of your life and your church?

Let me share with you some eye-opening statistics from the Tennessee Baptist Convention. Last year in Tennessee, we averaged approximately 350,000 people in worship attendance each Sunday morning. On average, Tennessee Baptist churches baptized approximately 5.6 people for every 100 people that attended worship each week. If you do the math, then to baptize 50,000 Tennesseans each year and set them on the road to discipleship, we must dramatically increase the number of people who attend our worship services and connect them to a small group Sunday School class.

Strategy #2 states that if we are going to *intensify efforts to identify and reach people*, then we must discover approximately one prospect for every one person we have in average worship attendance. In other words, we need to discover 100 prospects for every 100 worshippers if we are going to see 50,000 baptized and set on the road to discipleship in the Tennessee Baptist Convention.

I know that many of you are looking at that figure and are wondering to yourself, "*Where in the world will I find 100 new prospects?*" When you first read that number of 100 or think in terms of one new prospect for every one person who regularly attends worship

in your church, those figures look huge. The truth is that this number is probably not as large as you first might believe. Remember when I told you that there is no magic formula and that the work is not going to be easy? Well, here is where the work begins. Still, you have more prospects around your church, around the members of your church, and even around yourself than you may have ever dreamed. In fact, there are presently four million spiritually lost people just in the State of Tennessee.

So, where can your church find prospects? There are several key actions or strategies that a church can use to discover at least one prospect for every one person in worship attendance.

1. A church must be willing to make the intentional effort to seek prospects and gain information from them.

My father pastored churches for many years, and I would often hear him say, “If you do not have the name, address and information of someone you are trying to reach, then they are a suspect and not a prospect.” Every time the church meets, whether it be in a regular service or at a special event such as a musical presentation, Vacation Bible School, or a banquet, there must be an intentional effort to capture information from people who are in attendance.

Many churches use cards that are printed, handed out, and received from everyone present. If this method is used, then the cards need to specifically ask the information you need to know to do actual evangelism and follow-up with those who are completing the card. The card needs to have plenty of white space, enough room for people to write, and give a church the information you need. At special events, using incentives such as door prizes are great ways to gather information.

Other churches are using social media and online platforms to gather information from people. Text groups such as the Remind© App are simple and quick ways to get information. Online and web-based methods are also effective. At First Baptist Church of Lexington we created “Sunday Central” on our church’s website which allows people quick and easy access on Sundays to check in at our services, respond to the invitation, download sermon notes, give their offering, send in prayer requests, and give us their personal information (www.fbclexington.com/sundaycentral). This has become a very effective means of discovering prospects and communicating with them.

We have also had a large success with a highly trained staff of “First Impression” greeters at the doors and in the parking lots, as well as Welcome Center volunteers. Each Sunday guests are taken to the Welcome Center where they are given a gift, information, and they are asked to fill out a small amount of applicable information that will be used for follow-up. They are escorted to small group Sunday School classes or a worship service and introduced to people throughout the facility.

In addition to this ministry, we offer a “Pastor’s Reception” immediately following worship for all guests. In that reception we give every guest a personalized coffee mug filled with candy and church information. We offer them a snack, coffee, sodas, and bottled water. Finally, guests get to meet the pastor, other staff members, and church leaders for a few minutes of casual conversation. This reception allows us to gather a lot of personal information about our Sunday guests, and it helps us know who can best follow-up with them and minister to them in the coming week.

2. A church must come to understand that the only reason for special events is the purpose of evangelism and discovering prospects.

Church members do not need another thing on their calendars, and people who are out there in our communities are not really looking for something else to do. Carefully planned and targeted special events offer churches the opportunities to draw people to the church or special event where they can be welcomed by friendly members, encouraged, hear the good news, and a place where the church can gather information for the purpose of follow-up.

These events must vary in their target audiences. Community events held throughout the year and especially during the holidays and summer are great tools for outreach (VBS, block parties, backyard Bible schools, sports camps, concerts, car shows, seminars for parents, holiday contests, community worship events, mission projects in the community, men and women events, etc.). Regardless of what a church chooses to do, there must be intentionality in gathering information for the discovery of prospects.

3. Many of the prospects your church can reach you already know or have some type of interaction with. How? Through their family members.

One of the best ways to find prospects is to simply take a close look at your Sunday School ministry roll and ask several important questions:

1. Who on this roll is not an active participant?
2. Of those who are active participants, is there anyone in their home who does not attend?
3. Who on this roll is not a member of the church, has never been baptized, or who needs to hear a gospel witness?

These people should be considered prospects who become the focus of the church’s evangelism efforts, ministries, and personal follow-up.

4. New people moving into your community or area are excellent prospects.

In the church that I pastor, we send FAITH Evangelism teams to visit every new homeowner that moves into our church’s zip code. We take them a bag filled with community information from the Chamber of Commerce, coupons, brochures, and

goodies from local businesses and groups. We spend time welcoming them to our community and asking them a brief survey of applicable questions including the question “What do you think it takes for a person to go to heaven?” We have seen many new prospects discovered, many others give their life to Jesus, and a large number of people prayed for and encouraged.

There are a number of ways to get these names. For example, if you are a member of the local Chamber of Commerce, you can get new homeowner names through them. Other names can come from new water hook-ups with the utility departments.

We also purchase names from Mike Shields and Associates for our zip code (mike@newmovernames.com). The cost is minimal and the accuracy rate is about 90%. (The above information is shared as an example of this church’s experience.)

Another derivative of new homeowners for students and children is to partner with the local schools to provide a gift for the school to give new students when they register at the beginning of a new school year or during the year. This gift could contain snack items, sports bottles with candy, school supplies, and information about the ministries of your church as it relates to the child.

5. A large number of churches do community surveys throughout their communities.

Let me say that a survey just to ask random, meaningless questions is a worthless exercise. If you do a survey, then the questions being asked of the people who are kind enough to give you a few minutes of their time must be short, to the point, relevant to what is happening in your community or world, and questions that will help you gain some knowledge or information about your community that can be translated into new ministries, mission actions, evangelism, and the follow-up with new prospects discovered. It is always a great thing to give people a small token of appreciation for answering the quick survey.

6. Use demographic studies from the Tennessee Baptist Convention to help you discover unreached people groups in your area.

All throughout Tennessee we are seeing many international and ethnic groups coming into our communities for which there is no gospel witness. Your church needs to see these people as prospects and pursue these people with the gospel. There are large populations of unreached people who are prospects for your church.

In addition to people of different ethnic backgrounds, there are also other large numbers of unreached groups. For example, there are “twenty somethings” in every community. This group is one of the most unreached groups in Tennessee. They think, act, learn, and view the world from a different perspective than most of the other people in your church. However, there are many prospects in this age group all around your church

and even living in the homes of the members of your church.

7. Discovering prospects becomes easier when a church creates ministries that meet the needs of people right where they are in life.

Ministries such as:

- divorce or grief recovery
- single again ministry
- new parenting ministry
- food and/or clothing resources
- addiction recovery
- English as a Second Language class
- ministry to people who are deaf or blind
- ministry for people who deal with anger issues, anxiety, marital problems, or even financial difficulties

Ministries such as these all reach out to a segment of every population who may not be attending anyone's church, but recognize the church is willing to meet a real need in their life.

In addition to meeting these ministry needs, it is a fact that every community has other groups of people who can be reached. For example, these groups of people could include first responders, factory workers or union workers, military personnel, handicapped persons, teachers, and sports minded men, women, and students. If you will take a close look into your community, you will realize that your church has many opportunities to reach a variety of people who are prospects for the ministry of your church and the gospel message of Jesus.

8. One of the most overlooked ways of gathering prospects is simply to ask your church members a simple question like this: "Who do you know among your friends, relatives, associates, and neighbors that are currently not in church?"

While that sounds too simple, the reality is that a majority of people in your church are related to, live next door to, work with, or attend school with someone who is a prospect for your church.

Partner with People

Because PEOPLE MATTER, we must choose to strategically prioritize people, intentionally pursue people, and because PEOPLE MATTER, churches and church leaders must PARTNER WITH PEOPLE!

What I mean is this: **We must seek to connect them with a small group in our**

churches—in other words, develop a partnership. The most effective small groups in our churches are what we have traditionally called Sunday School.

While this will be discussed in more detail in later chapters, let me just say that **these small group Sunday School classes in our church are the foundation for evangelism, ministry, follow-up, and the assimilation of prospects. No other group in the church is organized to do prospect discovery and follow-up like an active, on mission small group Sunday School class.**

These small groups need to meet both on campus, as well as off campus. Helping prospects partner with others in these small groups will become one of the most effective means Tennessee Baptist Churches have in reaching new people and setting them on the road to discipleship.

Like Jesus, churches are in the relationship business. We must never stop looking for ways to invite people, meet people, build relationships with them, gather good information, encourage them, pray for them, minister to them, and show them the love of Jesus. Together, we must decide today that we will *intensify efforts to identify and reach people in Tennessee.*

QUESTIONS

to Guide Your Group's Discussion

What does this chapter say about the people God has placed around me?

What does this chapter tell us about God?

What does this chapter say about discovering those far from Christ?

How does this chapter change the way my Sunday School class or group should relate to people? Consider a weekly prayer time for the unchurched, lost people your Group has discovered.

Which of these strategies should our group/class consider adopting?

What church-wide event could I volunteer to serve in that would allow me to meet more unconnected people?

CHAPTER 3

RELATIONSHIPS MATTER

Mark Caldwell



Relationships Are Part of God's Plan

“Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone.” (Genesis 2:18a, CSB). Most of us will quickly recognize this verse from the creation account as the Bible records God creating Eve “as a helper comparable to him (Adam).” God put in place His order for marriage, but I believe He also gave us an insight into all of humanity. “It is not good that man should be alone” is not limited to the marriage union, but the truth is, we need one another.

Scripture gives us many examples and instructions concerning the value of relationships.

- Paul tells us to “bear one another’s burdens”, “serve one another”, “be kind to one another”, “love one another”, “comfort one another”, “edify, exhort and consider one another” along with many more reminders of our “one another responsibilities and opportunities.”
- James and Peter also remind us to “pray for one another, have compassion, have fervent love and be hospitable for one another.”
- John, the beloved disciple said at least six times in his epistles that we should “love one another”, and he recorded Jesus’ words in John 15:17 “This is what I command you: Love one another.” (CSB)

There are also numerous examples in Scripture when people came together to accomplish more than they could accomplish alone. Surely God can accomplish anything and everything without us, but He invites us to work with Him, usually inviting us to serve together. Jesus often spoke of “two or three gathered together” and the power of that partnership. Solomon reminded us “And if someone overpowers one person, two can resist him. A cord of three stands is not easily broken.” (Eccl 4:12, CSB)

Relationships are Built Best through Groups and Worship

The New Testament church reached out to people with the gospel through small and large groups (and other actions as well), but always with the desire to see them saved, baptized, and set on the road to discipleship and ministry (Acts 2:42-47). If each of our churches really desires to see people in our communities experience God’s salvation, spiritual growth, and service, then Scripture gives the blueprint.

Personal prayer, Bible study, intimate personal worship, private Christian ministry, and benevolence are all important and necessary in a believer’s life. However, to be a fully devoted follower of Jesus Christ, a believer needs relationships with others who love them and desire to pour into their life, train them, pray with them, walk with them in life’s circumstances, serve with them, challenge them, hold them accountable, and experience the goodness of God along with them.

I need those people in my life. They need not be exactly like me; in fact, it is best if they are not. They do not need to always have the answers, it is a joy to discover the answers together. I need someone to weep with me, laugh with me, mourn with me, and dance with me. I need people on the journey with me. As I write these words, I wonder if these realities are true for all of us? In my heart, I believe they are. We need one another.

Let us not forget the power of prayer! “The prayer of a righteous person is very powerful in its effect.” (James 5:16b, CSB) Imagine what the effective, fervent prayer of 3,000 Tennessee Baptist churches and around 400,000 regular attendees at those churches might accomplish? If the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much, just imagine!

There is something very powerful within the dynamic of a “group”. We have always known this truth, but it seems that we have drifted away from this intentional, purposeful gathering. For many years, most Southern Baptist churches built on a small group model that we called Sunday School. Our buildings facilitated this strategy and allowed various groups identified by age, interest, affinity, and other common connections to meet together and mature as believers.

We find using this model of inviting lost people to attend a small group and develop relationships within a controlled setting is usually less intimidating than the large corporate worship gathering. These small groups were/are intimate, personal, and an effective setting to lower our inhibitions and share honestly and openly.

For years, we have been taught that the strategy behind these small groups and their purpose was to be the “Reaching, Teaching, and Ministering” arm of the church. There was an intentional effort to be evangelistic, and in these open groups it was encouraged to share personal faith and testimony.

Although many churches continue to use this strategy, there are many hybrid strategies that make sense in different settings. For instance, if your sanctuary is much larger than the educational space available on your campus, it might be more logical to meet at other locations. A church might have adequate space for children’s groups, but not for adults, or a thousand other issues.

The challenge is that somehow, we realize the importance of connection and intimate relationships within the church and develop strategies to promote groups.

While writing this chapter, I contacted several pastors and asked about their church’s strategy and efforts to involve their flock in small group ministry. I realized quickly that my terminology needed to expand because I discovered so many different terms that had very similar core values, but very different titles. Most of the pastors I spoke with used the word “group” in their small group gathering, but there were many different adjectives in the titles. Maybe your church uses one of these titles: “Sunday School”, “Small Groups”, “Bible Study Groups”, “Cell Groups”, “In-Home Groups”, “Life Groups”, “Community Groups”,

“Connect Groups” and many have added in 2020 “Virtual Groups”. There are other group names and designations, but these were the most common in my conversations.

Some of these groups met on the church’s primary or satellite campuses, some were in public spaces, homes, and other unique locations. Each of these churches and their pastors were confident they were following the Lord’s direction with their strategy and felt confident they could continue and grow with these efforts. I pray that you too, have a strategy that you believe in and are willing to do the work required to improve and advance your efforts. If we are to see 50,000 Tennesseans annually saved, baptized, and set on the road to discipleship, we all have some work to do.

As leaders, we must be convinced personally, so that we might engage, encourage, and equip our congregations to rise to the challenge of winning Tennessee to Jesus, starting in our own communities. I have claimed for years, and completely believe that “The Church of Jesus Christ is not under committed, they are under challenged!” I believe God’s people want to see God move in a mighty and incredible way and are waiting for leaders to lead with passion, zeal, and confidence in the LORD. We want to be part of something bigger than ourselves and what could be more important, more eternal, than seeing 50,000 people saved, baptized, and set on the road to discipleship?

Increase Opportunities for More Relationships by Starting New Groups

As your vision expands and you realize your need for additional groups, you may need to consider how adding a new small group enhances your church’s efforts to reach your goal. When you have reached the goal of one small group per ten in attendance, then consider starting a new small group.

A reasonable goal for new groups might be to start a minimum of one new Bible study group annually with one additional group per 100 in attendance. It is more important to start well than to start just to reach a goal. Identify a solid group leader. Equip them to teach the Bible, be evangelistic, and be a role model to invite and disciple others. A group of two or three is a group! Do not wait until you have 10 or 12. Let the group grow as they go. At our church, we birth new groups when we determine a potential area that is under served or a “gap” in our ministry. Due to the pandemic, we started a couple of new groups virtually this year.

As we pray and ask God to prepare small group leaders, we are also listening to the Holy Spirit and watching what He is doing around us and in our community. Along with praying and encouraging God’s people publicly and privately, we celebrate when a new group is birthed. Again, make a big deal of it! You set a goal to begin a new group, and you accomplished the goal. This is work, so when you reach the goal, make sure the church

family knows that our Father in Heaven is pleased! We all long to hear Him say “Well done good and faithful servants!”

In chapter two of this book, we talked about discovering prospects. Let me remind you to consider the prospects that are already within the church family. There are often people who attend worship services but are not connected to a small group. They are often willing to connect but have not been asked or have never been involved or have some other reason they are not connected. I am convinced that if they are connected to a small group, they are more likely to serve the church, be committed to special events, invite others, give, and participate.

A few years ago, I told my Sunday School Director that we needed to begin a new class, and I would like to “birth it” and develop it, then hand it off to another teacher after one year. He told me that we did not have any prospects, so I said “What about the people who are in our worship services (including church members), guests who have visited and not yet connected? Get me a list of those people, and that will be my roll.”

He agreed and provided the list of names that were not on any roll or small group list within our church. There were about 60 names on the list, and I went to work inviting, calling, mailing announcements, making breakfast every week, studying, and trusting the Lord for the results. I ended up teaching a little longer than one year. After one year, the class was larger than our strategy. From the original group, we birthed three additional groups that are still flourishing in addition to the original class that I continue to teach. Currently, those four adult classes have added children from the Nursery through our Student Ministry classes.

I do not know how many people have been saved, baptized, and set on the road to discipleship from this “paper prospect roll” and how many volunteers have come from our ranks. I do know that half of our active deacons came through this small group, and more than a dozen teachers were developed within this group. Groups matter! Groups work!

As your groups invite others and begin to grow, you are going to realize a need for additional groups. There are people who want to be involved, but schedules, family situations, and other issues might make it difficult to attend.

Groups can meet at any time and at any place, and if we are going to increase our effectiveness, we need to consider additional venues, times, and even technologies.

In 2020, our church has realized the impact and opportunity of technologies within our small groups. Several people who were not able to attend church longed to connect with the people of God. We established small group gatherings online, through ZOOM, Facebook Live or other group video platforms and reached people that have not yet visited our campus.

We have a large ministry to all six of our county's elementary schools. We have hosted small group Bible studies and devotionals online for faculty members of these schools. It is amazing how willing they are to join in this facet of our "Bless the Schools" Ministry.

We also host a small group gathering for First Responders directed by one of our members who serves as Chaplain for our county.

We have seen several from all of these groups come to faith in Christ and start their journey on the road to discipleship. What all these unique efforts have in common is simple: they are fueled by prayer, evangelism, and based upon our small group model. Although each group has different elements, we are convinced that the small group dynamic is making a difference.

One goal I encourage you to set within your church is to increase your total group involvement compared to your worship service. Most pastors and church leaders will agree that when their church families are involved in a small group in addition to their attendance of worship services, they are more likely to volunteer to serve, go on mission, and are more connected to the church. Relationships deepen, intimacy grows, and the body of Christ is healthier when we are connected and "doing life" together.

Connect People to Groups through Enrollment

When I asked my pastor friends about the percentage of their Sunday morning worship that were connected and engaged in a small group, no one had a firm answer. Most said they believed about 50% to 60% of their folks were involved in their small groups.

First, I would challenge you to find out. Have someone count the number of people in your Sunday morning service(s) for a month, then simply check your small group attendance.

Second, whatever your percentage is, set a goal to increase it. If you are currently seeing 65% of your worshippers in small groups, set a goal of 70%. That may seem small, but if every church were to make this small increase, imagine the impact!

A reasonable goal for any church is to connect with and enroll one new member in your small group ministry per ten prospective group members in your church. For example: If you have 100 new prospective members, set a goal is to see a minimum of 10 of these connect with an on campus, off campus or online Bible Study Group. If you have 100 members in small groups, then you probably have around 60 adults in that total. With class sizes of 10 -15, you likely need 5 or 6 adult small groups.

If these numbers are close, then increasing the percentage of worshippers in small groups, could be as simple as adding a family (with children) and a couple of individuals to your groups. I am not trying to offend anyone with the words "as simple as", knowing that if

it were simple it would be happening more than it does.

It may sound like a very large and difficult task on your own, but remember, the church has been praying, you have been encouraging and promoting this goal, and you are not in this alone! You have the body of Christ working with you, and even more importantly, God Himself guiding the work and His Holy Spirit already working in the hearts of those you are inviting. You can reach this goal!

Make Relationships and Starting New Groups a Big Deal—Celebrate

So how do we proceed? What can you and your church do to realize this challenging goal accomplished and even exceeded?

At least part of the answer comes from this question: “How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time!” We roll up our sleeves and get to work!

- Prayer is the foundation.
- Mobilize existing ministries, groups, and congregation to focus on people.
- Ask God to give us a burden for the lostness, despair, and brokenness that is so evident in our culture.
- Ask God to tune our hearts to His so that we might see people as He does. If we do not have a genuine concern for lost people, all the strategies in the world will fail. We must be consumed with sharing the gospel and inviting people into a relationship with Christ.
- Pray for unity within your congregation that everyone will agree and make evangelism the priority of the church.
- Talk about it from the pulpit, in staff meetings, in ministry training sessions, in large groups, small groups, websites, social media, face-to-face conversations, virtual meetings, anywhere, everywhere!

We need this, our families need this, our neighbors, classmates, co-workers, and people we pass on the street need the good news of the gospel. Make this task our priority!

As we are praying (we cannot just pray and then charge into the next strategies, prayer must continue as we go), **ask God to give us clear goals within our churches.** The goals and strategies that are listed within this book are scalable for any size congregation, and we believe are attainable. For instance, as you are praying and God is renewing your passion and vision for reaching people, invest time in your groups.

Again, it does not matter how you describe or what you call your discipleship/group ministry, it is just critical that you understand the power and potential of these groups.

Although you may not be able to get “buy in” from every group, do not allow that to keep you from moving forward with those that will. Encourage group leaders to challenge the members of their groups to invite a friend.

After you announce this challenge, do it again, and then again. Do not stop reminding leaders and groups of the importance of people. Hold your leaders accountable. Hold yourself accountable to the goals that you establish. If you are the pastor or another church leader, then lead! Be an example. Invite a friend, guest, customer from the hardware store or ball field to join you in a small group. You will be surprised how many people will respond in the affirmative if you simply invite them!

A next practical step that we often overlook is when you reach a goal, **CELEBRATE!** As you are praying, promoting, and discussing, and you reach the goal, announce it to the church! Let them know that they have reached a milestone and God is being glorified as the people of God are faithfully following Him.

It is amazing the momentum that is built with victory! People are energized, they believe they are able to reach the next goal, and those who have been invited and are being assimilated into the family sense a genuine love and spirit within the church that makes them want to get involved (and they will invite their family, friends, and neighbors to this incredible church that they have discovered!).

After your church family has accomplished something bigger than themselves and realized that God is still at work, they are more likely to begin “catching the vision” and desire to see more of God’s handiwork. So, as you reach the goal, celebrate, and continue! Do not stop challenging and setting goals and celebrating each accomplishment.

We can do this Tennessee Baptists! Let us pray for one another. Let us see what we cannot see. Let us do what we cannot do. Let us experience what we cannot deny is the hand of God!

QUESTIONS

to Guide Your Group's Discussion

What does this chapter say about your intentional relationships with people who do not know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior?

What does this chapter tell us about God?

What does this chapter say about the importance of groups/classes and connecting people?

How should this chapter change the way our group/class works to teach and send out new leaders? Consider a weekly prayer time for God to call someone from our group/class to start a new group/class for their unchurched friends and neighbors.

How can our group/class celebrate a new group that starts this year?

CHAPTER 4

THE GOSPEL MATTERS

Sam Greer



“I am not worried about the day when we cannot share the gospel. I am worried about today when we will not share the gospel.” Randy Davis¹

THE CONTROVERSIAL CONVERSION OF THE VIKINGS

The controversial conversion of the Vikings is one of the most fascinating but least known stories in the history of Christianity. Concerning the Viking raids, English scholar Alcuin wrote,

Never before has such terror appeared in Britain as we have now suffered from a pagan race. Behold the church of Saint Cuthbert, splattered with the blood of the priests of God, despoiled in all its ornaments; a place more venerable than all in Britain is given as a prey to pagan peoples.²

Swift, brutal, and merciless were the Vikings as they attacked Christian settlements from Ireland to the Mediterranean. The Vikings brought with them both violence and pagan worship. No wonder monks regularly prayed, “From the fury of the Northmen, O Lord deliver us.”³ The Lord not only delivered England from the pagan Vikings, but He also delivered the Vikings from their paganism. It took time, but over the course of four hundred years, the Scandinavian countries became thoroughly Christian.

Here is where the conversion of the Vikings gets somewhat controversial. History records Vikings worshiping both Jesus and their Scandinavian gods. Also, force was known to be used by the Vikings to convert others to Christianity. For some Vikings, who were supposedly converted to Christianity, it really did not matter to them if they were going to Heaven or Valhalla (In Norse mythology, the majestic place of those who died in battle).⁴

The one aspect about the conversion of the Vikings that is not controversial or contested is the most common way in which they were converted. Some were converted due to missionary efforts or by royal conversions, but most were converted through day-to-day conversations with Christians as they traded goods. Personal evangelism was the main way the Vikings were converted.

My heartbeat is equipping believers and helping pastors and churches have more day-to-day gospel conversations. I pray that God may grant the Southern Baptist Convention the blessing of experiencing a gospel conversational movement and may it start with Tennessee Baptists! May our passion for personal evangelism be such that we make it hard to go to hell from Tennessee!

WHY TAKE PERSONAL EVANGELISM PERSONALLY?

The only way the Great Commission is going to happen is if gospel conversations are happening. The gospel will never be heard by all unless gospel conversations are being had by us all.

Jesus Said So

In Matthew 4:19, Jesus told His disciples, “Follow me,...and I will make you fish for people.” (CSB).” First, Jesus spoke to these fishermen telling them specifically that He would make them fishers of men. In Matthew 28:19, Jesus told these same disciples, “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations...” (CSB) Jesus calls out the called to call people to call on Him to be saved!

Second, Jesus spoke into these fishermen. Discipleship begins by speaking into people’s lives. In other words, Jesus spoke the language of the people. He met people right where they were and gave them a purpose and a future. Jesus did not say to these fishermen, “Follow me and I will make you accountants of men, doctors of men, tax-collectors of men, tent makers of men, or lawyers of men.” Jesus used language that connected with these fishermen. If Jesus can use these uneducated and inexperienced fishermen to catch people with the net of the gospel, then He can use the least of these to the greatest of these in your church to do the same.

Because Jesus said so is reason enough to share your faith and teach others to do the same. Sometimes all the motivation a child needs is to hear mom or dad say, “Because I said so!” As believers, let us make it so by answering the call to call people to call on Jesus to be saved.

Jesus Did So

Jesus’ walk matched His talk. Jesus was an equal opportunity gospel conversationalist when He walked on this earth. He talked on the level of the religious elite and on the level of the illiterate outcasts. With the woman at the well, Jesus spoke of the living water. While with teachers of the law, He spoke of the Hebrew Scriptures. Jesus spoke to a man in the top of a tree and a demon possessed man in a graveyard. The Lord Jesus does not expect us to do anything that He has not already done.

In John 4:10, Jesus said to the woman at the well, “If you knew the gift of God, and who is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink’, you would ask him, and he would give you living water.” (CSB)

Jesus could have sat the Samaritan woman down and dazzled her with His infinite knowledge of H₂O: where it came from, why it runs downhill, why it is wet. Jesus could have entered into a discourse on the ins and outs of the three states of water: liquid, solid, and gas. He could have introduced the idea of bottling water and made the Samaritan woman the wealthiest person in the known world. But, Jesus was interested in using a conversation about water to show this woman her life of sin and the reality of her need for salvation. When it comes to having more gospel conversations, Jesus did so in order that we would be able to do so.

We Must Also

As pastors and church leaders we tend to get caught in the competitive net of asking one another: “How many are you all running on Sunday mornings?”

A more accurate question to ask one another may be, “How many are you all catching as a church?”

A better question may be, “How many in your church are fishing for lost people?”

Perhaps, an even better question may be, “How many disciples in your church are teaching other believers to fish for lost people?”

Let us not lose sight of being “gospel conversationalists” who make other “gospel conversationalists.”

The current state of our evangelistic efforts in Tennessee is as follows:

Our churches reported almost 350,000 in worship. Our conversion rate was only 5.6 people per 100 worshippers. We cannot see 50,000 Tennesseans saved and baptized without reaching 150,000 additional people per year and increasing our conversion rate.

TWO GOALS FOR TENNESSEE BAPTISTS

Goal #1: Increase baptism rate from (whatever it is in your church currently) to 10 per 100 worship attenders.

Pastors and church leaders, it is on us to celebrate baptisms in our churches. Let us make sure that what we are celebrating on earth is being celebrated in heaven. Make a big deal about folks taking their faith in Jesus public through believer’s baptism.

Goal #2: Challenge the members in your church to have one gospel conversation per month.

The first step in having gospel conversations is repenting of not having gospel conversations. The next step is to set a goal of having a set number of gospel conversations per week, month, or year. Again, pastors and church leaders, it starts with us. Lead the way by setting a goal for yourself and challenge your church to do the same.

HOW DO WE TAKE PERSONAL EVANGELISM PERSONALLY?

Three modes of evangelism are helpful to consider: (1) come and hear, (2) go and tell, and (3) tell as you go. The first of these is realized every Sunday as people gather for worship, either online or in person on campus. Also, evangelistic events held at a church’s location would qualify.

The second mode happens when believers go into a different context to serve people and share the gospel.

The third mode, tell as you go, occurs through everyday gospel conversations. Doing the work of an evangelist cannot just be assigned to one event or to one day on the calendar. As a follower of Christ, doing the work of an evangelist is our calendar.

So, how do we take personal evangelism personally? Three ways are essential: (1) prayer, (2) Bible engagement, and (3) gospel conversations. Lead your church to pray for both the laborers in your church and the harvest in your community.

Bible engagement includes reading, memorizing, meditating, journaling, praying, teaching, preaching, believing, and sharing the Bible. Before believers will engage their world with the gospel, they must first engage the Word. Many churches have too many Bible studies to count; however, we do not need more Bible studies we need to study the Bible more. I have found that a helpful tool in teaching followers of Jesus to engage the Bible is *Journal Through the Word*.

Finally, cultivating a culture of gospel conversations is essential in taking personal evangelism personally. Gospel conversation starters will help in moving a conversation from a casual conversation to a gospel conversation. “Our Family Tree” is a brand-new gospel conversational starter/tool that will assist in developing a gospel conversational culture in your church.

Specific information on how to access or obtain the tools and resources identified in this section is provided at the end of this chapter under “Tools and Resources.”

EIGHTEEN EVERY DAY HELPS TO ENGAGE THE LOST IN EVERYDAY LIFE

The University of Tennessee’s legendary quarterback, Peyton Manning, retired from professional football in March of 2016. During his retirement speech, Peyton said, “When I was drafted by the Colts, Indianapolis was a basketball and a car racing town, but it did not take long for the Colts to convert the city and State of Indiana into football evangelists.”⁵

What can Peyton Manning’s “football evangelism” teach us about engaging the lost in everyday life? Below are eighteen helps as you lead your church to engage the lost in everyday life.

- 1. Get started.** Peyton said the decision to play his senior year in Knoxville was “one of the smartest decisions I have ever made.” Eventually, Peyton did start playing professional football. Getting in the game of sharing your faith by engaging the lost in everyday life will not happen until you get started. Get started by having a conversation.
- 2. Failures are not final.** Peyton Manning holds many professional quarterback records, including the rookie record for the most interceptions. Peyton’s failed reception attempts did not stop him from delivering the ball. Maybe you have tried

to engage a person with the gospel but failed to communicate the gospel clearly. Do not give up! Keep delivering the gospel!

3. **Remain coachable.** Speaking of his coaches, Peyton said, “Over my NFL career, I have had five coaches who have helped me become better at my craft and have helped me become a better human being: Jim Mora, Tony Dungy, Jim Caldwell, John Fox, and Gary Kubiak.” His gratitude for his coaches highlights the fact that Peyton remained coachable. Keep growing more in your faith, so you will keep sharing your faith more.
4. **God’s Word is our playbook.** Can you imagine the number of playbooks Peyton has memorized throughout his career? Of all those playbooks, Peyton referenced 2 Timothy 4:7, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” (CSB) God’s Word is our evangelism playbook.
5. **The game, not the goal, changes.** Eighteen years is an extra long career in the National Football League, considering the average career length is about 3.3 years. Many changes may occur over the course of eighteen years in the game of football, like rule changes and players’ safety. Yet, the goal of football never changes. As former NFL coach Herman Edwards ranted, “You play to win the game.⁶ The way we engage people with the gospel may change, but the message and the goal of the gospel never changes.”
6. **The mission is greater than the mission’s greatest.** The sport of football is even greater than one of football’s greatest players, Peyton Manning. The Great Commission is the greatest mission for followers of Christ. Even the greatest disciple maker on earth is not greater than the greatest mission under heaven to make disciples.
7. **You are not alone.** During his retirement speech, Peyton named family, players, coaches, friends, and fans who joined him on his football journey. At times, following Christ will be lonely, but being lonely is not the same thing as being alone. When you are lonely, remember you are never alone as you share the gospel.
8. **Setbacks do not have to set you back.** When speaking about the ups and downs in football, Peyton said, “Football has taught me not to be led by obstructions and setbacks....” Sin is a setback, but sin does not have to set you back in sharing Jesus with the lost. Do not allow sin to set you back from engaging the lost; rather, allow God’s grace to set you up to engage the lost.
9. **Include your family.** When I became a New Orleans Saints fan in 1981, Archie Manning, Peyton Manning’s dad, quarterbacked the Saints. Peyton’s older brother, Cooper Manning, played football. Peyton Manning played football. Eli Manning, Peyton’s younger brother, played football. The Manning family is a football family. Is your family a gospel family? Do you involve your family in sharing the gospel of Jesus?

- 10. Endure to the end.** Endurance is a theme in 2 Timothy as Paul is imploring Timothy to endure to the end by doing the work of an evangelist. Peyton, addressing the timing of his retirement, said, “After eighteen years, it is time.” He endured to the end of his football career. You are never too old to share your faith. Endure to the end by sharing your faith to the end.
- 11. Peyton played using his unique personality.** God made no two quarterbacks with the same personality. Peyton played using his own personality and no one else’s. No two followers of Jesus have the same personality. The gospel never changes, but the personalities who share the gospel are never the same. Be the best you can be by being all God made you to be in Christ.
- 12. Share one conversation at a time.** Peyton led the Colts to win at least 12 games in each of seven consecutive seasons. Still, Peyton could only play one game at a time. Jesus, as the Incarnate Word, engaged people one conversation at a time. Do not be overwhelmed at the vast lostness around you. Combat that lostness by having one gospel conversation at a time.
- 13. God is aware and cares.** Peyton closed his retirement speech with this blessing, “God bless all of you and God bless football.” Does God care about football? God absolutely cares about the people involved in football, because God is aware of the people involved in football. God absolutely cares about you engaging the lost in everyday life, because God is aware of the people involved.
- 14. Finishing does not mean you are finished.** Peyton left the football field, but he has something left to offer off the football field. He said, “There’s a scripture reading, 2 Timothy 4:7: ‘I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race. I have kept the faith.’ Well, I have fought a good fight. I have finished my football race....” Although his football race is over, Peyton’s life’s race is not over. As a follower of Christ, you never retire from following Christ.
- 15. Leave a living legacy.** Of Peyton Manning, Tom Brady said, “Congratulations Peyton, on an incredible career. You changed the game forever and made everyone around you better. It has been an honor.” Peyton has left a living legacy in the world of football. In all of creation under heaven, only the souls of men and the Word of God remain forever. Our mission is to leave a living legacy by sharing the Word of God with the souls of men.
- 16. Be grateful.** Summarizing his thoughts about the game of football, coaches, organizations, players, and fans, Peyton declared, “Grateful is the word that comes to my mind.” His gratitude for the game shows that Peyton never got over the game. One of the ways to guard against never getting over the gospel is to express gratitude for the gospel.

17. Jesus is the Hero of the gospel. Addressing his preparation and work ethic, Peyton shared:

Pundits will speculate that my effort and drive over the past 18 years were about mastery and working to master every aspect of the NFL game. Well, do not believe them. Because every moment, every drop of sweat, every bleary-eyed night of preparation, every note I took and every frame of film I watched was about one thing, reverence for this game.

Peyton’s reverence for the game drove the future Hall of Fame quarterback to be his best. What drives you to be your best? Jesus is the reason we engage the lost in everyday life.

18. Have fun. Peyton’s official retirement announcement even had a flavor of fun in it as he said, “There is just something about 18 years. Eighteen is a good number and today I retire from pro football.” As you continue to engage the lost in everyday life, do not take yourself so seriously. Peyton did not. Have fun engaging the lost in everyday life!

¹ Davis, Randy. Speaking at a TBMB Pastors Evangelism Roundtable, Fall, 2018.

² “Transforming a Hostile Culture,” <https://www.preachingtoday.com/search/?query=conversion+of+the+Vikings>. Accessed on 14 September, 2020.

³ Ibid.

⁴ “Vikings and Religion,” <https://sonsofvikings.com/blogs/history/the=vikings-and-christianity>. Accessed 14 September, 2020.

⁵ All of Peyton’s quotes derive from his retirement speech. Peyton Manning, Transcript of Peyton Manning’s Retirement Speech, http://www.espn.com/blog/denver-broncos/post/_id/19274/transcript-of-peytonmannings-retirement-speech. Accessed 17 January, 2017.

⁶ Doug Farrar, *10 Years Later*, Herm Edwards’ “You Play to Win the Game!” Rant Still Resonates, <http://sports.yahoo.com/blogs/shutdown-corner/10-years/after-herm-edwards-play-win-game-225650424-nfl.html>. Accessed 17 January, 2017.

TOOLS AND RESOURCES

For more information on what Journal Through the Word is and how you can utilize this Bible study tool in your church, contact Sam Greer on Twitter at @SamGreer_PSG or, visit the Gospel Conversations with PSG website at gsplconversations.org.

For more information on how Jesus engaged the lost in everyday life, order your copy of “The Gospel Conversationalist” online.

To learn how to utilize the “Our Family Tree” conversation starter, download the “Our Family Tree” app by texting TREE to the short code 79969. Or, search “Our Family Tree” at the App Store or Google Play.

For more information on cultivating a gospel conversational culture in your church, order your copy of “**The Gospel Conversational Church**” online. Both of these books are available through the **Gospel Conversations with PSG** website at gsplconversations.org.

QUESTIONS

to Guide Your Group's Discussion

What does this chapter say about personal gospel conversations?

Where do I have opportunities to have gospel conversations?

When was the last time I had a personal gospel conversation? How do I follow-up after have those conversations?

How does our church train us to have personal gospel conversations? In what areas do we need to do a better job with these trainings?

Which one of the **eighteen every day helps** stands out to you the most? Which one of these do you need to improve on?

CHAPTER 5

LOVE MATTERS

Matt Greer



Have you heard the expression “People do not care how much you know until they know how much you care?” In these unprecedented times, the thought is more accurate than ever before. Sadly, fewer people are running to church for answers. Instead, people are seemingly running quickly in the opposite direction. If we are going to reach the lost world and revitalize our churches, something has to change.

What has caused the exodus from church? Why has the world lost its respect for the church? Simply put, we lack love! In 1 Corinthians 13, the Scripture plainly tells us we can be the best at all things spiritual, but if we lack love, we are “a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal” (13:1, CSB). We have become good at church, but it has cost us our influence.

Why does love matter? Do we genuinely care about the people around us, or are we only checking boxes on a “to-do” list? I want to make this clear -- *our purpose is not to reach goals; it is to reach souls!*

When we look at the crowds outside of church, do we see them as Jesus did? Do we see them as sheep having no shepherd? (Matthew 9:36, CSB) They have no one to help them and no one to guide them! Jesus has called us to love on those closest to us.

God sent the first missionary to help a people bound for hell who did not know God, or the way to get to Him. His name is Jesus!

Love Starts Where We Are

When Jesus told His disciples in Acts 1:8 that they would receive the power of the Holy Spirit and become His witness, He said it would start right where they were. It would start in their Jerusalem! We have neglected our own Jerusalem, our communities, and even our own families!

Missions is more than sending money somewhere to someone else—it is also meeting the needs of the people down the road or across town.

How many of your church’s neighbors know you love them? If I were to come to your community and ask what your church is known for, which of these responses would you receive?

- “They are all about themselves.”
- “They think they are better than everyone else.”
- “They are religious, but not relatable.”
- “They are the most loving, kind, and caring people-church I have ever seen.”
- “They will do anything for anyone!”
- “They love like Jesus!”

It is important to always remember: The greatest church in your community is not the

biggest church. Instead, the greatest church is the one doing the most for its community! How are you loving your community?

Love Compels Us to See Beyond Ourselves

Some would say the Great Commission has become the Great Omission—more a suggestion and no longer a command. The reality is that far too many churches are stuck in the building. Churches have taken on a country club mentality; we tend to the members. At some point, we should realize by giving our members more benefits inside the buildings, we actually hinder the work of the church. The church must leave the building! The Great Commission says to go, not to come! If we are going to win Tennessee, we have to get out in our communities.

A Word of Testimony—Our Church’s Story

I currently serve as the senior pastor of Missionary Grove Baptist Church (MGBC). At the age of 18, I was saved; at 19, I was called to preach; at 22, I was called to join MGBC. I served as the youth minister beginning in 2004. I had no postsecondary education and zero experience. Now, at age 38, I have been the senior pastor for 11 years.

Our church has not always been where it is now. In fact, at one time, the church almost shut its doors. The church was in a slump. The congregation loved the Lord, desired to see people saved and the church grow, but did not know how it would happen.

At MGBC, we believed in missions, but we were not mission-minded. We failed to live it outside the walls of the church. Wikipedia defines missional living as “the adoption of the posture, thinking, behaviors, and practices of a missionary in order to engage others with the gospel message.”¹ While Wikipedia may not be the best source, the definition is meaningful. We were giving to missions, but we were not giving to our community. We were sending the Gospel to foreign countries, but we were not speaking it locally -- something had to change. We had to have a shift in our culture, in our DNA.

To all of the pastors reading this chapter, let me say your church will never be missional if you are not. Pastors, we must push it from the pulpit. We must live it ourselves.

In the movie “We Were Soldiers,” Mel Gibson portrayed Lt. Col. Hal Moore. On November 14, 1965, some 450 American paratroopers invaded the enemy’s territory in Ia Drang Valley, a location in Vietnam known as the “Valley of Death”. The soldiers found themselves surrounded by 2,000 Vietnamese. Before deploying, Lt. Col. Moore addressed his assembled troops, “I cannot promise you I will bring all of you home alive, but I swear, before you and Almighty God, when we go into battle, I will be the first to set foot on the field, and I will be the last to step foot off. I will leave no one behind, dead or alive; we will come home together. So help me, God.”

Pastors, do not expect or ask your congregation to do anything you are not modeling or preaching before them. It will not happen! It is all a trickle down and it starts with you and me!

Love Compels Us to Action; Missions is Love in Action

The reason I tell you my story and the story of Missionary Grove is this: missions is the reason our church did not have to close the doors. The missions of our church consisted of local and foreign work.

Our experience has taught us two valuable lessons that have guided us to put love into action through missions. First, define or clarify your church's mission—why does this church exist in this community? I ask you pastor, what is your church's mission statement? Does anyone know it? Do you even have one? We have to be very intentional with missions.

Second, use the mission statement to guide ministry decisions and actions. At MGBC, our mission statement is "Sharing Hope Through the Love of Jesus." Love matters! It is simple, yet profound! It sums up everything we try to do! If someone wants to do something in our church, or start a new ministry, we ask, "Does it live up to our mission statement's requirements?"

Loving on people has to be intentional. For us, our mission statement carries a lot of weight. It is on all printed literature and social media, every t-shirt, and coffee mug. It is who we are!

At MGBC, we changed the culture because God changed our DNA. It is His heart. Missions is the Father's heart. We went from forty people to four hundred! We went from almost closing the doors to building a bigger church; from dying on the vine, to bearing much fruit! These things took place because we became missional. The fields are ready to be harvested! People are lost and hungry for something to satisfy their souls.

I often reflect on a revival I attended ten years ago, led by Ronnie Coleman. As a church, we went to the altar and asked God to send us the ones no one else wanted -- and He did! What are you willing to do to see this happen in your church? Missions has to be your culture and missions has to be personal, preached, practical, and pointed. What are you going to do? You have to get your people's feet wet. Once you have preached it and pushed it, it is now time to plan! There are so many things you can do to be missional. Remember, they do not care how much you know until they know how much you care!

If Tennessee Baptist churches want to win TN for the glory of God, we can! However, each pastor and each church must see our community as a mission field. The shotgun approach will not work. **We have to target people groups. We must be in constant prayer asking, "Whom do you want us to reach, Father?" Who has God given you to minister to in your community?** MGBC's mission consisted of the people

no one else wanted; the unchurched, the dechurched and disenfranchised, the broken, hurting, poor, the widow, and the orphan.

Love Compels Us to Practical Ministry to Share the Gospel

Now, remember, we are not here to make the world a better place only for people to die and go to hell. **Everything we do is with the gospel in mind.**

To be able to minister to people in your community spiritually, you must minister to them physically. In “A Theory of Human Motivation”, a paper written in 1943 by Abraham Maslow, he identified the hierarchy of human needs. At the bottom of the pyramid were physiological needs like food, water, warmth, rest, shelter, and clothing. People could not even fathom the things in the top of the pyramid due to being too worried about where their next meal would come from, where they would sleep, what they would wear, or if they had water to drink. All of which are things we take for granted. Let me say it like this: when someone’s stomach is growling, the growling will speak louder to them than our gospel presentation. We must meet the needs of our neighbors if we are to be effective in sharing Jesus with them.

It is imperative to incorporate all ministries within the church. Include every Sunday school class, youth group, etc. Gather all believers who are capable of doing something good and speaking the gospel.

We have found several practical ministry actions that have enabled us to connect with our community, meet real needs that demonstrate Christ’s love, and provide opportunities to share Jesus. Some, or perhaps all, of these will spark ideas for your church in your community.

1. Food and clothing ministry
 2. Van ministry
 3. Community events
 4. Missions camps with projects
-

1. First, we need to feed and clothe them.

Meet their needs before you ask them to bow their knees. This allows you to identify how to be missional and who needs the most help. Proverbs 19:17 says “Kindness to the poor is a loan to the Lord, and he will give a reward to the lender.” (CSB) You will be a blessing and be blessed in return.

One idea is to have a food giveaway. Benton County, where we minister, is the third poorest county in the state. A median income for a family of four is \$27,000. Feed them! Like

us, you can team up with Second Harvest. In doing so, they will bring a semi-load worth of food to a designated location. In addition, other churches in your town may pitch in too. It is helpful to borrow shopping carts from your local grocer. The mission team can load carts and hand out food from your church. Set up a prayer tent. Give away bottled waters with your church name on it, and have your church flyers ready to hand out with Gospel tracts. Let some give physical food...let others give spiritual food.

Overall, be sure not to over complicate everything. Feed them physically and spiritually. In doing so, it will also light a fire in the souls of those who help from the church, and they will want to continue to serve.

We have accomplished a lot in our community, but note we have no other full-time staff members besides me. You do not have to be a big church to do missions; you just have to have a big vision! We need to find a way to involve everyone in a mission. If we are going to see 50,000 Tennesseans saved annually, it will take every group in the church being involved!

Now, during these times, I will admit things are different. The pandemic has stopped a lot of missions, especially foreign. More than ever, now is a time to really key in on the needs of your community. Since COVID-19 started, over the span of five months, we have fed 25,000 meals. Every week we have gotten food from Second Harvest Food Bank. A team of volunteers assemble food boxes for families and food bags for children. The boxes have a week's worth of food. Every child who rides our vans will get a bag with four meals. We have multiple church vans to distribute the food to the families. We meet their needs and they meet Jesus!

2. We have had many saved, baptized, and set on the road to discipleship through van ministry, which is missions.

We are targeting people groups and going after them. Loving on people is hard work but someone has to get their hands dirty! We are called to be the hands and feet of Christ; hands do and feet go. Any type of mission endeavor will excite and ignite the passion in your church people.

3. Let me encourage you, churches: if your community has an event, be present. Take part and show them you care.

You could even plan one of these events. Find a servant in your church, who loves your community, and let them take charge. Our church sponsored an event entitled "1 Heart, 1 Community". It was for anyone and everyone. The event was a great blessing and was definitely a catalyst for more ministry opportunities. Teams picked a project to complete in a four-hour time span. Some chose to clean yards for the elderly, while others painted houses. One of our Tennessee Baptist Convention churches, First Baptist Church Camden, gave out 5,000 jugs of milk! Everyone played to their strengths and everyone proved to the community we love them!

MGBC worked with a local gas station, allowing us to pay for gas and give it away. We paid a total of \$1,000, \$10 at a time. However, as the day continued we had donations providing our community with more free gas, totaling over \$1,200! People were blown away. We prayed with people, cried with people, blessed people, and they blessed us! Many were touched that day, but especially our team. Missions is not just about the people you reach. It is also about the people doing the projects. Those who pumped the gas that day will never be the same.

Pastors, you have to provide mission prospects. Every year, at MGBC, we have multiple local and foreign mission opportunities. The people, once they experience the joy of loving on others, will be changed forever. I also remember the KISS method. Keep It Simple Stupid. I am laughing as I write. It does not have to be complicated, just Christ-centered and people-driven.

4. Another good way to involve your people in missions, especially youth, is missions camp.

For the past several years, our youth group has been doing summer missions camps, working locally in Benton County. With the cost of camps being so expensive and the group of children we minister to being low income, we had to change our methods. You know it is okay to change your methods, just not the message, right?

Every summer, we rent out the group lodge at our local park. We have live worship in the mornings and evenings, with teaching and discipleship all throughout the day. Our leaders find projects throughout our communities. Every day we load our vans with the youth and take them to different locations to serve. From building wheelchair ramps, shelters, service at the animal shelter, or hosting VBS at local apartment complexes, the youth are blessed while blessing others. The youth have been a part of things that changed our community and changed their heart. Every year we have multiple youth saved at missions camp!

To the glory of God this year through September, we have baptized 47 people. Missions is the key! In the pulpit, in the pews or chairs, in the people, and in the places surrounding you. Jesus came to His own first. When will we get a burden for our own? Paul was broken for his own people. When will we break out of the church and be broken for our community? Your greatest mission field is the one where God has placed you. Do not overlook the harvest field right in front of you. As Randy Davis, Executive Director of the Tennessee Baptist Convention says, "Tennessee is a mission field any way you slice it." It is your mission field!

I leave you with this: we all know Romans 10:13 says "For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." We love that verse! The problem is in verse 14, "How, then, can they call on him they have not believed in? And how can they believe without hearing about him? And how can they hear without a preacher?" (CSB)

Until we mobilize people to community missions, there are thousands upon thousands who will never hear the gospel! Once they see how much you love them, they will listen to you and faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God! Make missions a priority. This will please the Master! Watch the miracle of life change in both your church and your community unfold right before your eyes!

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Missional_living#:~:text=In%20Christianity%2C%20missional%20living%20is, others%20with%20the%20gospel%20message.

QUESTIONS

to Guide Your Group's Discussion

What is your church's mission statement?

What does this mission statement tell us about God?

What is your group/class doing to see this mission statement come to fruition?

How can you love people on your street? In your community? At your local school?

Who in your group/class could become the missions champion and lead out with projects for your group/class?

CHAPTER 6

DISCIPLESHIP MATTERS

Tim Key



At the outset, we need to clarify and connect two terms—discipleship and disciple making. Both the distinction and the relationship of these are vital for this chapter and especially for your church.

Discipleship describes what takes place in and through the life of a believer as that person is saved, baptized, grows in Christ, and goes out to serve, shares the Gospel, and makes disciples. **It is the path for a person's spiritual journey.**

Disciple Making describes the processes and actions a church takes through its ministries to move people along in their discipleship journey. **It is the pathway the church uses.**

For the purpose of the WinTN emphasis and more specifically, for the purpose of this chapter, the primary focus is on guiding your church to create a disciple making culture and develop a disciple making plan or approach that enables your congregation to more effectively see people saved, baptized, discipled, and mobilized to fulfill the Great Commission.

The Call to Make Disciples is Biblical

Why make disciples? The answer is simple yet we tend to make it complex. We make disciples because that is the final command of our Savior: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations.” Jesus gives the formula to making disciples: “baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20, CSB)

The Need to Make Disciples is Real and Vital Today

Imagine this scenario in many of our Tennessee churches...

It is Sunday morning in the local church. The preacher has just delivered the final point of the message. The instrumentalists are in place and begin to softly play as the final prayer is given; the call to invitation to trust Christ, join the church, move a church membership, or pray at the altar has been given.

As the invitation starts, someone steps out. It could be a child, teen, young adult, single, couple, mom, dad, grandma, grandpa, or someone the church has been praying for on a regular basis for salvation; they have stepped out and are moving toward the front. The pastor, staff or a decision counselor meets them. This person has come forward to trust Jesus as Savior.

The new follower of Jesus has been introduced to the congregation. The angels rejoice. The church is excited and celebrates with great joy. God has brought a new child of His to the church, a new member of the family of God. As is the custom/tradition of many churches, many come by and give them “the right hand of welcome to the family of God.”

Another service is over. People begin filing out for lunch. Another child has been added to the family.

Now, what is your plan? Do you have a plan? What is next for this new babe in Christ? How are you going to process and grow this new believer from an infant in Christ to a reproducing adult disciple of Jesus? It is at this point that I see blank stares and hear crickets. Many pastors do not have a plan beyond the decision.

Regardless of when and where a person decides to follow Christ (church, work, home, community), we must remember the command: “make disciples.” We get really excited when it comes to evangelism, seeing people respond to the gospel, and we certainly should. We make sure that those who trust the Lord are baptized. Why can't we get that excited about making sure those saved and baptized are not only converted but disciplined to become disciple makers themselves?

What I often hear from pastors is “I do not have time.” Making time to complete the process of disciple making is being biblically obedient. If you are not a disciple making church, you are a dying church. The growth and strength of your church will only be as strong as your core group (your disciple makers).

In 2016, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) commissioned a task force chaired by Robby Gallaty to study the disciple making in SBC life. The report noted that a lack of disciple making in the church resulted in a decline in membership. This report confirmed what I had been studying for over 25 years—there is a disciple making dilemma.

In March, 2020, Discipleship.org produced a *National Study on Disciplemaking in USA Churches: High Aspirations Amidst Disappointing Results*. The study reported similar results across all Christian denominations. There is a disciple making disconnect.

Regardless of the organization or years selected in the report, this is what I have discovered across the board. We are baptizing many more than we are retaining.

In the Southern Baptist Convention from 1980-2018, there were 13,896,606 baptisms reported. There were 1,687,959 additions to the total membership of the reporting churches leaving a loss of baptisms to additions of 12,208,647.

In the Tennessee Baptist Convention during the same period, there were 949,283 baptisms reported. There were 133,617 additions to the total membership leaving a loss of 865,881 baptisms to additions.

In my association during the same period, there were 12,765 baptisms reported and a membership gain of 2,363 leaving a **loss** of 10,083 baptisms to membership.

These results are not found only in the TBC or my association. I have led numerous groups through this discovery phase. In studying other state conventions, associations, and local churches 20 years or older, the results are very similar.

Conduct your own research for your church.

- Obtain a “Multi-Year Digest” report for your church from your Associational Mission Strategist (DOM) or his assistant.
- Choose whatever year span you wish; forty years is a good start. Total all the baptisms in that period of time.
- Under total members, subtract the beginning year from the end year to get membership gain.
- Then subtract baptisms from membership gain and the result may shock you.

Side note: The question is often asked about accounting for the death of members in the reported numbers. The ACP report does not account for losses due to the physical death of members. It has been my experience and observation from memorial reports in the associations I have served that between ten and twenty-five percent of the losses may be due to physical death of members, both active and non-active. Again, this is an observation I have experienced and not reflected on any official church profile of the SBC that I can find.

The current reality must be reversed. There is no doubt about it. We need to stop hiding our heads in the sand. There is a major disciple making disconnect. We must wake up.

The Path to Make Disciples was Demonstrated by Jesus

Jesus encountered people in a variety of settings and situations. Sometimes there were crowds. Sometimes it was a small group. Other times it was one person. He met them in the marketplace, on the roads, in their homes, in their place of business.

Sometimes the person initiated the conversation. Other times, Jesus did. Sometimes people were curious about Jesus. Other times, people wanted nothing to do with Jesus or simply were not interested in Him or anything He had to say.

Jesus started with people at whatever point they were and sought to bring them into a life-changing relationship with Him. Jesus demonstrated a clear path that gives us a blueprint for a person’s spiritual journey today.

Jesus brought people along a path from the spiritually dead (crowd) to a new believer (spiritual child) to a growing (spiritual) disciple to disciple maker, then to being a co-laborer in ministry.

In Jesus’ ministry, we see this path played out from the crowds in Matthew 5 and 13, to the gathering of disciples from which He called the twelve (Luke 6:12-14), the sending of the twelve (Matthew 10, Mark 6, Luke 9), and culminating in a focus on three.

Three of the first four called were in this inner circle. The Scriptures speak of them as they went further with Jesus than the other nine. They are the **Committed Inner Circle** of

Jesus. Peter, James, and John observed and experienced several unique opportunities: They were mentioned with Jesus

- at the healing of Peter's mother-in-law (Mark 1:29-31),
- on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1),
- at the raising of the daughter of Jarius (Mark 5:37),
- at the revealing of the signs of the end of time (Mark 13:3-4),
- deeper in the garden (Mark 13:33).

They were designated as the pillars of the early church in Jerusalem (Galatians 2:9). Other than Paul, these three men wrote the majority of the New Testament.

The smaller, more intimate group has so many advantages over the larger groups of 12, 72, and multitudes. Scripture reveals the importance of the committed inner circle of three. Study the Triads in Scripture: the Trinity, patriarchs, prophets, early church fathers/missionary travels. Just as a cord of three strands is not easily broken (Ecclesiastes 4:12, CSB), the group of three has great strength.

The Pathway to Make Disciples was Modeled by Jesus

How did Jesus take a group of men from various backgrounds, educations, life skills, and personalities and develop them to be the eleven who would transform the world?

Some insights can be gained from examining a contemporary approach from one branch of our military. When seeking pilots, the Air Force uses a specific process to train their candidates to produce qualified pilots.

What if they did it this way? A retired B-52 pilot friend was one of fifty-five in his class. After passing a battery of mental, psychological, and physical tests, he was taken to a base for training. Upon arrival, all fifty-five candidates met the flight instructor. They were given flight training materials consisting of operating procedures, regulations, and the aircraft systems manual.

The instructor took the candidates out to the flight line for an aircraft walk-a-round. The primary aircraft was a simple, single-engine Cessna 172. The instructor explained what they needed to know about the aircraft and instructed the candidates to study the manuals for the next seven days prior to first flight. They were told to memorize all procedures for aircraft operations.

One week later, all fifty-five candidates were taken back to the flight line where forty training aircraft were neatly parked in a row. The only instruction given: the first forty candidates to get to an aircraft, start it, safely taxi, takeoff and fly two landings will continue in the process. The remaining will be sent home as washouts.

That is absurd of course—this scenario is ***not*** the process the U.S. Air Force uses to train pilots.

In actuality, a pilot candidate is assigned an individual, personal flight instructor, who comes alongside the student pilot to teach that student, step by step, the process for earning the coveted wings. As the student completes a step in the process, the instructor leads the student to more advanced procedures and maneuvers. Eventually the student leaves the instructor for the assignment to serve as a pilot. Some pilots become instructors. They continue the process of instructing beginning students in the discipline of flying and even instructing more students. What a great process for teaching rookie pilots and developing them into the best pilots in the world!

Is this not a great model for taking new Christians and developing them to be the best they can be in their world for the Kingdom—mature believers partnering with new believers to instruct and develop them into disciples who make disciples for the Kingdom? Jesus took the twelve followers on a three-year path and gave them a specific pathway to reproducing disciples for the Kingdom's health and growth.

Back to the original question—how did Jesus do it? He began where they were and took them to where He knew they needed to be as reproducing disciple makers through five identifiable stages.

In the pre-disciple stage, Jesus called His disciples to “*Come, follow me.*” Since Jesus had already started His preaching ministry, their curiosity was challenged with this special call from Jesus. Whatever the reason, they immediately left all they had and followed.

The disciples were seeking to know the answer to an important question, “Who is Jesus?” As seekers, they were hungry for discovering who Jesus really was. Was He really the promised Messiah? John the Baptist identified Jesus as Messiah. Stories of His baptism, the opening of heaven and the words of John the Baptist were evidence to those called by Jesus that He was worthy of investigating.

After Jesus called His disciples and continued, He began to teach them what it meant to follow Him by modeling the desired results. **This second stage was the Teaching Stage.** Jesus did not expect His disciples to know what to do immediately. He expected them to watch and learn. Jesus taught by showing them. The disciples were doing what they were expected to do, as they followed the Master. They were ready to begin to learn. *I do, you watch.*

As learners, the question of “Who is this Jesus?” was beginning to be answered. They were following, still seeking, and learning to be like their Teacher. The revelation of Jesus' identity was becoming clearer. The disciples question became, “Why follow Jesus? What is in it for me?”

As the disciples observed Jesus, the answer to these questions became clear. His integrity and teaching drew the disciples to follow Him closer; to observe, learn, and become imitators of Jesus. They followed Him because they saw more and more clearly that Jesus was the Messiah.

In the third stage—the Mentoring Stage—Jesus continued to be the teacher and model, but He began to give the disciples a few assignments and responsibilities. Jesus was not ready to turn them loose completely, but He was giving them some practice.

Jesus was not far away to help and continue to guide them in the learning process. By His actions, Jesus was modeling: I will continue to model and teach you what to do. I want to give you little assignments along the way. I will continue to teach and help you get the assignments completed. *I do, you help.*

The disciples were beginning to grasp what it meant to follow Jesus. They were beginning to look like Him. Although rough, they were beginning to identify with Jesus.

The disciples remained students and questioners in the third stage. Following several of Jesus' preaching and teaching opportunities, the disciples pulled Jesus aside and asked deep questions about the lessons. In those private moments, Jesus went deeper and explained the meaning of the parables, sermons, encounters, and interactions with the people.

The more the disciples learned, the more they were convinced that they not only needed to identify with Jesus, but pay the cost and follow Him. The disciples must have asked themselves, "What will it cost me to give my all and follow Jesus?" That question would be answered in their future. What did it cost them? It cost them everything.

The Coaching Stage is next in Jesus' model of disciple making. Jesus poured His life into His disciples. He taught them what He wanted them to learn and how to teach it to others. It was time for them to receive a little more responsibility from the Master. In the Coaching Stage, Jesus was saying in effect: I have shown you what I want you to do and you have learned how to do it. I have helped you in the small assignments. Now, I want to give you more responsibilities and help you in larger assignments. *You do, I help.*

Jesus had poured Himself into His group. He taught and modeled the way for them. It was time to coach them along the way. Jesus began to let go and help them do all He had taught. Matthew recorded an event when Jesus sent them on a short-term missionary assignment (such as in Luke 10:1-20).

They learned from the Master. They were given authority to do what they had seen Jesus do time and again. Then, Jesus sent them out and watched from the sideline, encouraging them to put into practice all they had learned.

No doubt the disciples were excited about their mission assignment. They responded with excitement upon their return, "*Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name*" (Luke 10:17, CSB). The disciples were ready to work with Jesus. Their skill and confidence were improving. The key question they might have asked themselves was, "Can I really do all that Jesus has asked me to do?" Although confidence was increasing there was still the need for the Coach to assist. In the afterglow of their mission experience the answer for them must have been a resounding, "Yes!"

The final stage in the disciple making plan of Jesus **was the Releasing Stage**. Jesus had given His all in training those He selected; He was confident they were ready to assume the responsibility of taking the gospel to the ends of the earth and discipling those who heard and believed. In releasing them, Jesus expected those who followed to continue the process of making disciples of all those who followed. Failure was not an option for Jesus. *You do, I watch.*

His final words were, “Go and make disciples.” He did not leave them alone in the task of making disciples. Jesus said, *“I will be with you.”*

Producing disciples who make disciples is the goal of Jesus’ process. For those who continue being fruit producers (Parable of the Sower), they will produce fruit 30, 60, 100 times what was sown. (Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23, CSB).

The Practical Process to Make Disciples is through Your Church’s Ministries

Increased Engagement with God’s Word is Critical

Jesus taught and modeled two essentials for a believer to grow in Him and ultimately become a disciple maker: Prayer (the disciples asked Jesus “teach us to pray”) and the Word! Two outgrowths of these are ministry to others and mission to the world.

Essentials for use are a Bible, journal, pen/pencil, and two questions:

- What is God saying to me through the Scriptures?
- How am I going to respond to what He said?

Here is a simple way to share with your people to help more of them engage with the Bible individually:

- The book of Proverbs has 31 chapters.
- Let each chapter number correspond to the same day in the month (for example, chapter one on day one of the month).
- Using that schedule, read one chapter each day.

Over a period of time, you will experience new teachings and insights from the Father each month; and be wiser in the end.

Another way to increase Bible engagement is with reading the Bible through in one year. A person who reads three chapters in the Bible each day will read the entire Bible through in one year (this can be done as individuals, families, each Bible study class/group, or as a church-wide experience).

I have found that one way to read the Bible through in one year is to choose one chapter from three different books. For instance, start in Genesis 1, Proverbs 1, Matthew 1, and read one chapter each day from each book, systematically. Ask the Father to open you to His still

small voice, to “stop fighting, and know that I am God.” (Psalm 46:10, CSB)

This may be helpful for you and your church: I begin my time in the Word each morning with an adaptive prayer from Henry Blackaby’s *Experiencing God*:

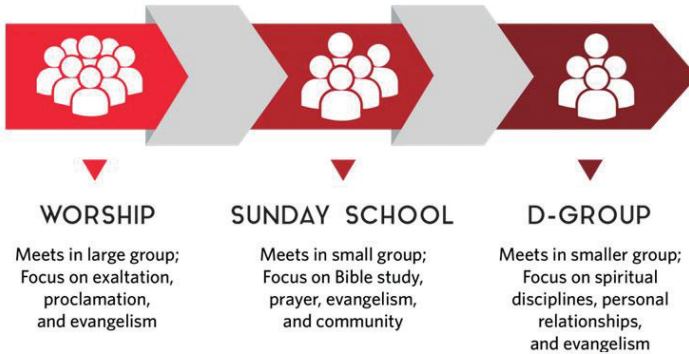
“Father, speak to me today by your Holy Spirit through Your Word, in my time of prayer and meditation, in the circumstances/situations in my life and through others connected to You as You reveal Yourself, Your purposes and Your ways. May I hear You, see You at work around me, follow You and obey You as I experience You at work.”

As you grow personally take two with you on the journey. Teach them; disciple them. Lead them to be reproducing disciple makers.

Lead Your Church to Have Definite Steps to Make Disciples

Recall the pathway Jesus used to make disciples—He worked in large groups, small groups, and even smaller groups. Look at the following diagram in relation to your specific congregation.

DISCIPLE MAKING PROCESS



Which of these three elements does your church already have in place?

When a person encounters Christ and becomes a believer, how is that person connected to a Bible study group?

Once a person is connected to that group, where and how does he/she develop the habits of Bible reading, prayer, service, and witness?

Disciple making is not as much about teaching content as it is about catching the vision and processes to not only “be fishers of men” but to develop reproducers of disciples. GO and MAKE DISCIPLES who make disciples who continue to make disciples.

The Urgency in Our Churches and in Our Times Demands “an even better way” (1 Corinthians 112:31, CSB)

I am a proud grandpa of a new baby granddaughter, my second. At the time of writing this chapter, she had just turned three weeks old. We celebrated her birth and welcomed her home to grow and nurture the day after her birth.

Right now, she is dependent on her mom, dad, and us to feed, change, bathe, and grow her through the stages of infancy, childhood, adolescence, and lead her into adulthood. All of these steps take time. There is a sense of “newness” in the house over the new birth.

What if her future went like this?

Eventually, the “newness” wears off,

- her mom and dad place a bottle in the crib with a note attached “When you are hungry drink this”
- they give her a diaper and wipes with a note attached “When you soil yourself, use these”
- then walk away to let her take care of herself.

In addition to serious moral and ethical problems, there would be legal ones too. You do not raise a new baby like that.

In a sense, when we do not take new believers and disciple them, we are following this example. If we do not start making disciples of the newborns the Father gives us, we will continue to see the results we have seen, a declining church, weak believers, and statistics that continue to fall.

However, if we make disciples of all the Father gives us, I believe HE will give more, the church will increase, and we will hear, “Well done, good and faithful servant” instead of “You evil, lazy servant” (Matthew 25:23, 26, CSB).

Three actions you can start taking now:

First: Pray.

For the next 40 days, pray for the Father to reveal two others to take on this journey.

Second: Develop a plan.

Whether the Bible, a journal and two questions or a produced discipleship curriculum, just do it!

Third: Invite.

Invite the two people God revealed to you in step one and work the plan, leading to your disciples becoming disciple makers.

Who are your two? 1. _____ 2. _____

Let us commit to close the back door and make disciples who make disciples, thereby following the Great Commission!

QUESTIONS

to Guide Your Group's Discussion

What does this chapter teach us about discipleship and disciple making?

Who has been the biggest disciple maker in your life?

What was one of the biggest growth seasons in your life as a disciple?

What is your group's/class's disciple making plan?

What stage of discipleship do you feel you are in right now?

Who are the two God is calling you to invite on a disciple making journey?

CHAPTER 7

MULTIPLICATION MATTERS

Eric Nichols



Question: How many different generations are represented in your congregation on a typical Sunday morning?

How about a few other questions:

- Do all generations really matter?
- Do we need to focus on one generation more than another?
- Isn't it adults who finance the ministry through their tithes and offerings?
- On the other hand, aren't the children the future of the church?
- Which generation should we really focus on?

These are all rhetorical questions. **Of course, every generation matters!** We need all generations for the church to thrive today and all generations for there to be a church tomorrow.

Two Keys to Multiplication: Healthy Balance and Healthy Service

In my 16 years of full-time ministry, I have concluded that a growing and thriving church has approximately 30-50% of its Sunday morning attendance in its preschool, children, and student ministries. This can be broken down accordingly. A healthy ratio in Next Generations ministries is 10-15% in preschool (Birth-Pre-K), 10-15% in children (K-5), and 10-15% in youth (middle school-high school) of the total number in attendance.

In addition, I have noticed that children who serve will move on to the student ministry, and the students who serve are less likely to leave the church when they graduate. I believe in the old school adage, "The children are not the future of the church. If they are believers, they are the church!" Therefore, it is important to move all ages to use their gifts as part of fulfilling the mission.

Multiplication Starts Right Where You Are

When I was in Children's Ministry at Thompson Station Church, each year we would take our fifth and sixth-grade children to Big Creek, Kentucky for a mission trip on their fall break from school. We would put them to work in impoverished areas of the Appalachian Mountains. We worked in clothes closets, food pantries, special needs facilities, the VA Assisted Living and Nursing Home, and at multiple schools. It became the highlight of every year!

On my first trip as the Children's Pastor, in 2011, I had a breakthrough. It was spurred by a simple question, "Why are we not doing these things in our own community?" In our hometown, we had clothes closets, food pantries, assisted living facilities, nursing homes, and public schools. We were on a mission trip, but were we living our lives on mission every day? This spurred a new perspective for multigenerational ministry!

We needed to get our people, young and old, mobilized into our own community. It was

time to disciple our people to live life on mission, and to be generational bridge builders. You see, every generation should be investing in the generations that are coming behind them. A middle school student can build a bridge for an elementary student, a high school student for a middle school student, a young adult for the high schooler, and on and on... Our seniors should be investing in all generations. We need their wisdom and their valuable insight! These bridges need to be built as we live life on mission in our communities, not just on Sunday mornings in the “church building.”

“Serve Sunday” is an event that we started doing every year because of the epiphany on the Big Creek mission trip. On the Sunday of Labor Day weekend, instead of having a worship service, we would worship through service. We mobilized all generations to be a blessing to the younger generations. We wanted to show our church how important it is to show the community that the church loves them and wants to help.

In preparation for “Serve Sunday”, we requested a list of projects that each local school principal would like to see accomplished. These were the projects that they walked by every day and wished they had the time, personnel, and money to accomplish. After receiving the list, we looked through it and planned to complete as many as possible within a four-hour time period. The goal was to love on the schools and expect nothing in return.

Over the years, we landscaped, painted rooms and hallways, cleaned furniture, cleaned bathrooms, wiped down lockers, pressure washed, cut back tree limbs, painted stripes in the parking lot, and much more. Some of the bigger projects included building a pavilion at a middle school, pouring a concrete sidewalk at the reform school, and painting a couple of gymnasiums. Local businesses, civil servants, and politicians joined in to help.

It is amazing the relationships that have been established because of the church serving the community. The schools will reach out to us for help throughout the year because they trust us. In addition, our children and their parents work in their own schools. Those parents see that we value their children’s education, and it creates a bond. This has brought many new families into our church. It is a vision that they can get into and that they consider a worthwhile investment.

Multiplication Means an Outward Focus—Reaching Beyond Sunday and Beyond the Building into Our Communities

Children’s Ministry does not just happen during your Sunday and Wednesday programming, or through big events. It also happens throughout the week. Most churches try to build their children’s ministries from the inside out. The “build it and they will come” mentality does not work, especially in this current culture. The Great Commission tells us to “go.” Accept the challenge to start on the outside. Your ministry needs to be outward focused. This is the best approach to reaching your community, and specifically reaching the families of those who have children and teenagers.

To reach a child, your people need to go to his or her turf. If you spend time with people

on their own turf and during their normal daily activities, you have a better opportunity to get to know them on a personal level. In addition, it is during these times that you will see doors open to share the gospel and/or invite them to your Sunday worship.

Allow me to share a few examples. (*Please note, the names have been changed to protect the privacy of each child.*)

Able was in the first grade when we first met. Some adults from our church volunteered with the local elementary school as tutors during their after-school program. Able was one of a handful of first grade students with which I would read and help with homework in multiple subjects. To be completely honest, listening to a child in first grade read can be about as painful as fingernails on a chalkboard. You must fight the urge to read for them. It is difficult, but the sacrifice is so worth it! I had the honor of helping these children out twice a week for an entire year.

When the next year came around, I was struggling to get back to the school and volunteer. Our church was growing, and my responsibilities were increasing. A few weeks after the school year started, I was able to visit and to spend some time checking in with the principal. As he and I met to discuss the possibilities of our volunteers working at the school again in the new year, we moved our conversation to the hallway. That is when Able came by with his classroom. They were headed to the library in your typical single file line. To our surprise, Able broke from his classroom line, walked over to me and the principal, and said, "Pastor Eric, I miss you!"

As you can imagine, that was the day that I signed up to read with Able's second grade class once every week. Funny thing, though; they gave me the wrong class, because they had another Able in his grade. That meant I had to sacrifice another hour each week and read with two classes, because I was not going to back down from the commitment to the first classroom they gave me and I definitely was not going to miss reading with my little friend. In the years to follow, I continued to read with both classes until they headed to middle school. It was my honor to receive an invite to attend their elementary school graduation.

Amanda is another sweet friend that I met. She was in Able's class. I will never forget one specific book we read together. It was "*Oh, Say Can You Say?*" by Dr. Seuss. The reason I remember it so clearly is the book was one long continuous tongue twister. Amanda and I struggled through the first half of the book. When our time was up, she put a bookmark in it and said, "We will finish it next time."

It was over a month before the rotation brought Amanda back into the hallway, and she was carrying that tongue twister with a humongous smile on her face. She pulled the bookmark out of the middle of her book and said, "Okay, let's finish it!" I must tell you that I had completely forgotten, but she had thought about it for over a month. Amanda had locked it into her mind that we were going to finish that Dr. Seuss masterpiece together. So, we did! We struggled through it, but we finished it.

Jesus said that children matter. In addition, He also said that adults could learn from their example:

“Then little children were brought to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them. Jesus said, ‘Leave the little children alone and don’t try to keep them from coming to me, because the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.’” (Matthew 19:13-14 CSB)

I learned a valuable lesson from that precious fourth-grade girl. You see, Able is the reason that I started volunteering to read, but Amanda is the reason that I remained consistent with reading. These lessons and these incredible relationships led us to start an after school Bible Club at that elementary school.

It was during their fourth-grade year that we were able to start a Discovery Club. Since it was after school, the parents signed consent forms and we were able to teach the gospel to those amazing children! The form literally said that we would be teaching from the Bible about Jesus. Guess what grade I taught?! That’s right! I taught the fourth grade. I had been reading with them since they were in first grade. What started as tutoring became sharing the Gospel with kids, and it was on their own turf!

Discovery Club is an organization in our community that prior to our partnership with them had already created four active clubs in our county’s elementary schools. We were the fifth club! Our members, along with some of the Christian faculty members from the school, volunteer as teachers, hand out snacks, lead games, and share the gospel with these amazing kids. In addition, we financially support the Discovery Club as a nonprofit ministry. Together, we are taking the Word of God to these children on their own turf. In turn, this also opens the door for amazing conversations with teachers, faculty, and parents. Some of those conversations even led to them attending church with us.

Brad is a perfect example of this reality. He was in Able and Amanda’s class. He and his parents started attending our church. Soon after the family became members. His Dad is currently the Volunteer Director for our Safety Team. The best part of this story is that we had the honor of baptizing Brad. This is only one of many salvation stories that we have seen, and God is still writing new ones as we speak!

Our Father in heaven is writing these stories because we are leaving the confines of our building and going out to fulfill the Great Commission in our community. We are taking the older generations to meet the younger generations on their own turf.

With all of these incredible things that God was doing, it was Evan’s story that blew our minds the most. Evan was in the second grade and came from an anti-God family. At one point, his mother blamed the church who met at the school on Sundays, as the reason for the flu spreading in the school. However, for some reason she signed her child up for Discovery Club. He listened, but you could tell by his language that what he was learning in Discovery Club was not lining up with what he heard at home.

Each week, I would ask a different child if they wanted to come up and pray during our opening ceremony. In the first semester of Evan's third grade year, I asked if he wanted to pray for us. I must be honest; I had totally forgotten about his situation. Well, it was a God ordained moment! We bowed our heads, I knelt beside him, and he began to pray in a quiet and hushed voice.

"Dear Heavenly Father, I want to thank you for Discovery Club. Last year, I didn't really believe any of this stuff, but now I do. Thank you for sending Jesus so we could be forgiven. Amen."

I may have been the only earthly ear who heard his prayer, but I have no doubt that our Father in Heaven heard it and was pleased by his powerful confession. It still gives me goosebumps to write Evan's story. Here was a young man that needed the Gospel to be brought to him. His Mom was not going to bring him to church. Through years of volunteering, the Lord paved the way for us to start the Discovery Club. Now, Evan has those seeds of the Word planted in his young heart, and it will fulfill the purpose for which it was sent!

Reaching children can draw other family members to the gospel, too. I will never forget the time that Joy attended VBS and it led to her whole family seeing a spiritual awakening. Joy was only five years of age. She had bright red curly hair, and big beautiful blue eyes. Her sweet face was painted with freckles.

I was still pastoring at Hampshire First Baptist Church, and we were a small church. That sweet little girl coming to VBS started a movement of God. Soon after VBS, her dad and his girlfriend started attending church. It was not long after that they fell under conviction and decided to get their relationship right with God. They were living together and knew that this was not the Father's design or plan for the family. So, we started premarital counseling in preparation for their wedding. During our first session, both her dad and future stepmother surrendered their lives to Jesus. Sometime afterward, they were baptized. Within a short period of time, both of her stepsisters were saved and baptized. Finally, the icing on the cake was when we baptized her 70 year-old great-grandmother!

Multiplication Takes All of Us, and It Matters

Generations reach generations. We can debate whether the older generation is more important for reaching the younger generation, or whether it is the younger generation that brings the older generation within earshot of the gospel. The answer is "yes" to both. What we know is that God says that every generation is significant, and that we need to "Go" and make disciples of all people.

It might be that we need to rethink our approach for the current and future health of our churches and mobilize them to connect people with Jesus outside the walls of our buildings.

Every generation needs to be served. Every generation needs to serve. Let's face it. We are all on a mission trip every day. This is not our home!

QUESTIONS

to Guide Your Group's Discussion

Discuss the two keys to multiplication with two to three others in your group/class.

What are some ways you have served to take the Gospel beyond the walls of the church in the past?

What projects is your church involved in which your group/class could join?

How can your group/class help host a multi-generational/family mission project?

TO HELP EVERY CHURCH WIN ITS HARVEST FIELD

Mark Miller

Every Church Matters

Every church matters if we are to win Tennessee. Bill Sutton, one of the pastors I served with, taught me an old revival song from the early 20th century entitled Win Them One by One. The first verse and chorus go like this:

If to Christ our only king
Men redeemed we strive to bring,
Just one way this may be done—
We must win them one by one.

Chorus: So you bring the one next to you, And I'll bring the one next to me; In all kinds of weather, we'll all work together, And see what can be done;

Tennessee will be won when every church implements a strategy to win the ones next to them and my church wins the ones next to me. The song goes on to say, “in no time at all, we'll have them all, so win them, win them one by one.” Every church counts.

Partnership Matters

The Tennessee Baptist Mission Board's mission is to “Make Christ Known by Serving Churches.” Our passion is found in our calling to serve your church. As you make a commitment to win Tennessee, we are ready to come alongside of you and your church to partner with you in seeing people saved, baptized, disciplined, and mobilized to fulfill the Great Commission.

When people ask me, what do you do? I respond, “I serve churches in Tennessee as a consultant, coach, conference leader, and champion.” As you make a commitment to implement the seven steps outlined in this book, your TBMB (Tennessee Baptist Mission Board) staff is a valuable resource for you.

The Baptism-Discipleship Team is made of specialists that relate directly to the ministries of your church. For example, my passion is helping churches with Sunday School, adult Bible study groups, and discipleship.

The New Church Team is ready to assist mother churches in planting new churches. New churches are needed to win Tennessee.

The Church Revitalization Team exists to help churches identify and overcome obstacles and develop a path towards health. Healthy churches are a necessity to win Tennessee.

The Resourcing Team provides help for churches in the matter of stewardship and promotion of the Cooperative Program and Golden Offering for Tennessee Missions. Increased giving is necessary to win Tennessee.

Other teams and specialists exist to help your church with service, communications, missions, worship, etc. Search to find the right specialist for your need or complete a *Need Ministry Support Form* at www.tnbaptist.org.

We look forward to partnering with your church on specific strategies, emphases, and events to impact your harvest field.

Special Note: In the appendix, you will find an overview of WinTN supporting resources and emphases available through the TBMB (Tennessee Baptist Mission Board). These are organized according to the chapters of this book.

Also refer to our website, www.tnbaptist.org for WinTN events and WinTN suggested annual emphases.

WHERE DOES OUR CHURCH START?

Begin by setting goals for each step. Here are some suggestions for each strategy in this book:

Prayer Matters

This book has laid out a seven-step church-based strategy to Win Tennessee. If we are going to win Tennessee, we must begin and continue and end in prayer.

Two goals related to Step 1: Harness the Power of Prayer

- Engage 10 Church Members to adopt 100 neighbors per 100 in attendance.
 - Note: If a member signs up at Pray4TN.com with an email address, that person will receive a daily email with five of their closest 100 neighbors each day.
 - Example: If your church averages 25 in attendance, encourage at least three members to adopt 100 of their neighbors.
- Encourage older children, youth, and adult groups to have an evangelistic prayer list equal to their participation (enrollment).
 - Example: If a class has 10 members, encourage them to identify and pray weekly for a minimum of 10 lost people.

People Matter

Don't just pray...connect with people, because people matter. Every church must work the fields around their church that are white unto harvest to discover people who are lost and unchurched.

Two goals related to Step 2: Intensify Efforts to Identify and Reach People

- Discover one prospective member per one person in attendance.
 - Example: A church averaging 100 would seek to discover 100 prospective members.
- At least one of every 20 persons in a Sunday morning worship service should be visitors from the church's ministry area.
 - Example: If 100 people attend Sunday morning worship, at least five should be visitors from the church's ministry area.

Relationships Matter

Invite the people identified into a relationship. Evangelism and discipleship happen best in the context of relationships. Groups and Worship are important.

Three goals related to Step 3: Boost Involvement in Groups and Worship

- Connect (Enroll) a minimum of one out of every ten prospective members in an on campus, off campus or online Bible Study Group.
 - Example: If you have 100 new prospective members, the goal is to see a minimum of 10 of these connect with an on campus, off campus or online Bible Study Group.
- Start a minimum of one new Bible Study Group annually with one additional group per 100 in attendance.
 - Example: If your church averages 200 in Groups/Sunday School attendance, start at least two new groups.
 - Example: If your church averages 1-99, start at least one new group annually.
- Increase your percentage of worship attendance in groups to 75%.

The Gospel Matters

We must not forget to share. Share the good news of Jesus...and then invite them to accept Jesus as their Savior. Share with them what God is doing and teaching you.

Two goals related to Step 4: Heighten Personal Evangelism through Group and Member Involvement

- Challenge members to have at least one Gospel conversation per month.
 - Impact: If you have 25 active attendees, each year your members would engage in 300 Gospel conversations. If one percent accept Christ, you would see three saved, baptized, and set on the road to discipleship.
- Increase your baptism rate to 10% of your worship attendance.
 - Example: If you have 25 in weekly worship, at least three people would be saved, baptized, and set on the road to discipleship.
 - Example: If you have 1,000 in weekly worship, at least 100 people would be saved, baptized, and set on the road to discipleship.

Love Matters

The fields are white for harvest. We must go and work in the fields. As we work, we must serve and love people just as they are.

Two goals related to Step 5: Implement Actions to Serve Our Community

- Involve every adult and youth group in a mission or compassion ministry project.
 - Example: If your church has a total of six adult and youth Sunday School classes, your church will conduct a minimum of six projects during the year.
- Adopt a people group in Tennessee to pray for and serve.

Discipleship Matters

We must not fail to disciple them. We must help newborn babies grow into fully devoted followers of Christ. We must remember to reproduce disciple makers that multiply and reach the next generations.

Three goals related to Step 6: Build a Disciple Making Culture

- Challenge every member to read their Bible daily.
 - Note: The number one indicator of whether someone is growing in Christ is that they read their Bible daily.
- Engage at least 75% of your worship attendance in a group.
 - Example: If your church averages 40 in worship, seek to have a minimum of 30 in your Sunday School.

- Engage 25% of the Group attendance in a Discipleship group of 3-4 believers.
 - Example: If your Sunday School averages 75 adults, offer 4-5 discipleship groups for men and/or women.
 - Note: The primary purpose of a Discipleship Group is accountability for reading, studying, memorizing, and applying the Bible.

Multiplication Matters

To see at least 50,000 Tennesseans annually saved, baptized, and set on the road to discipleship, multiplication matters. We must reproduce disciple makers not just converts. We must reach the next generation.

One goal related to Step 7: Strengthen Next Generational Ministries to Reach and Disciple Preschool, Elementary, Middle, and High School Students and their Families.

- Attain a healthy ratio in our Next Gen ministries of 10-15% in preschool (birth through pre-kindergarten), 10-15% in children (kindergarten-fifth grade), 10-15% in youth (sixth through twelfth grade) of the total number in attendance.
 - Example: If your Sunday School attendance averages 75, a good balance would be 7-12 in preschool, 7-12 in children, and 7-12 in youth classes with 39-46 in adult groups. This church would offer a minimum of 1-2 classes for preschool, 1-2 for children, 1-2 for youth, 4-5 adult's groups for a total of 7-11 classes.

Let's Pray, Connect, Invite, Share, Serve, Disciple, and Multiply.

WINNING TENNESSEE MATTERS!



**Scan the QR code for
available WinTN Resources and Services**

