LIBERTY UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

The Effectiveness of the African American Church Evangelism Outreach Process

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Doctor of Ministry

by

Jeffrey L. Dennis

Lynchburg, Virginia

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Thesis Project Approval Sheet

_____
Michael C. Whittington, D.Min.
Assistant Professor of Practical Studies
Liberty University School of Divinity

_____

_____
C. Fred Smith, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Theology and Biblical Studies
Liberty University School of Divinity

THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT
Jeffrey Dennis
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Mentor: Dr. Michael Whittington

Many African American churches are on a continual decline or have become stagnant in membership due to a lack of relational and spiritual community evangelism. The focus of this project reflects that African American churches in North Carolina are not growing because they do not focus on Jesus Christ's central mandate to his disciples and the church to evangelize the community and the world around it. The researcher performs applied research on African American churches that directly interacted with these communities and investigates positive and negative data by surveying twenty African American churches in Winston Salem, Greensboro, High Point, and Burlington, North Carolina. The results of this thesis project are a guide to develop essential strategic methods for the African American church to engage, produce, and impact communities through Christian evangelism and outreach development. This project proves a decreasing connection between the African American church and evangelism outreach as a commitment to the Lord's plan for the church universal.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The African American church has a long history of outreach programs and ministries. From the abolishment of slavery to the civil rights movement, African American churches assisted and supported African American communities with religious, educational, political, social, and economic concerns. Fredrick Harris says, "Urban African American ministers and churches have been committed to providing social services to the poor."[1] The African American church plays a pivotal part in shaping and cultivating the Black community. The church continues to unite faith and culture in all areas of the Black community, and this unity leads to understanding the link and contention faith and culture have been constructed, interpreted and reinterpreted to define a social meaning.[2] There seems to be a shift in African American church community involvement and increasing support in secular and humanitarian issues.

The Great Commission of Jesus Christ seems to be eroding and evading from the ministries of the African American churches. The traditional perspective of the church in the African American community has swayed from an outward focus to an inward perspective of Christian ministry. The central mission of all Christian churches is to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with the world, and in the context of this mission, the ministry practices of several African American churches lead to questioning the absence of evangelism within the church.

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[1] Fredrick C. Harris, "Black Churches and Civic Traditions: Outreach, Activism, and Politics of Public Funding of Faith-Based Ministries," *Poverty Reduction, Realpolitik, or Both? Federal Faith-Based and Community Initiative Funding and the States* (2002-2006): 140-56.

[2] Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas, Juan Floyd-Thomas, and Carol B. Duncan, *Black Church Studies an Introduction* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), 101.

Many African American churches reside within communities of the same ethnic background allowing for parishioners to walk or take a short drive to their place of worship. These churches have historically been founded and built by and populated with African Americans since their enslavement.[3] African American churches have supported the growth and development of the neighborhoods around them, and evangelism and outreach have been core parts of their ministry. Further, poverty due to institutional racism is a profound problem that continues to transform the African American community. The African American church provides financial support for secular social services for impoverished communities. The secular institutions that receive support include the United Way, the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), Second Harvest Food Banks, and Urban Ministries.[4] Sewell says (regarding a survey of African American pastors in Atlanta, Georgia),

> As such, in the year 2000, pastors in Atlanta were of the mindset to conclude that black advocacy groups would be better able to advance the needs of the Black community than Black Baptist churches. This apparent disregard for secular activism stands in sharp contrast to the historical context of Black Baptist churches, which, heretofore, has seen the Church as the liberating champion of human rights, civil rights, and the attainment of a quality of life comparable to that which exists beyond the boundaries of our disenfranchised black communities.[5]

Historically, religion has served multiple entities within African American lives and communities. The African American church has viewed mission and outreach as a response to material and political needs while spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ.[6] Christianity and the

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[3] C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 96.

[4] Harris, "Black Churches," 143.

[5] Said Sewell, "African American Religion: The Struggle for Community Development in a Southern City," *Journal of Southern Religion* 4 (2001). accessed November 19, 2015. http://jsr.fsu.edu/2001/sewellart.htm.

[6] Thabiti Anyabwile, *Reviving the Black Church: New Life for a Sacred Institution* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2015), 230.

African American church have been the impetus for social outreach in the post-civil rights movement and era.[7] African American churches have provided for their communities with mission ministries and outreach service programs, and the churches have been directly involved in the spiritual, social, and political lives of the African Americans. As a result, the church is a focal point for civic involvement, politics, material supply, and meeting spiritual needs. Harris says, "The Black Church was the only space in which Black people could define their spirituality on their terms."[8] These provisions involve civic and religious organizations that have served the African American community.

Notably, African American churches have a second perspective on community outreach and mission. These churches have a dual view regarding evangelism mission: save people from sin and the bondage of oppression.[9] Many African American churches defined outreach from a local viewpoint. Anyabwhile says, "From the majority of its history, the African American church has maintained the two-fold view of a mission to respond to the material and political needs of the community and to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ around the globe."[10] He believes this view was formulated by a "faith shaped by white evangelicalism's focus on individual salvation yet conscious of the contradictions of slavery and therefore focused on the socio-political freedom."[11] The African American church has continued to work with the community culture and to resolve the social and civil crises of the Black people in the United States.

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[7] Harris, "Black Churches," 140.

[8] Floyd-Thomas, Floyd-Thomas, and Duncan, *Black Church Studies*, 106.

[9] Anyabwile, *Reviving the Black Church*, 230.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid., 229.

Statement of the Problem

The African American community continues to transform itself, and spiritual and physical poverty remain present in their homes. A 2012 government census revealed that the number of educated and employed African Americans is increasing in the United States; however, household income for African Americans is declining.

> According to the 2012 U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, the poverty rate for all African Americans in 2012 was 28.1%, which is an increase from 25.5% in 2005. The poverty rate increased between 2005 and 2012 for every demographic of African Americans except those ages 65 and over who experienced a decrease from 21.2% to 19%. Black families with children under 18 headed by a single mother have the highest rate of poverty at 47.5% compared to only 8.4% of married-couple Black families.[12]

African American churches have shifted their ministry focus from outreach to one that has little or no regard for their surrounding community, which differs from their past practices. Based on the census results, the author proposes that the African American church should reconnect with the community with compassion and defend against poverty and socioeconomic problems that affect the community. Based on the author's research and subsequent observation that the church's community outreach has decreased, it is necessary to reverse the increasing moral and

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[12] Shandrira Pavelcik, *BlackDempgraphics.com,* n.d. accessed November 30, 2015. http://blackdemographics.com/households/poverty/.

socioeconomic decline, and the problems of increases in poverty, immorality, and crime.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2012 ACS Report
BlackDemographics.com

Dr. Carl Ellis, Jr. maintains that the African American church is unable to positively affect the problems of the surrounding community even though churches are positioned to and relevant regarding supporting the needs of the African community. Ellis says,

> Because today's [African American] core concerns remain unaddressed, increasing numbers of African Americans are looking for theological answers. The church is strategically positioned to meet this challenge. While the traditional church has played a vital role in the Black experience, it is not equipped for the task before us in its present state. It will continue to be unable to connect with those who are seeking answers to their theological questions. Addressing these concerns requires new models of the church: models able to appreciate the old traditions yet armed with a theology that is biblical, cognitive and applied to address legitimate African American cultural core concerns.[13]

A mere observation of the problem is insufficient because the problem must be addressed. Fortunately, the church can act when it understands the mandate, provision, and process of evangelism.

The goal of this thesis project is to determine whether there is a link between church membership and evangelism. Three areas of concentration are as follows: what do African American churches view as evangelism? Does the community view the church as a reliable place of spiritual and physical refuge? And how can the church influence the community through

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[13] Carl Ellis Jr., "The Exchange: The African-American Church: Past, Present, and Future," *Christianity Today*. Ed Stetzer, ed. July 11, 2013.

evangelism? In understanding the problems presenting in the African American church, this thesis project must set parameters regarding its terms and definitions.

Terminology and Definition

Culture is defined as "the customs, arts, social institutions, and achievements of a particular nation, people, or other social groups."[14] This author uses the term culture to describe people. Additionally, a descriptive term may precede the term "culture" to designate a particular racial or social group.

The author uses the terms "African American" and "Black" interchangeably and has endeavored to do so in a respectful manner. These terms represent a person or group of people from the United States who have dark-colored skin and ancestry from Africa.

The term "mission" is defined as spreading the Word of God and the Gospel message through community outreach. The word "mission" takes on a different meaning for many of the African American churches. Lincoln says, "Many black clergies follow the orthodox meaning of mission meaning to spread the Word and to save souls."[15] This view is from a more church-inward perspective than from authentic outreach to the community.

The terms "evangelism" and "evangelize" identify the direct mission of Jesus Christ to the church and the duty of Christians to share the gospel of salvation. Evangelism is defined as the tradition within Christianity that emphasizes the authority of the Bible and salvation through

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[14] Christine A. Lindberg, ed., *Oxford American Desk Dictionary & Thesaurus* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 185.
[15] Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church*, 170.

personal faith in Jesus.[16] The verb "to evangelize" is used to represent the duty response of Christians and the action of Christians sharing the Gospel with others.

Statement of Limitations

The first limitation of this study is its limited geographical area: the southeast region of the United States. However, the author selected this area because of the availability and concentration of African American churches.

The second limitation is that the author limited the respondents to current African American pastors, and these leaders tend to determine the direction and engagement of the church within the community. For example, Mamiya states,

> Today's Black Church is struggling for relevance in the resolution of today's black problems. These problems consist of racism; drug abuse; child care; health and welfare; housing; counseling; unemployment; teenage pregnancy; the false securities of conspicuous consumption; and address these social challenges without abandoning its unique mandate to assist human beings in their efforts to find conciliation and comfort with their Creator. There is no moratorium on the human need for spiritual and moral nurture.[17]

These African American pastors set the direction and the pace for which churches will engage in the community and the method used for evangelism.

The third limitation regards politics. African American religions have been involved in local, state, and national politics. Notably, the African American Christian church and other churches engage in politics. The church has addressed policymakers regarding funds and support for social programs. African American church clergy engage in electoral activities, and some have directly supported a candidate during worship services, as clergy in other types of churches have done. These actions are a concern for policymakers regarding government funding of social

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[16] Lindberg, *Oxford American Desk Dictionary & Thesaurus*, 274.
[17] Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church*, 398.

services under the umbrella of church institutions. Notably, many churches consider this form of service a part of their mission and outreach.

A fourth limitation of this research is the number of social service programs involved in African American communities. Though these services are outreach, pastors tend to qualify participation with these programs as evangelism.

Although politics plays a part in many African American churches, and other types of churches, this type of community outreach are not addressed in this research project. The author proposes that these forms of civic services and duty hamper a church's real mission and evangelism. Not all African American churches and clergy believe politics is an appropriate course of action to fulfill community needs. Harris says, "The tension between the belief that black churches should expand community outreach efforts and the belief churches should spend more time on personal salvation points to conflicts that may influence the success of public funding for faith-based programs."[18] Many churches have provided financial support for services instead of providing direct support to individuals. Often, funding and politics are both applied in outreach to African Americans.

Theoretical Basis

Outreach ministry has a unique place in the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the history of the church. Although the term "outreach" is not in scripture, there are several cases of outreach-like moments. Many churches defined outreach as an act of service meeting the needs of the less privileged. Throughout the Bible, God orchestrates many events to help His people and is benevolent to His people and humanity. In the Old Testament book of Ruth, Boaz had

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[18] Harris, "Black Churches," 141.

compassion on Ruth allowing her to glean in his field for corn as a daily food provision for herself and her mother-in-law, Naomi.[19] Likewise in the New Testament gospel of Matthew, Jesus, feel with compassion for his followers took two fish and five loaves of bread from a young boy, thanked God for the food, and feed five thousand men plus women and children.[20] There are numerous other events that can be referenced to show outreach is a part of God's favor for his people. These events created opportunity for God to express His will of reconciliation for believers.

Theological Reflection

In Genesis, there are several forms of outreach to the community as support. For example, Joseph, the son of Jacob, is despised by his brothers, sold into slavery in Egypt, imprisoned over false accusations, and through a dream appointed to second-in-command of Egypt.[21] During his administration, his God-given, skillful efforts preserved Egypt and the surrounding nations through the seven years of severe famine in the Middle East caused by drought. Additionally, enough grain was available to share with neighboring countries and communities, allowing Egypt to sustain and prosper during a time of despair.

Another Old Testament example of outreach is in Ruth. Boaz grants Ruth, the daughter-in-law of widowed Naomi, permission to glean in the fields he owned. Before Boaz's encounter with Ruth, his workers had provided an act of charity to Ruth and Naomi by allowing her to glean behind his maidens. Upon Boaz's return, he takes his outreach ministry further by allowing Ruth to glean from the fresh-cut stock. Thomas Nelson says, "Boaz's appreciation of Ruth's

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[19] Ruth 2, NIV.

[20] Matthew 14:13-18, NIV.

[21] Genesis 37-42, New International Version (NIV). Unless otherwise noted, all scripture references in this thesis project will be from the New International Version of the Bible.

kindness strikes a similar chord in his feelings. He recognizes his opportunity to give protection and provision, as would the God in whom this young Moabite had only recently come to trust."[22] His act of charity toward Ruth underscores the need for outreach ministry.

The New Testament also has several examples of outreach ministry. First, Jesus' whole mission on earth was an evangelistic outreach to the Jews and Gentiles. An unusual request for evangelism is in the Great Commission of Jesus Christ where He says, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you, and surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age."[23] His commission to His disciples is a direct command to evangelize to the world. Luke, in Acts, records that Jesus' narrowed focus of the Great Commission to how the outreach was to be implemented. Jesus directed His disciples on how and where to go. Jesus says, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."[24] As witnesses, believers provide testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the community to the world.

From the beginning of Jesus' ministry on earth, the purpose of his outreach was to save sinful souls. During the calling of Jesus's disciples, Jesus declared, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."[25] To be a "fisher of men" is simply an outreach movement to seek and catch humanity for Christ. Jesus says, "As thou [Father] didst send me into the world, so I have sent

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[22] Thomas Nelson, Bible, King James Version (KJV), *Nelson's Scripture Commentary, v.12* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1988), 448-49.

[23] Matthew 28:18-20, NIV.

[24] Acts 1:8, NIV.

[25] Matthew 4:19, NIV.

them into the world. Moreover, for their sake, I consecrate myself that they also may consecrate in truth."[26] Jesus sent his followers into the world to do his mission, and He ordained his followers for Christian outreach service. Christians should help people who are in need and less fortunate by sharing his love through his message of salvation.

Second, Paul addresses outreach and community in his letter to the Philippians. He compels the Philippians to be just as concerned about others' needs and problems as they were for themselves.[27] Paul says, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your interests but each of you to the interests of the others."[28] Outreach is the reflection and display of personal humility.

Third, the writer of Hebrews also shares a need for community outreach. Christians are to be mindful and considerate of others' needs and concerns "provoking one another to love and good works."[29] Being concerned for others cultivates a community of charitable outreach and builds Christ-like relationships.

Next, as an example of an outreach ministry, Peter also shares the desire for an outreach community. Christians should perform good deeds among the saved and unsaved to glorify the Lord. Peter says, "Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though

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[26] James Montgomery Boice, *Foundations of the Christian Faith* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 581.

[27] Philippians 2:4, NIV.

[28] Philippians 2:3-4, NIV.

[29] Hebrews 10:24, NIV.

they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us."[30] Christian outreach is serving the Lord by serving each other.

Historical Reflection

Several Christian-based outreach programs of today started in churches or church organizations. Earle Cairns states, "In 1864; the New York Protestant Episcopal City Mission became the arm of the church for social services… They provided 'orphanages, mission, hospitals, homes for the aged, and other agencies meeting the needs of the poor, homeless, and diseased.'"[31] He continues that in 1877, the Chicago Pacific Garden Mission formed to aid families oppressed by social crimes and disorder, help the physical outcast, and evangelize spiritually uncertain individuals.[32] The YMCA formed in Boston in 1851, and the YWCA formed in 1866, to meet the social needs of young men and women, respectively, in cities.[33] Both organizations provided, for example, housing, physical exercise, Bible study, and social activities. Cairns states that just after 1900, Goodwill Industries was formed in the church of Edgar J. Helms to provide poor and elderly individuals with employment by repairing discarded articles of clothing and selling them cheap to those in need.[34] As a final example of outreach ministry, the Salvation Army, in the United States, provides refuge for poor and needy individuals through social settlement, housing, nurseries, and other social techniques.[35] Thus,

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[30] 1 Peter 2:11-12, NIV.

[31] Earle E. Cairns, *Christianity Through the Centuries* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 437.

[32] Ibid., 437.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid., 438.

[35] Ibid.

theologically and historically, the church has been engaged in outreach by meeting spiritual and social needs.

This thesis project is predicated on the foundation of the scriptures, Jesus, the mandate of the disciples, and church history and emphasizes the need for evangelism ministry today. It shows that biblically and historically, the church has directed outreach toward humanity. In the early church, the mission was to evangelize the community. For a good period of history, European and early North American Christian settlers were directly involved in evangelism.[36] However, in US history, African American Christians were proactive in introducing the lost to the love of Jesus Christ.[37] Conclusively, the Black Church continues to be a vital influencer within Black communities and culture through religious traditions, political influence, and social engagement.

Statement of Methodology

This project comprises four chapters:

Chapter 1: Introduction

The introduction presents the aforementioned information and details of the proposal for evangelism outreach. The introduction investigates needs, limitations, and a theological and historical review of the thesis, and the literature review follows.

Chapter 2: Trends of the African American Church

This chapter examines outreach efforts from several churches that have influenced African American communities. This chapter reveals the areas of outreach the African American

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[36] Floyd-Thomas, Floyd-Thomas, Duncan, *Black Church Studies*, 114.

[37] Louis R. Jones, *Evangelism in the African American Community* (Lincoln, NE: Universe, Inc., 2003), 19.

church considers as crucial to the community. In this chapter, a commonality reveals the social needs of the African American community.

Chapter 3: Evangelism Questionnaire

This chapter reviews the African American church pastors' responses to the nine-question survey on evangelism practices and the growth of individual churches. The pastors' response identifies the sizes and membership growth of each church over one to five years. The survey also uncovers if these churches have an established evangelism plan for its membership and reveal the number of people converted through this evangelism plan for over five years. Last, how this church directly confronts the doctrinal beliefs to evangelism and its relationship as the central mission to the universal church is reviewed.

Chapter 4: Biblical Model of Evangelism

This chapter outlines the vital biblical areas that direct Christian believers to evangelize, highlights the need for salvation in the world, and reflects on how the Lord adds to the churches that evangelize. Additionally, a review of the most common trends in the African American church related to evangelism and community outreach is performed.

This chapter also employs a strategic plan to evangelism learned through this study and other evangelism plans to improve African American churches' evangelism practices within the African American communities and all communities. This strategic plan is developed from biblical teaching, common evangelism practices, African American church culture, and community assessment.

Literature Review

Books

Evangelism in the African American Community, pages 1–66, by Dr. Louis R. Jones, identifies a lack of spiritual reputation within the African American community and provides a hopeful plan of action to influence the African American church committed to the evangelism mission. He reviews issues uncovered in the church or community and provides steps to address those concerns. His solution for engagement provides a practical method to address the issues the book identifies.

Reviving the Black Church, by Thabiti Anyabwile, calls his readers' attention from the historical faith of Christians and biblical teaching with the opportunity to revive churches and its church leaders to a rehabilitated commitment to biblical service, commitment, and worship. Anyabwile contrasts the present age of the African American church with its historical development and growth and sections his writing into three parts. First, he suggests examining "the necessity of reviving the Black Church by God's Words as the source and guide of the black church life and practice."[38] Second, Anyabwile calls for "a revival of biblical pastoral leadership in the black church that is faithful and godly men."[39] Third, he presents "the case for reviving the black church depends upon healthy efforts for membership and mission."[40]

The Black Church: Relevant or Irrelevant in the 21st Century, by Reginald F. Davis, draws attention to deepen the "concerns for the black church."[41] The concerns regard the practice of "cheap grace that is grace we bestow on ourselves, preaching of forgiveness without requiring

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[38] Anyabwile, *Reviving the Black Church*, 11.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid., 12.

[41] Reginald F. Davis, *The Black Church: Relevant or Irrelevant in the 21st Century?* (Macon: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Inc., 2010), 1.

repentance, baptism without church discipline, communion without confession, absolution without personal confession, grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, and grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate."[42]

The Black Church in the African American Experience, by C Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, provides a wide-ranging study of the churches and clergy that comprise the seven major historic Black denominations.[43] The publisher of the book offers, "The authors seek to engage readers by providing important insights into the African American Church's relationship to politics, economics, women, youth and music, and trends that will define the Black Church well into the next century by examining both the internal structure of the Black Church and the reactions of the church to external, societal challenges."[44] The main influences are on social descriptions by providing historical overviews, statistical data, and social analyses.[45]

Black Church Studies: An Introduction, pages 99–117, by Stacy M. Floyd-Thomas, Juan Floyd-Thomas, and Carol B. Duncan, provides a reflection on Black churches' journeys of faith throughout history. The authors discuss the Black church's role in social, political, and cultural changes in Black communities and their relationship to broader society.[46] These pages detail the relationship the Black church has with transforming and shaping culture by pointing out the areas of integration it has within the Black community.

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[42] Ibid., 9.

[43] Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church*, 1.

[44] Ibid., Back Cover.

[45] Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church*, 1-2.

[46] Floyd-Thomas, Floyd-Thomas, and Duncan, *Black Church Studies*, 99.

Bad Religion: How We Became a Nation of Heretics, by Ross Douthat, uncovers the US religious issue, which he calls bad religion. Bad religion reflects "the slow-motion collapse of traditional Christianity and the rise of a variety of destructive pseudo-Christianity's in its place."[47] The author concludes with four recommendations to recover Christianity. First, the "*postmodern opportunity* sees the possibility that the very trends that have seemingly undone institutional Christianity could ultimately renew it."[48] Second, the "*Benedict option* assumes that Christianity must contract before it grows, with faithful believers forming communities that stand apart from postmodern culture and inspire by example rather than engagement."[49] Third, "*Next Christendom* makes aware the global Christianity could help restore orthodoxy's vitality and revive Western Christianity."[50] Finally, the "age of diminished expectations will be a time when churches reckon with the ways that bad theology and bad religion" have helped bring the United States to its present state and thrust Americans into spiritual renewal and revival.[51]

The Essential Civil Society Reader, by Don E Eberly, presents informative materials on restoring civil society through community efforts. Eberly maintains that at the core of civil society are democratic values with civil virtues.[52] The essay provides unique reviews of US civil involvement related to community services and the roles of social and religious organizations in community outreach.

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[47] Ross Douthat, *Bad Religion: How We Became a Nation of Heretics* (New York: Free Press, 2012), 3.

[48] Ibid., 279.

[49] Ibid., 280.

[50] Ibid., 282.

[51] Ibid., 283-84.

[52] Don E. Eberly, *The Essential Civil Society Reader* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 17.

Black Megachurches and Social Services, by Malcom P. Drewry, Jr., is a dissertation that questions the effectiveness of the Black church's ability to provide social services based on size and demographics.[53] Drewry suggests that larger churches can offer more opportunities and resources than small churches; thus, size is relative to effective outreach and ministry.

Telling the Story: Evangelism in Black Churches, pages 13–50, by James O. Stallings, provides additional information on the history of the Black Church and Evangelism by using stories of their traditions. Specifically, in Chapter 2, Stallings focuses on illustrating the foundational trust of evangelism in Black churches by examining the meaning that evangelism has had for the Black churches in the United States.[54]

Religious Education in the African American Tradition, pages 46–52; 78–86; 151–160, is by Kenneth H. Hill. Chapter 3 discusses the authority of the Bible for the Black Church in teaching, interpreting, and reading. He believes that the Bible is sacred and holy when he writes, "the revelation of God's nature and will, and record of God's action in history with and on behalf of a chosen people."[55] In Chapter 5, Hill uncovers the unresolved problem of the relationship between theology and religious education and evaluates how this relationship promotes and correlates the theological understanding of the African American church.[56] In Chapter 9, "Reshaping the Future of the African American Christian Religious Education," Hill discusses

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[53] Malcolm P. Drewery Jr., *Black Megachurches, and Social Services* (Ann Arbor: ProQuest, 2008), 40.

[54] James O. Stallings, *Telling the Story: Evangelism in the Black Churches* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1988), 21.

[55] Kenneth H. Hill, *Religious Education in the African American Tradition: A Comprehensive Introduction* (St Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2007), 27.

[56] Ibid., 78-79.

the challenges facing the role of African American Christian education and provides direction to meet the challenges of teaching, culture, and theology facing the African American church.

Evangelism and Discipleship in African American Churches, page 17–74, by Lee N. Junes, Ph.D., editor, reviews in Parts I and II the historical evangelism and discipleship practices of the African American church and the role leaders play in these practices, as illustrated in the literature. For example, in Part I Chapter 1, V. Simpson Turners examines the effects of evangelism from the growth of the nation, and in Chapter 2, Tom Skinner analyzes the effectiveness of evangelism. In Part II Chapter 3, "The Church's Role," Willie Richardson examines how churches can engage in effective evangelizing and discipling.[57] In Chapter 4, "The Pastor's Role," Lee Junes examines the pastor's position from a biblical perspective as a pastor, a teacher, and one person with a dual characterization.[58]

Evangelism: How to Share the Gospel Faithfully, pages 1–29 and 77–90, by John MacArthur, uncovers the theology of Evangelism from a biblical perspective. In Chapter 1, "Theology of Sleep: Evangelism According to Jesus," MacArthur examines Jesus' message to his followers and the power of transmission of the message to others. He writes, "The reality is that God's power comes through the message, not the messenger."[59] In Chapter 2, "God's Global Goal: The Power of the Great Commission," MacArthur references Jesse Johnson, whose beliefs divulge the severity of the Great Commission toward Christian faith and the implications on evangelism. He writes, "Only when believers are obedient to the commands to evangelize will

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[57] Lee N. June and Matthew Parker, *Evangelism and Discipleship in African American Churches* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999), 47.

[58] Ibid., 61.

[59] John MacArthur, *Evangelism* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2011), 1.

they truly be imitators of God's heart for the world."[60] In Chapter 6, "Giving Up to Gain: All Things to All People," MacArthur challenges the traditional methods of modern evangelism constructed by techniques and methods that merge the Christian faith with the cultural awareness of a New Testament model that Christians should mark with holiness, which in every way would make them different from the culture.[61]

Articles

"African American Religion: The Struggle for Community Development in a Southern City" demonstrates the African American church's lack of involvement in community issues and community-based initiatives.[62] It uncovers the need for clergy and church resistance. Sewell provides opportunities for restoring community commitment from the African American church.

"The Characteristics of Northern Black Churches with Community Health Outreach Programs" discusses a method for the church to expand mission and outreach through meeting the son of the physical needs through a focus on health disparities in the Black community.[63] It uncovers successful techniques for churches to support low-income communities. Additionally, the article reveals that church involvement in such programs can uncover controversial issues that conflict with churches' agendas.

"Black Church Culture and Community Action" reflects on the influences and efforts of the Black Church and the African American community.[64] The order uncovers the significance

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[60] Ibid., 29.

[61] Ibid., 78.

[62] Sewell, "African American Religion."

[63] Stephen B. Thomas, Sandra Crouse Quinn, Andrew Billingsley, and Cleopatra Caldwell, "The Characteristics of Northern Black Churches with Community Health; Outreach Programs," *American Journal of Public Health* 84 (1994): 575-79.

[64] Sandra L. Barnes, "Black Church Culture and community Action," *Social Forces* 84, no. 2 (2005), 967-

of church symbolisms and the role they play in the spirit and culture of African Americans. Additionally, Sandra Barnes reveals Black churches' functions under a mixture of ideological systems that work to represent the oppression of people and unspiritual salvation.

"Role of Black Churches in Health Promotion Programs: Lessons from the Los Angeles Mammography Promotion in Churches Program" discusses the benefits and challenges of outreach programs within the African American church regarding health care concerns.[65] The study recognizes two major lessons based on surveys: "First, a disparity can exist between a pastor's commitment to participating in a health study and the enthusiasm of the church's members. Second, a related-pastor endorsement is important, but the recruitment strategies and retention of individual church members should acknowledge their possible reluctance to participate in health studies."[66]

"Black Churches and Civic Traditions: Outreach, Activism, and Politics of Public Funding of Faith-Based Ministries" relates how political outreach and social issues influence the actions of the Black church and the Black community.[67] Fredrick Harris exhibits the civic traditions of church-based activism by showing the challenges with lawmakers and the involvement of clergy leaders in politics. He explains, from a study on Chicago's Black community, the Black clergy has formed a collation that directly affects public funding within

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[65] Susan Markens, Sarah A. Fox, Bonnie Taub, and Mary Lou Gilbert, "Role of Black Churches in Health Promotion Programs: Lessons from the Los Angeles Mammography Promotion in Churches Program," *American Journal of Public Health* 92, no. 5 (2002), 805-10.

[66] Markens, Fox, Taub, and Gilbert, "Role of Black Churches," 809.

[67] Harris, "Black Churches."

the Black community; in addition, he uncovers how the united clergy involvement has positive and negative effects on the community.

"The Benefits of Church Involvement for African Americans" discusses the vitality of church outreach in the United States. The article uncovers how the church assists and motivates a culture of change through spiritual and social outreach programs. Through these programs, the article reveals the important roles religion plays in the African American community. In addition, the article shows how the leadership of the church and the congregations can carry out effective evangelism outreach.

"Living Faith: The Black Church Outreach Tradition," by John J. Dilulio, analyzes a historic review of Black church outreach programs. John Dilulio reveals individual testimonies and institutions' involvement and presents an underlying message that the Black church has always been involved in social issues too big for the church to manage. He concludes that unifying with social services may help church outreach ministry and is just as essential.

Websites

www.blackdemographics.org is an African American website that publishes statistical social, political, and spiritual data for the African American population. The data are collected from the National Census Bureau and research on African Americans.

www.census.gov stores collected census data for the general US population.

www.christiantoday.com is a Christian news website that provides news, articles, and information from around the world from a Christian perspective.

Scriptures

1. "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." Then, he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."[68]

In view of a crowd of followers that had no direction, Jesus had an internal movement of "compassion." The suffering of his followers had caught his attention. To understand the verb, "compassion" or compassionate, in Matthew 9:36, it is from the Greek verb, *splanchnizomai*, meaning to be moved as to one's inwards or to have the bowels yearn.[69] The compassion Jesus had for the suffering of his followers lead him to develop a deep feeling of sympathy and yearning to bring salvation to all suffering. In Matthew 9:38, Jesus' compassion turns to a plea for prayer for more people to join the ministry than only the twelve disciples had accepted. The author suggests that as a Christian disciple, individuals witness the suffering of unbelievers, and their responsive action, should be to labor in the vineyard of sinful suffering people who have sinned and pray for others to join the ministry.

2. "Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age."[70]

Christ commands in Matthew 28:19; "go" and "make." "Go" and "make" signify a journey.[71] Throughout a Christian's life, he or she should be intentional about making disciples.

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[68] Matthew 9:36-38, NIV.

[69] Edward W. Goodrick and John R. Kohlenberger III, *The Strongest NIV Exhaustive Concordance* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 1591.

[70] Matthew 28:19-20, NIV.

[71] James Strong's Dictionary, 207.

Stuart K. Weber reveals "go" or "going" because believers actively cross boundaries, cultures, conditions, and distance to make disciples.[72] Jesus commands his followers to act. Matthew 28:19-20 signifies Jesus' Great Commission. At the center of the command is the commission to "make disciple[s]." Weber describes this request, "At the heart of the Great Commission is the reproduction in others of what Jesus has produced in others: faith, obedience, growth, authority, compassion, love, and a bold, truthful message as his witnesses."[73] To "go" and "make disciples" are functions believers perform in response to their faith in the word and person of Jesus Christ, meaning evangelism.

3. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."[74]

God has invited the world to know him and love him through His creation and His Word. God's nature has been described as complete holiness, and His being has been identified as love itself.[75] His love for the world is immeasurable, and His attribute of love for humanity gives gravity to John 3:16. His love for humanity accentuates the gift and blessing given to believers. This gift of love from God is His son, Jesus[76]—the core of the gospel message to humanity. Kenneth O. Gangel states, "The gospel begins with God's love, penetrates through the cross and the empty tomb, and results in eternal life for those who believe."[77] Gangel's statement uniquely

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[72] Stuart K. Weber, *Homan New Testament Commentary: Matthew,* ed. Max Anders, Vol. 1 (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2008), 484-85.

[73] Ibid., 484.

[74] John 3:16, NIV.

[75] 1 John 4:8, 16, NIV.

[76] Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology,* 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 709.

[77] Kenneth O. Gangel, *Holman New Testament Commentary: John*, ed. Max Anders, Vol. 4 (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2000), 54.

connects God's love as the source and essence of salvation that accomplishes the fulfilled promised of eternal life for individuals who believe in His love.

4. "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."[78]

Jesus reiterates his Great Commission to His disciples. The uniqueness of this verse comes with the acknowledgment of "power." In Acts 1:8, "power," the Greek word *dunamis* means miraculous power, ability, or power in action. The word power is essential to identify because it shows that the ability, will, and source of a believer's action are predicated on the presence of the Holy Spirit dwelling or "coming" on the believer. The "power" is the "Holy Spirit." One role of the Holy Spirit is to empower the ministry of Jesus and Christ's church.[79] His empowerment is worked out and through the lives of believers. Gangel states, "Every believer should be a 'world Christian' able to function for the Savior from the other side of the street to the other side of the world."[80] Therefore, equal to Jesus' disciples, believers are called witnesses and are empowered by the Holy Spirit to carry his gospel to all areas of the world, that, is "evangelism."

5. "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."[81]

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[78] Acts 1:8, NIV.

[79] Chad Brand, Charles Draper, and Archie England, ed., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary,* Prod. Cross e-book (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 1290.

[80] Kenneth O. Gangel, *Holman New Testament Commentary: Acts,* ed. Max Anders, Vol. 5 (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 1998), 10.

[81] Acts 2:42, NIV.

As believers in Jesus Christ, the newly Holy Spirit-empowered Christian demonstrated their faith by devoting themselves. The word "devoted," in Greek, *proskartereo*, means to join, adhere to, to be ready, or to give attention.[82] Additionally, they devoted themselves to the "teaching," in Greek word, *didache*, which means careful instructions.[83] This is critical because it signifies the direction of their devotion. The new believers embraced God's salvation, gave full attention to living and learning as the disciples taught, and were led by the detailed instructions from Christ. This continues to be the institution of the church. The church is where believers gather to embrace and give full devotion to the teachings of the biblical apostle as foundation instructions for their daily lives.

6. "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."[84]

God's love for humanity has full authority and presentation within the death of Jesus Christ. This love of God has been characterized as "holy love." To understand God's character, the Holiness of God must never be separated from the love of God.[85] The use of the word "demonstrates" in Romans 5:8, in Greek, *synistemi*, means to bring about or to prove to be.[86] This illuminates the truth of Christ's death on the cross as the perfected picture of God's love toward sinful humanity. In addition, this demonstration of God's love is that Christ "died." The Greek word used in this verse for "died" is *apothnesko*, which means to be mortal, put to death, or to die. Warren Wiersbe shares, "Now that we are His children, surely He will love us more. It

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[82] Goodrick and Kohlenberger, *The Strongest NIV Exhaustive Concordance*, 1587.

[83] Ibid., 1541.

[84] Romans 5:8, NIV.

[85] Brand, Draper, England, *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 652.

[86] Goodrick and Kohlenberger, *The Strongest NIV Exhaustive Concordance,* 1595.

is the inner experience of this love through the Spirit that sustains us as we go through tribulations."[87] God's reflection of love is that Jesus was put to death for "sinners." The Greek word used for "sinner" is *hamartolos*, meaning absolute moral failure.[88] Jesus was put to death for individuals who were absolute failures, and this is the message of evangelism.

7. "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved."[89]

Two primary actions are taken by individuals that come to a knowledge of God's love: confess and believe. As illustrated in Romans 10:9-10, these actions have resulted in receiving the gospel message of Jesus. To "confess" is derived from the Greek word *homologeo*, which means the profession of allegiance or to declare. To "believe" is translated from the Greek word *pisteuo*, which means to put one's faith and trust and implies that actions based on the trust may follow.[90] The action to believe begins and forms in the heart that leads to confessing what one believes. Kenneth Boa and William Kruidenier state, "What the heart believes, the mouth confesses."[91] Therefore, if an individual confesses and believes in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, he or she is saved, meaning "evangelism."

These two actions of new believers are accompanied by God's response to their action; in as much, you are justified, and you are saved. Boa and Kruidenier provide more clarity by stating

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[87] Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition: New Testament*, Vol. 1 (Colorado Springs, CO: Chariot Victor Publishing, 2001), 527.

[88] Goodrick and Kohlenberger, *The Strongest NIV Exhaustive Concordance,* 223.

[89] Romans 10:9-10, NIV.

[90] Goodrick and Kohlenberger, *The Strongest NIV Exhaustive Concordance,* 1583.

[91] Kenneth Boa and William Kruidenier, *Holman New Testament Commentary: Romans,* ed. Max Anders, Vol. 6 (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2000), 311.

that "you are justified by your belief in the person and work of Christ represented by the resurrection but are saved by the outworking's of one's faith represented by confession."[92] These words emphasize salvation is one's action through believing and confession in the provision freely given of God by the life and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

8. "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent?" As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"[93]

When reviewing the words of Romans 10:14-15, Paul seems to insist that people must be sent so that the message of Jesus Christ can be proclaimed and believed.[94] Each of the questions asked builds upon the previous question, that believers have a direct role in spreading the gospel throughout the world. The instrument of the gospel is the proclamation of the gospel to people. Paul quotes Isaiah 52:7 when he states, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring the good news." To "preach" is the Greek word *kerysso*, meaning to proclaim. It was important to share the good news in the Old Testament. It is just as important in Paul's time and today to preach the gospel. The message proclaimed in the New Testament and today is a message of permanent deliverance from sin for individuals who believe in Jesus. This is the method and message of evangelism.

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[92] Boa and Kruidenier, *Holman New Testament Commentary: Romans*, 312.

[93] Romans 10:14-15, NIV.

[94] Douglas J. Moo, *Encountering the Book of Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 160.

9. "Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."[95]

In Acts 2:46-47, these verses are an example of a believer's faith and God's reward for the universal church. These verses are an extension of Acts 2:42. Homer A. Kent shares, "At this time the Christians had the respect of the whole city of Jerusalem."[96] Christianity had started to spread in the region. These new Christian believers spent much of their time in spiritual actions.[97] These believers' actions and continued faithfulness to the teachings and meeting together for worship led to an eternal response by God. The verb "added" is translated from the Greek word *prostihemi*, which means to increase or given. Therefore, the Lord is the source of growth for the church, and He grows it with new people who became saved.[98] The Lord's moment of faith is evangelism at work in the community.

10. "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."[99]

The Apostle Paul exerts what it means to be an ambassador. The Greek word for "ambassador" is *presbeui*, which means elder in rank.[100] Elder men during this time were chosen

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[95] Acts 2:46-47, NIV.

[96] Homer A. Kent Jr., *Jerusalem to Rome: Studies in Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1972), 35.

[97] Ibid.*,* 34.

[98] Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition*, 411.

[99] 2 Corinthians 5:20-21, NIV.

[100] W.E. Vine, *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1996), (New Testament Section), 25.

to be ambassadors. The Oxford Dictionary describes an ambassador as a person sent by a state as its representative in a foreign country.[101] As a government official of one's own country, ambassadors represent their country in another land. As an ambassador of Christ, believers are called to tell others that God will save you through His son Jesus Christ.[102] God's love is present in this world, and Christians are sent to share the gospel in it: "evangelism."

Conclusion

In summation, this thesis project focuses on evangelism outreach practices of the African American church in North Carolina and its positive and negative impacts on the growth of today's Black churches. With this study, individuals should be able to identify plans the Black church have developed and used over the years to evangelize and uncover the evangelistic practices and methods of today. With a fusion of past and present evangelism methods, this process is for churches to use as a new evangelism launch. This thesis project provides a strategic plan for Black church pastors to help African American congregations rediscover and implement evangelism in their churches as a message and method for engaging in church growth.

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[101] *Oxford American Desk Dictionary& Thesaurus* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 25.

[102] J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible: 1 Corinthians through Revelation,* Vol. 5 (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983), 114.

Chapter 2

Trends of the African American Church

In this investigation of the African American church evangelism ministry, the biblical view of evangelism outreach ministries is influenced by its roots in tradition, history, and cultural trends. Stacy Floyd-Thomas says, "One of the main questions that have preoccupied scholars of Black religion and culture in America is the question of the origin and the autonomy of these traditions."[103] African American churches have played a direct role in community outreach over the years and collaborate with each other and other Christian and social organizations to serve the needs of the African American community. As churches fill with educated and affluent African Americans, the desire for the church to serve a wealthier congregation has led to a decreased commitment to continually evangelize the lower-income and less wealthy people in the church's neighborhood. The African American community integrates more into the multicultural society of the United States as their incomes increase, and this diversity has directly affected the Christian faith of the members of African American churches.

A concentration on the trends of higher wages, economic stability, and social involvement will reveal the core of church ideology in evangelism outreach. According to the Joshua Project, 85% of African Americans are professing Christians with 35% as Evangelicals.[104] A survey by Pew Research in 2014 found 45% of Black individuals attend church once per week, 36% attend a few times a year, and 17% seldom or never attend.[105] Further, with over thirty-nine million African American people in the United States, African

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[103] Floyd-Thomas, Floyd-Thomas, and Duncan, *Black Church Studies*, 111.

[104] www.Joshuaproject.net.

[105] www.pewforurm.org.

American churches have a vast group of people to which they can minister and serve.[106] An

evaluation of today's African American church and its role as the center of African American

religious life is useful. An evaluation of the church's current beliefs and practices in the scope of

this project, the author attempts to illuminate how the church continues to support a community

presence.

C. Eric Lincoln states,

> Today's Black Church is struggling for relevance in the resolutions of today's black
> problems: racism; drug abuse; childcare; health and welfare; housing; counseling;
> unemployment; teenage pregnancy; the false securities of conspicuous consumption; and
> the whole tragic malaise with which society, in general, is burdened. It must address all
> these social challenges without abandoning its distinctive mandate to assist human beings
> in their efforts to find conciliation and comfort with their Creator. There is no moratorium
> on the human need for spiritual and moral nurture.[107]

With these many community issues and challenges, the Black church continues to evolve its

beliefs, practices, and the manner by which it presents itself to the community.

Current Beliefs and Practices

Indifferent Attitudes toward Evangelism

Multiple Views of the Gospel

At the center of the Christian faith is the Gospel. A prevailing attitude within the African

American church is the multiple views of the Gospel message being evangelized today. Churches

may have different views on the gospel message, and the Gospel message of Jesus Christ varies

within the Black church, which the author asserts, has negatively affected the church. Anyabwile

says, "These distortions of the gospel also produce negative effects on the church's

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[106] www.joshuaproject.net.

[107] Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church*, 398.

understanding of her mission in the world."[108] The message of salvation is not communicated consistently nor universally.

In the African American church, the means and messages of the Gospel must be defined and become the central vision and mission. The author observed at least three views of the gospel message or a variation of these three Gospel views within the Black church. These views function from the belief that Jesus Christ is the center of its Gospel faith.[109] However, these views function and operate under their own ideology.

These three current beliefs are the Evangelical Gospel, Liberation Gospel, and Prosperity Gospel. First, there the Biblical or Evangelical Gospel. In the Evangelicals Gospel, Anyabwile maintains that "Black evangelicals believe the Gospel begins with the truth about God."[110] He continues, "the gospel tells us the truth about the nature and future of humanity and shows that God has made a way to escape from his wrath;… the good news about righteous life; atoning death; and justifying resurrection of Jesus demands a response from those who hear it."[111] This has been the foundation for the evangelical church for years. The Evangelical Gospel holds true to what Jesus Christ has mandated to the church: share his message throughout the world. In the New Testament book of Acts, Jesus declares to his disciples that they will be is "witnesses."[112]

The second segment of the African American church has religious traditions tied to a theology called Liberation Gospel. James Cone promotes and states, "Black theology is a theology of liberation because it is a theology which arises from an identification with oppressed

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[108] Anyabwile, *Reviving the Black Church*, 80.

[109] Ibid., 69.

[110] Ibid., 67.

[111] Ibid.

[112] Acts 1:8, NIV.

blacks of America, seeking to interpret that gospel of Jesus in the light of the black condition, It

believes that the liberation of the black community is God's Liberation."[113] Cone suggests that

Black people have to liberate themselves from the oppression and that this liberation is

connected to one's Christian faith. Anyabwile declares, "Liberation Gospel or the gospel of

liberation is a belief that Jesus is God himself coming into the very depths of human existence

for the sole purpose of striking off the chains of slavery, thereby freeing man from ungodly

principalities and powers that hinder His relationship with God."[114] The use of the Liberation

Gospel in the African American church has helped empower and energize the church regarding

politics and social justice. Cone also states, "Black Theology is Christian theology because it

centers on Jesus Christ and …the Black community is where Jesus Christ is at work."[115] This

view encourages the church to be active in serving their community's social needs in the context

of the gospel message. Anyabwile states that the message of human liberation is to preach good

news to the poor, proclaim release to captives, recover sight to the blind, and liberate oppressed

individuals.[116] From this view, the Black church has been able to rally and champion the cause of

the less fortunate and disenfranchised to the faith that liberates them from the social

circumstances and the oppression of segregated people. One challenge is when an area or group

of people become liberated, their economic and social situations change through education,

financial increases, community growth, and social improvements. People desire a message that

motivates their spiritual development as a reflection of their social class and status changes.

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[113] James H. Cones, A Black Theology of Liberation, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY, 2010, 5.

[114] Ibid., 69.

[115] James H Cones, A Black Theology of Liberation, 5.

[116] Ibid.

The third gospel African American belief system is the Prosperity Gospel. Anyabwile says, "Prosperity Gospel is an adherent use of the language and themes of the older Evangelical Gospel but calls for the definition of the gospel to be expanded to include physical, emotional, material, social, and financial prosperity in this life."[117] With better employment, wages, and financial opportunity afforded to the African American church, the Prosperity Gospel theology is based on the evidence of physical financial blessing that the Lord provides through his promises of wealth and health. It is a message of physical and material abundance as the fulfilling promises and blessings of the Lord. Anyabwile says, "The 'good news' includes not only individual spiritual salvation but also individual temporal prosperity."[118] A belief is that a person's spiritual growth is directly reflected through his or her material and financial growth.

Along with these three Gospel views are versions or combinations of views in the Black church. Some churches combine one or two of these views as part of the ministry. In either case, it leads to dysfunction regarding the message of the Gospel and how to share it. Anyabwile declares, "The church finds herself pursuing many noble and necessary pursuits while leaving aside the one thing that only the church can do - proclaim the gospel of salvation to a perishing world."[119] The church is the vessel through which the gospel of salvation is shared. The author concludes that these multiple views have led the African American church toward indifference to evangelism, and this phenomenon can lead many individuals to question the intentional nature of the Great Commission mandate. In addition, these gospels have changed the nature of the church as well.

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[117] Ibid., 71.

[118] Ibid., 74.

[119] Ibid., 81.

Non-Intentional Mandate of the Church

Another area where the African American church is observed to be indifferent toward evangelism is from the intent of ministries within the church: there is no recognition of the biblical mandate of the Great Commission within many of the church ministries and practices. Louis Jones argues, "There are also many black churches that were once flourishing but are now dying in these communities because they fail to evangelize and witness to the incoming residents."[120] Without continuous evangelism that targets the surrounding families and individuals, the church's physical and spiritual growth and development suffer and dwindle as families move in and out of the community. Additionally, many African American preachers are not intentional about preaching and teaching the biblical text that the Word of God will be revealed and remain alive in the hearts of those who hear it. Anyabwile writes, "No Church can live that does not nourish itself on the living life-giving Word of the Lord. To provide that substance, we have argued that preachers in the African American church must reform their preaching such that the main point of any biblical text must be the main point of their sermons."[121] The message reaffirms the exegesis and application of the biblical text.

Many African American churches are avoiding the biblical mandate to evangelize as an intentional part of the ministry, and they have a lack of desire to view the Great Commission as the central mission and message to the church. This Gospel message should be central to every individual and ministry within the church. During the early growth of the church, the disciples understood that they were to testify to the life and works of Jesus Christ. In Acts 2, as the

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[120] Jones, *Evangelism*, 11.

[121] Ibid., 65.

disciples preached and evangelize the Gospel, the Lord added to the church daily. [122] Jones says,

"Time and again, amid our regular church affairs, we often tend to lose focus of one of our

central objectives: evangelism."[123] Evangelism is not the main focus of many churches, and

evangelism is neither discussed bout nor encouraged by the leaders of the church as a fulfillment

of Christ's commission. Without a mandate to evangelize, the author asserts that it is another

practice that hinders the African American church and its ability to function within the

community it serves. The trend within the African American church includes variations of the

Gospel, a failure to understand the mandate given by Christ, and leadership passivity.

Leadership Passivity

The leadership of the church has a direct effect on those who follow them. If the

leadership promotes a project or a ministry and campaigns for it, the followers will be inclined to

obey. George Barna suggests, "To lead people means that one motivates, mobilizes, directs, and

resources them so that they can fulfill a vision that they have agreed is appropriate and worth of

their pursuit."[124] It is not much different within the church. Many church leaders must lead in

such a manner that motivates, mobilizes, directs, and resources parishioners to take the passion

of the ministry to an active process. Darrell Guder shares, "Church pastoral leadership has taken

on a transformation as organization management shaped to meet the spiritual needs of consumers

and maximize market penitential for numerical growth."[125] Pastors are to directly engage in the

ministry of the church with membership growth as a goal. However, many leaders of the Black

church have developed a passive approach to evangelism as a central part of church ministry.

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[122] Acts 2:42-47, NIV.

[123] Ibid., 19.

[124] George Barna, *The Power of Team Leadership* (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press, 2001), 20.

[125] Darrell L. Guder, *Mission Church*, (Grand Rapids, MI: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 198.

Lee June writes, "Pastor-teachers must view themselves as God's means for the perfecting of the saints, that is, for equipping them for Christian service."[126] The African American pastor's and leader's leadership practices should be based on the biblical mandate to teach, grow, and equip the Christian community.

Many issues have been pointed out regarding leadership practices. Church leadership, at times, faces internal conflict, encumbering traditions, and social activism. From within the church, there are organizational structure issues. Anyabwile says, "The Black church has functioned under many practices that have no warrant or justification in the Scripture."[127] They have practiced the use of committees, programs, and other ideas to insert authority.

From an internal conflict, the balance of church leaders has a tendency to formulate into a misappropriated hierarchal system of leadership. Many churches have an elder and a deacon. The elder, pastor, and deacons of the church function as a check and balance system.[128] Some pastors have a dictator-like leadership style. The elders have support and obedience only as far as they faithfully watch over the souls of the saints.[129] There is also territorialism from parishioners who tend to subclassify themselves within the church.

With encumbering beliefs, there are oral traditions practiced in the Black church as well. Pastors and parishioners tend to desire the traditions of hearing from the pastor as God speaks to and through him. Floyd-Thomas states, "There is no question that, in Black Church worship, the matter of content is essential in carrying out the nurturing task in reaching."[130] The content and

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[126] June, *Evangelism and Discipleship*, 61-62.

[127] Anyabwile, *Reviving the Black Church*, 117.

[128] Ibid., 120.

[129] Ibid., 118.

[130] Floyd-Thomas, Floyd-Thomas, and Duncan, *Black Church Studies*, 191.

context of African American church worship traditions are essential to nurturing the church community. Floyd-Thomas maintains, "In the prophetic sermon, the preacher uses a nurturing method that employs biblical material to challenge people to think about Scripture and its intersection with their lives in new and helpful ways."[131] The prophetic bible interpretation plays a direct role in the nurturing and edifying life of the believer in the hope of a better future life with the Lord. Floyd-Thomas reveals, "There is also a priestly word in Black Church preaching that nurtures worshipers by calling their attention to coping strategies and life skills that can see them through the challenges of life and assist their formation of stories of promise."[132] The priestly bible interpretation helps Christians understand the word of God through their trials and adversities. Therefore, how the word of God is interpreted directly effects evangelism as well.

Social activism tends to be a priority of the Black church during political and social changes. Many churches prefer to focus on providing social needs and justice for the community rather than for the community's spiritual shortcomings. Floyd-Thomas argues, "Political activism is another common feature in the life of the Black Church that is the venue for education. It is common for church leadership, both pastor and laity, to move beyond the local church and into local and regional politics."[133] The Black church values the need to be active in the community and is an active voice for individuals who are socially and economically desolate and less fortunate. In this context, challenges and trends have come from a deep focus on social issues and concerns. Floyd-Thomas suggests, "Talented black men and women developed their leadership skills in the black churches and used them as launching pads for professional careers

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[131] Ibid., 191.

[132] Ibid.

[133] Ibid., 167.

in the church or elsewhere in a Black society like education, music, and entertainment."[134] The church functions as a means to develop tools and skills that can be better served socially with the benefits of financial growth and gain.

In summary, the author proposes that the trends of the African American church are influenced by doctrinal beliefs and social activism; these trends are influenced by a lack of engagement on the part of its leaders; and these issues are compound by inadequate or inept leadership.

Inadequate Leadership

Abuse of Power

Many pastors view their role as pastor as a supreme leader over all the parishioners. Floyd-Thomas states, "Though Black Church leadership emphasizes a pastor-centered approach to leadership, the leadership of the laity is critical to the life of the institution and the life of the people."[135] The leadership of the church should not rest on the efforts of the pastor, and a congruent leadership between pastor and laity is effective in the life of the church and its members. This effectiveness is based on a balanced relationship between pastor and deacons over power and authority.[136]

Sin often plays a part in the church, and sinful pastors and leaders can negatively impact the growth of the church. Anyabwile declares, "Clergy misconduct is not a victimless crime.

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[134] Ibid., 383.

[135] Ibid., 163.

[136] Anyabwile, *Reviving the Black Church*, 120.

Individuals and entire congregations suffer from the misdeeds of appointed leaders."[137] Some

leaders are accepted despite their sins. Many pastors and congregants have a disregard for the

known sin of leadership for the sake of emotional pleasures and desires. Anyabwile says, "The

Black Church has long valued charismatic leaders capable of organizing and inspiring the

faithful."[138] Many times the Black church chooses charisma over character-traits with their

leadership choices. The character of a person should be considered when choosing leadership.

Anyabwile states, "However when sinful misconduct goes unaddressed, it eventually hinders the

work of Christ in that place."[139] Churches suffer from weak leadership because of sinful

behavior.

Parishioners also engage in misconduct. Parishioners may live sinful lifestyles or commit

sins. Within the Black church, misconduct is not discussed or holds nonspiritual edification.

Kenneth Hill says, "Black people have interpreted the Bible from their own experience and have

sought the Black church as part of their identity formation."[140] Black people have often used the

Bible to justify their living; additionally, there is the sin of the love of money committed by

many individuals worldwide. Financial gain and wealth have led to leadership and teaching

based on lucrative substances and substantial financial portfolios. Many African American

Christians view the effects of sin from their experience and identify with the church community.

This may go against scriptural doctrine and practices and result in negligence of sinful behavior.

Anyabwile states, "However, the congregation must also take action in cases of moral

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[137] Ibid., 141.

[138] Ibid., 144.

[139] Ibid.

[140] Hill, *Religious Education*, 49.

transgression."[141] With the evasiveness from confronting sinful behavior, Black churches, or any church, under leadership that engages in misconduct will be hindered by the action of that leadership.

Presenting Issues for Churches

Communities in the United States continue to change: individuals move in and out of communities. The Black church, and many other denominational churches, have issues that compete against the wellness and health of the church. One issue in many denominational churches is the stagnation of church membership.[142] Thus, the author asserts that for the church to continue to serve communities, it must increase its number of parishioners; however, the literature has shown that the number of churchgoers is decreasing.

Decreases in Church Membership

Decline in Church Membership

Decreases and stagnation in US church membership have been observed. Reginald Davis asserts, "In Black America today, we face the extinction of family, community, culture, identity, and values as a people."[143] The author proposes that many of these issues are from a decrease in spiritual presence in the home and that this spiritual decline has led to increased immorality within Black culture. Due to sin and disregard for its biblical and social consequences, many Black Americans, along with many Americans in general (e.g., whites), are turning their spiritual intentions away from biblical teaching and guidance regarding family, community, morals, and

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[141] Anyabwile, *Reviving the Black Church*, 202.

[142] Jones, *Evangelism*, 11.

[143] Davis, *The Black Church*, 5.

values. This issue has a direct relationship between church growth and evangelism. Davis says, "The black church cannot continue to deny the black crisis or treat the crisis like the elephant in the living room."[144] Thus, all churches, including the Black church, can no longer intertwine faith with sin and continue to exist as a church of God. The church must hold to the biblical truth or their membership will continue to decline until the church ceases to exist.

The nondenominational movement is attracting a greater number of church and nonchurch individuals than denominational churches. An undesignated author in Christianity Today states, "The growing popularity of nondenominational identity is the result of two trends: the decline in the number of Protestants overall, as more Americans eschew any religious affiliation (becoming 'the nones'), and shrinking denominations themselves."[145] This increasing trend is significant because it reveals a problem in denominational church practices. The church ministry has to identify the issues to determine its weaknesses and adjust in order to grow. In addition to the new movement, a faltering commitment to evangelism is also decreasing membership.

A direct correlation was made between evangelism and church growth. Floyd-Thomas states, "Effective mission is the ability to determine where the emphasis should be placed in the light of existing realities."[146] Denominational churches must face the reality that there is a disconnect with their ministries, the Great Commission, and church growth.

Another area responsible for decreases or stagnation in church growth is passive or non-approach to the Great Commission within the Black church. Within the church, sharing the

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[144] Ibid., 6.

[145] https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2017/july/rise-of-nons-protestants-denominations-nondenominational.html. Accessed January 2018.

[146] Floyd-Thomas, Floyd-Thomas, and Duncan, *Black Church Studies*, 397.

gospel alludes to many of the practices and structures. Floyd-Thomas shares, "The critical point here is the translation of the Afrocentric concept of communication and spiritual life in the transformation of Christianity through preaching and communal formation of the worship experience."[147] The Black church focuses its identity of being a Black church that reaches Black people, and they want people to experience the Lord based on their perspective. It is not an exclusive approach to church but an exception to doing church. The author asserts that the focus of all church ministry should be the Great Commission, and the focus of the church should be to share the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Self-centered Theology and Practice

With the Gospel, what the leadership of the church teaches and practices play a direct role in the belief structure of the church. Hill argues, "The history of the relationship between theology and education in the African American church shows that evangelical theology, proclamation, and Pentecostal theology occupy a dominant place in the Black Churches"[148] Leadership and parishioners have been observed to be more concerned about personal interests, spiritual well-being, and supporting their personal beliefs and practices. Thomas says, "Black preaching certainly wrestles with philosophical theology about such matters as existence, but holds that exercise is neither its goal nor its source of revelation or relevance."[149] The vision and theological perspective of preaching should lead to the result. Often, the conclusion is to have no conclusion. Edification and spiritual growth can be affected in this direction. Another sense of self-centered theology is illustrated within the liberation message teaching. Thomas states,

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[147] Ibid., 208.

[148] Hill, *Religious Education*, 79.

[149] Floyd-Thomas, Floyd-Thomas, and Duncan, *Black Church Studies*, 204.

"Black preaching praxis must contend not only with the struggles of life or faith seeking self-understanding but also with struggles of the oppressed seeking liberation."[150] Black preaching practices have used liberation in conjunction with life and faith as they contend with various interpretations of scriptures. The biblical truth is infused with the cultural and societal components of African American people.

False Doctrine

Scripture Twisting for Personal Gain

Every church is different and functions differently due to doctrinal beliefs and practices. Hill purports, "One of the most important issues of African American life concerns the struggle of Black people to define and embrace their Blackness or African-ness."[151] This false Bible teaching has become more about the Lord's blessing than about responding to the gift of salvation by serving others. Hill adds, "The Black experience is a religious experience in which the forefathers and foremothers reinterpreted the Christian faith in the light of their suffering. They did not just read the Bible. They brought to the text their total experiences-pain and pleasures, hopes and despairs, agonies and ecstasies, and the belief that a better day was coming."[152] The Black experience incorporates history, enslavement, social studies, economics, morals, and values. The Black church is observed to function out of the historical traditions of the past pieced together within the changes of the diverse present. Many Black Christians desire to hold to the traditions of their ancestors.

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[150] Ibid., 205.

[151] Ibid., 157.

[152] Ibid., 37.

Allusion of Righteous Living

Scripture twisting leads to incorrect living before God. God is the center of the church. Anyabwile says, "If upholding the sanctity of God's name is the goal for the entire community, then the entire community must join in the solemn duty of ridding itself of sin and evil. There is no way for the correction to have the desired effect unless everyone plays their part."[153] Sinful living and desires are often overlooked to maintain numbers both physically and financially. Black churches are a place of displayed faith, in conjunction with experience, in view of the righteousness of God.

Return on Investment

African American churches in African American communities often rely on word of mouth versus engaging in evangelism, allocate the majority of their budget to building maintenance and payroll, and do not allocate resources for evangelism. Another issue is the commitment of people willing to engage in evangelism. African American pastors often direct parishioners to invite, reach out and connect with others, which require no commitment. Thus, the author proposes that with no investment in evangelism methods and ministry, the church should not expect a numerical increase in membership.

Choose Not to Help

The mission of the church is to evangelize. With any evangelistic effort, new Christians often require time to develop and grow into practicing and giving parishioners. Anyabwile says, "Many African American churches today find it difficult to reach people in the country's inner

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[153] Anyabwhile, *Reviving the Black Church*, 200

cities, especially young people from the hip-hop generation."[154] Each new generation must wrestle with spiritual growth, and African American churches and their leadership have taken a passive approach to sharing the gospel. Anyabwile states, "With the rise of megachurches and satellite campuses, the 'local' in 'local churches' is fast disappearing. Where the body of Christ ceases to be local, it ceases to be visible and transformative. Salt must season the dish; light must shine in dark places. There is no effective way to be a preserving or enlightening agent if the church does not operate in decaying and dark places."[155] This relationship binds the church to the community; otherwise, the church is merely a building on a lot.

Tension Points Regarding Evangelism Today

Lack of Teaching on Evangelism

A lack of support for teaching evangelism in the Black church was observed. Many pastors neither support nor emphasize a proactive approach to evangelism as a directive from Jesus Christ. Anyabwile expounds, "The preacher has not properly exposed the meaning of a biblical text until he moves naturally from the particular text-whether Old Testament or New Testament -to the message of Jesus Christ and Him crucified, buried, and resurrected to save sinners from the wrath of God."[156] If a preacher never conveys his or her biblical text and message to the gospel message of Jesus Christ, he or she disregards the evangelistic message the Lord has entrusted his followers to share. The pastor often champions the efforts of the church. If the pastor considers evangelism or its promotion unnecessary, the congregation does the same. In addition, the training to appropriately evangelize is minimal and is best taught to small groups.

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154 Ibid., 206.

155 Ibid., 207.

156 Ibid., 45.

The author observes that churches do not provide educational materials and development tools to train and teach Christian evangelism. Among church denominations, some are unaccustomed to or disinterested in evangelism; additionally, the church community does not cultivate the skills or motivation to perform evangelism.

Lack of Strategic Plan for Evangelism

A majority of churches have no strategic plan for evangelism. Anyabwile states, "Many traditional black churches face at least three challenges to effectively making disciples and helping people closely follow the Lord: poor content and methodology, competing with foreign teachers, and poor definition of growth."[157] First, the traditional method is Sunday school. Anyabwile argues, "Why Sunday school ministries have a rich history of blessing and equipping the saints, and while such ministries continue to be useful in making disciples, care must be taken to ensure that one does not inadvertently reduce the Great Commission to one hour on Sunday morning."[158] In many traditional Black churches, Sunday school or worship service is the best teaching that many individuals receive on a weekly basis. There are few intentional methods to teaching and leading parishioners in evangelism.

Another challenge is from external teachers, such as television preachers, various church websites, and social media. Anyabwile says, "Easy access to bad teaching can create a challenge to the local congregation."[159] It creates a poor spiritual understanding of faithful Christian living. In several cases, the problem has not been with the effort of the local church but with many the

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[157] Ibid., 174-77.

[158] Ibid., 176.

[159] Ibid., 177.

Christians seeking their primary source for spiritual food from teachers with no accountability to the local church.

A third challenge is from the misinterpretation of the meaning of to grow because some church leaders focus too much on numerical growth and too little on spiritual growth. Growth has a direct connection to spiritual maturity. "If church leaders aim merely at increasing figures for attendance and giving, they will likely miss the harder-earned yet more meaningful and lasting growth of righteousness, peace, justice knowledge, and love."[160] Solomon writes, "Where there is no vision, the people perish..."[161] This proverb is valid in all things. Without a focal point, people lose hope and fade away. In effect, a biblically valid method is necessary for sharing and evangelizing. The African American church must look to reflect and evaluate its ministries to answer the following question: is the church following the vision set forth by God to reconcile mankind back to Him. The Great Commission is the mission and method that continues to make this possible. Thus, the author asserts that the church should plan to keep the congregation focused on what the Lord has provided for them. Without a plan, the church will continue to evade their available growth potential by living obedience to Christ and His word.

Shrinking Volunteerism

Membership Decline

As aforementioned, many local churches desire to go into the communities around them. This desire can be due to factors such as finance, safety, and social concerns. However, churches are experiencing a decline in attendance and membership throughout the United States. This

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[160] Ibid., 178.

[161] Proverbs 29:18, KJV.

downsizing is not limited to a denomination or ethnic group; people, in general, are abandoning the church.

Another problem is the time and energy involved to evangelize. This has more to do with planned training. Churches now compete with multiple entities, for example, work, school, sports, and entertainment. The decline in volunteers is the realignment of priorities. Families and individuals must spend more time and energy to maintain a household than in the past, and many individuals misappropriate the need for the present for the needs of the future. Children's development and activities feed into program design to entertain children by increasing their mental and physical development with the goal of making them a well-rounded person of society. Youth sports take up much of the children's spare time. With the increase in the Amateur Athletic Union, the Junior Olympics, school sports, and private trainers, the free time of children and adolescents are full. With their busy children, parents are also busy supporting their children. The concept of down-time or me-time equates to the pursuit of personal well-being that involves nothing that hinders self-desires. These are some significant constraints to volunteerism.

Outside Influences

Along with the internal church, issues are from external influences that prevent evangelism efforts within present-day communities. In many communities, bylaws prohibit door-to-door soliciting through a no-solicitation ordinance. Many legal, personal, political, and cross-cultural elements divert individuals from evangelizing and have persuaded many Christians to avoid community witnessing. Urban and suburban development attract membership to leave local areas for a potentially better lifestyle. With many families living suburban developments, there is a disconnect between the church's surrounding communities and parishioners that attend those churches.

Conclusion

In African American traditional church ministry practices, many factors have been said to hinder Jesus Christ's commission to go as He stated to His disciples and to those disciples who would follow them. These hindrances are internal to the leadership and congregation and external to social and cultural changes. Along with people, there are differences in policies, doctrines, and religious customs. Today's African American church may be severely hindered by the lack of commitment to the message, the mandate, the urgency, and the empowerment of the Great Commission of Jesus Christ as apparent by the data cited in Chapter Three. It is further hindered by personal leadership agendas of pastors and congregants' views and experiences. With little to no attention provided for evangelism and church growth, the church forfeits its intent directed by and commanded by Jesus Christ in the Great Commission. The literature has provided more than enough evidence to call for this thesis project to analyze the connection between evangelism and church growth.

In Chapter Three, pastors that participated in the questionnaire provided data from local churches around the Piedmont Triad, NC. This data reflects a small section of the United States and a smaller segment of people worldwide. The questionnaire attempts to gather the information that reflects the church's view on evangelism and its effects on the life and the growth development of the congregation. The questionnaire identifies the current status of each church and the growth of the church over five years. In addition, the questionnaire identifies the impact of evangelism on the church. With evangelism as the central mission to the church, each pastor is asked if that is the view and vision they share about the church and if it is their continued commitment and focus for the church. Therefore, Chapter three provides data on the African

American church with respect to church growth, the methods of church growth, and the mandate

of the Great Commission of Jesus Christ.

Chapter 3

**Evangelism Questionnaire Results**

This thesis project administers a questionnaire to African American church pastors in the urban areas of Winston Salem, Greensboro, Burlington, High Point, Lexington, NC, to assess the disparity in the evangelism practices of the Africa American church. The presenting problem in Chapter 1 is that the African American church does not grow because they do not support evangelism. In Chapter 2, the church had a historical focus on reaching humanity; however, many churches changed their focus toward social and justice issues of the community. The churches' membership ethnicities were majority African American and located in African American communities. In Appendix A, the results of the questionnaire show that the African American church does not grow because it does not evangelize. One hundred surveys were sent to the pastors via email, handout, or phone interview and twenty-one African American pastors responded. Additionally, from the responses received, several pastors refused to answer one or more of the questions on the survey. The validity and reliability of the results are minimized because many of the pastors did not respond to the survey. Notably, the data are reflected quantitatively.

Question about Pastor Leadership

Questionnaires were provided to African American pastors who had been pastoring for at least one year. Each question was directed to identify the pastor's level of service, view on evangelism, application of evangelism implemented, and results of that implementation. According to the results of question one, the level of one pastor's leadership years was over ten years at one church location; fifty-seven percent of the pastors had greater than seven but less than ten years of experience; thirty-nine percent of the pastors had been at their current church for one to seven years; and one pastor had less than one year of the present leadership. The

leadership of the pastor is essential to show that time was available to implement the type of leadership and teaching to promote evangelism. All the respondents answered this question.

Q1 How long have you served as pastor at your current church?

Answered: 21   Skipped: 0
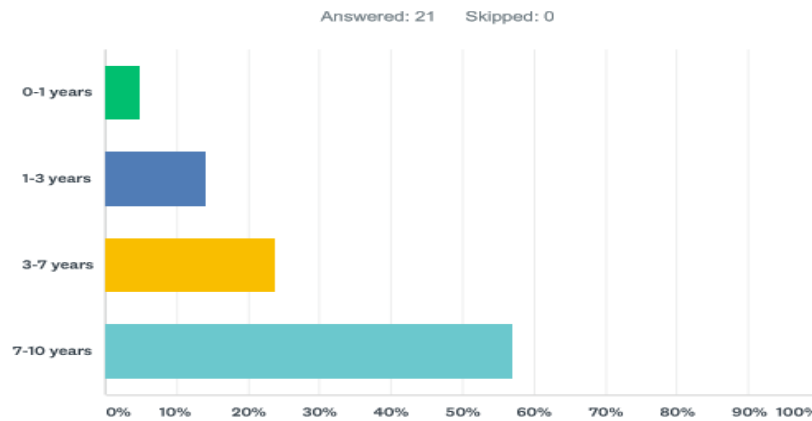
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
0-1 years	4.76%	1
1-3 years	14.29%	3
3-7 years	23.81%	5
7-10 years	57.14%	12
TOTAL		21

Question on Church Size

Along with the pastor's tenure in his or her current position, the current size of the church is reviewed and provides the numerical value for measuring the growth of the church over time. In Appendix A, church sizes are evaluated in relation to evangelism effects. By knowing the current church size, data show the effectiveness of evangelism toward the growth of the church and will determine growth based on the strategic evangelism plan and its effects on membership size by year. Of the pastors that responded to the questionnaire, one had five members, and nine percent have less than twenty members nine percent have twenty to fifty members, and nineteen percent have fifty to one hundred members, thirty-three percent of their churches have congregations of one hundred to two hundred members, fourteen percent have two hundred, and fourteen percent have congregations of over five hundred members.

Q2 What is your average Sunday attendance?

Answered: 21   Skipped: 0
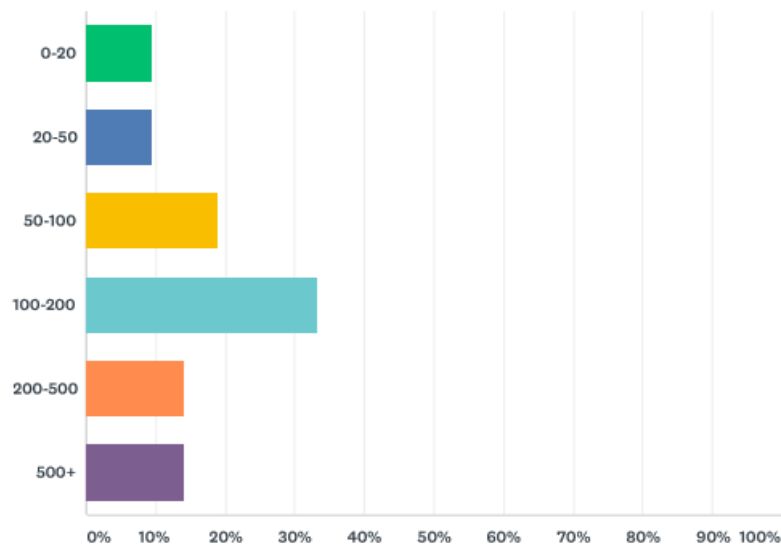
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
0-20	9.52%	2
20-50	9.52%	2
50-100	19.05%	4
100-200	33.33%	7
200-500	14.29%	3
500+	14.29%	3
TOTAL		21

All pastors responded to the question regarding the current size of their church. A process that gathered information on the average size over three timestamps—two years, three years, and five years—was essential. With these timestamps, the past size of the church can be compared with the current size of the church to show church growth over a five-year time-frame. Churches' membership increased or decreased over the five years. In Appendix A, the data show the effects evangelism had on the growth or decline of the church.

The data in Appendix A were analyzed. Additionally, based on Table 1-3 of question three, the size of the churches changed. Two years prior, all the churches responded. At three years, eighteen churches responded. At five years, fifteen churches responded. The sizes of the

churches fluctuated. In most cases, church membership decreased from five years to the current

year.

Q3 What was your average Sunday attendance a year ago?

Answered: 21   Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Two years?	100.00%	21
Three years?	85.71%	18
Five years?	76.19%	16

Table 1

Two Years

#	TWO YEARS?	DATE
1	100-200	2/6/2018 6:06 PM
2	200	2/6/2018 1:05 PM
3	50-70	2/6/2018 12:57 PM
4	65	2/4/2018 11:30 PM
5	50-100	2/4/2018 6:17 PM
6	0	2/4/2018 5:29 PM
7	250	2/2/2018 3:20 PM
8	350	2/2/2018 3:19 PM
9	550	2/2/2018 3:17 PM
10	150	2/2/2018 3:16 PM
11	500+	2/2/2018 3:15 PM
12	1000	2/2/2018 3:14 PM
13	200+	2/1/2018 11:36 AM
14	90	1/22/2018 2:28 PM
15	27	1/22/2018 2:25 PM
16	150	1/22/2018 2:23 PM
17	185	1/22/2018 2:21 PM
18	50	1/22/2018 2:16 PM
19	125	12/11/2017 10:45 PM
20	200	11/28/2017 8:58 AM
21	100	11/27/2017 9:24 PM

Table 2

Three Years

#	THREE YEARS?	DATE
1	100-200	2/6/2018 6:06 PM
2	200	2/6/2018 1:05 PM
3	55-70	2/6/2018 12:57 PM
4	75	2/4/2018 11:30 PM
5	100-200	2/4/2018 6:17 PM
6	0	2/4/2018 5:29 PM
7	250	2/2/2018 3:20 PM
8	300	2/2/2018 3:19 PM

3 / 11

Church Evangelism Survey   SurveyMonkey

9	500	2/2/2018 3:17 PM
10	150	2/2/2018 3:16 PM
11	200	2/1/2018 11:36 AM
12	80	1/22/2018 2:28 PM
13	27	1/22/2018 2:25 PM
14	150	1/22/2018 2:23 PM
15	180	1/22/2018 2:21 PM
16	145	12/11/2017 10:45 PM
17	210	11/28/2017 8:58 AM
18	100	11/27/2017 9:24 PM

Table 3

Five Years

#	FIVE YEARS?	DATE
1	100-150	2/6/2018 6:06 PM
2	200	2/6/2018 1:05 PM
3	50-75	2/4/2018 11:30 PM
4	100-200	2/4/2018 6:17 PM
5	0	2/4/2018 5:29 PM
6	250	2/2/2018 3:20 PM
7	300	2/2/2018 3:19 PM
8	450	2/2/2018 3:17 PM
9	150	2/2/2018 3:16 PM
10	170	2/1/2018 11:36 AM
11	90	1/22/2018 2:28 PM
12	150	1/22/2018 2:23 PM
13	170	1/22/2018 2:21 PM
14	150	12/11/2017 10:45 PM
15	230	11/28/2017 8:58 AM
16	125	11/27/2017 9:24 PM

Questions on Evangelism

Pastors were asked whether their churches had implemented a plan for evangelism. The results demonstrate that two-thirds of the churches have a program and one-third has no plan. Thus, the author expected that the churches that reported an established evangelism program would have increased church attendance. However, although sixty-seven percent of the churches reported they had an evangelism outreach process, sixty-two percent had a decrease or no change in average church attendance over the five years. This data indicates the existence and ineffectiveness of their evangelism programs; therefore, their evangelism programs were indeed unsuccessful. Based on the data from this question and church size, the effects of evangelism

plan implementation on the size and growth of the churches is presented in Appendix A.

Q4 Does Your Church have an evangelism outreach process?

Answered: 21   Skipped: 0
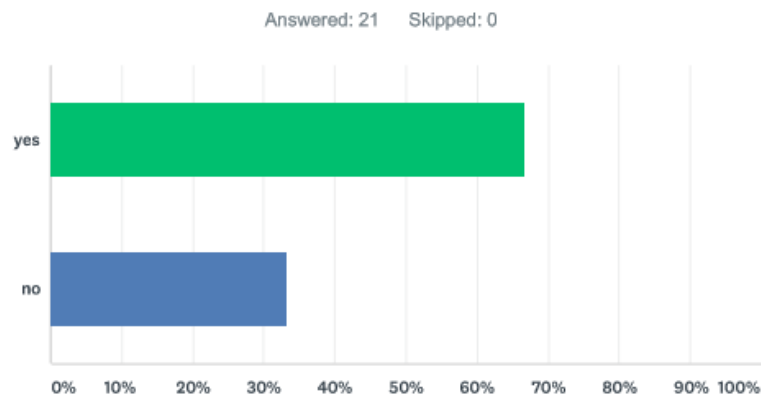
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
yes	66.67%	14
no	33.33%	7
TOTAL		21

Forty-three percent of these churches have a strategic plan for evangelism and forth-seven percent have no plan. Notably, one pastor was unsure of the existence of a strategic plan, and this response is recorded as a *no* answer. Therefore, for the majority of African American pastors surveyed, their churches do not prepare to evangelize. Notably, thirty-eight percent of the reporting churches had an increase in church attendance.

Q5 Does your church have a strategic plan in place for evangelism outreach that include a mission statement, vision, core values, assessment, strategy, method of implementation, and evaluation of the process?

Answered: 21   Skipped: 0
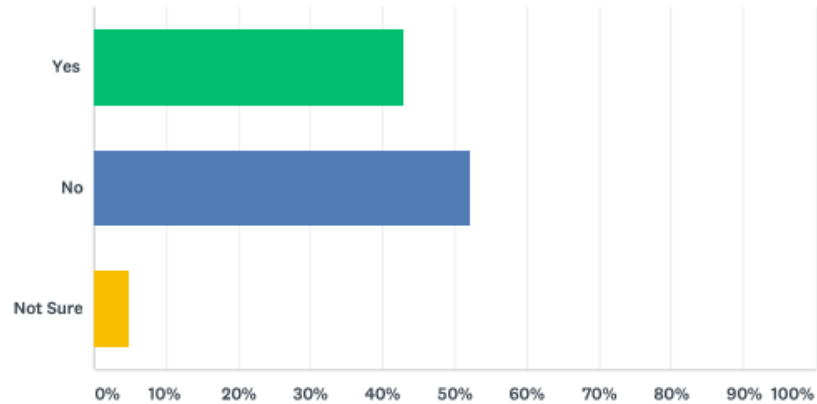
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	42.86%	9
No	52.38%	11
Not Sure	4.76%	1
TOTAL		21

Questions five and six provide more data on the gap between evangelism and the African American church. Nine pastors answered these questions: four pastors for over seven years had a strategic plan, one pastor had a strategic plan for five to seven years, one pastor had a strategic plan for three to five years, and three pastors had a strategic plan for one to three years.

Q6 If you answer yes to question 5, how long have you had this strategic plan in place?

Answered: 9   Skipped: 12
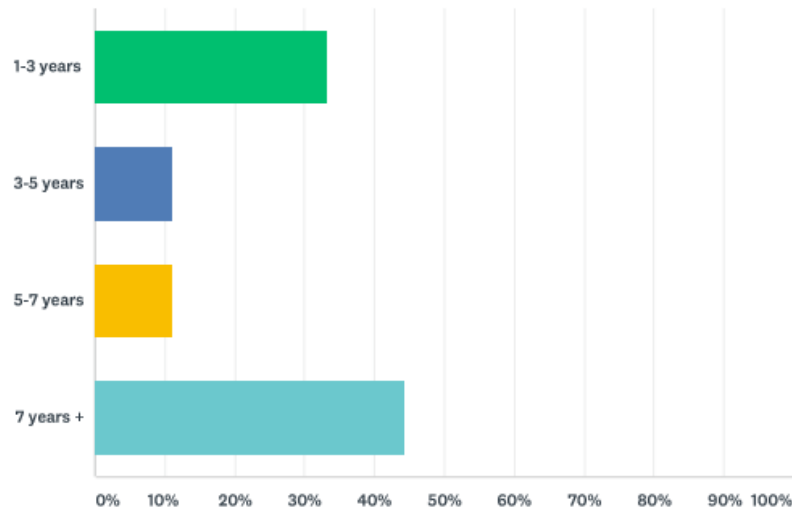
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
1-3 years	33.33%	3
3-5 years	11.11%	1
5-7 years	11.11%	1
7 years +	44.44%	4
TOTAL		9

Question seven focuses on the number of converts as a result of an evangelism plan. The author assumes that the number of converts reflects the efforts of the plan. Notably, nine pastors have a plan, but sixteen pastors respond to question seven. According to Appendix A, of the sixteen responding pastors, the numbers of people converted in year one of implementing an evangelism plan are as follows: survey nine had one hundred and fifty; survey seven had thirty; survey eleven had twenty; survey four had twelve; survey two had ten; survey ten had nine; survey five had eight; surveys one, three, twelve, and fifteen had three; and surveys six, eleven, thirteen, and fourteen had zero conversion. The numbers of people converted two years prior is as follows: survey number sixteen had fifteen; number two had twelve to fourteen; survey one had twelve; number three had ten; numbers seven and nine had five; and numbers four, five, and

eight had zero. Surveys ten through fifteen did not respond. The number of converted people three years prior is as follows: survey number one had thirty-seven; number six had twenty-five; number three had nine; number seven had five converts; number nine had one; and numbers four, five, and eight had zero. Last, the number of converts five years prior is as follows: survey number one had sixty-four, number five had forty, number two had twelve to fifteen, number three had twelve, number six had six, and number seven had two. Survey number four had zero converts.

Table 1-4 of question seven displays data on conversion rates. The timeframes compared are one, two, three, and five years.

Q7 How many people have been converted through the church's evangelism outreach efforts in the past year?

Answered: 16   Skipped: 5

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
One year?	93.75%	15
Two years?	56.25%	9
Three years?	56.25%	9
Five years?	50.00%	8

Question 7 graph above displays conversion totals. Table 1-4 below displays the data by year.

Table 1

First Year:

#	ONE YEAR?	DATE
1	3	2/6/2018 6:06 PM
2	10	2/6/2018 1:05 PM
3	3	2/6/2018 12:57 PM
4	12	2/4/2018 11:30 PM
5	8	2/4/2018 6:17 PM
6	0	2/4/2018 5:29 PM
7	30	2/2/2018 3:20 PM
8	20	2/2/2018 3:15 PM
9	150	2/2/2018 3:14 PM
10	9	2/1/2018 11:36 AM
11	0	1/22/2018 2:25 PM
12	3	1/22/2018 2:21 PM
13	0	1/22/2018 2:16 PM
14	0	12/11/2017 10:45 PM
15	3	11/28/2017 8:58 AM

Table 2

Two Years:

#	TWO YEARS?	DATE
1	12	2/6/2018 6:06 PM
2	12-14	2/4/2018 11:30 PM
3	10	2/4/2018 6:17 PM
4	0	2/1/2018 11:36 AM
5	0	1/22/2018 2:25 PM
6	15	1/22/2018 2:23 PM
7	5	1/22/2018 2:21 PM
8	0	12/11/2017 10:45 PM
9	5	11/28/2017 8:58 AM

Table 3

Three Years:

#	THREE YEARS?	DATE
1	37	2/6/2018 6:06 PM
2	12	2/4/2018 11:30 PM

8 / 11

Church Evangelism Survey		SurveyMonkey
3	9	2/4/2018 6:17 PM
4	0	2/1/2018 11:36 AM
5	0	1/22/2018 2:25 PM
6	25	1/22/2018 2:23 PM
7	5	1/22/2018 2:21 PM
8	0	12/11/2017 10:45 PM
9	1	11/28/2017 8:58 AM

Table 4

Five years:

#	FIVE YEARS?	DATE
1	64	2/6/2018 6:06 PM
2	12-15	2/4/2018 11:30 PM
3	12	2/4/2018 6:17 PM
4	0	2/1/2018 11:36 AM
5	40	1/22/2018 2:23 PM
6	6	1/22/2018 2:21 PM
7	2	12/11/2017 10:45 PM
8	10	11/28/2017 8:58 AM

To identify the relationship to church growth and evangelism, the author compares the number of converts with the number of church members during the same period. Appendix A presents the identifiable relationship between church growth and evangelized converts. Sixteen pastors responded to question three, and eight pastors responded to question seven. The pastors who responded to both questions denoted converts through church evangelism, but only three of the eight had an increase in membership over the same period. Four of the churches' membership

decreased despite their two to fifty-three converts over the five years. One of those churches had no increase in Sunday attendance but documented eighty conversions in the same period.

Question on Evangelism Doctrine

To understand the pastors' views of evangelism, two survey questions were on the Christian view of the evangelism doctrine. First, does your church believe evangelism is the Lord's plan for the Church? Second, does your church believe that following the Lord's Great Commission found in Matthew 28:18-20 is the central mission of the Church? The results indicate that the pastors believe that evangelism is the Lord Jesus Christ's plan for the church. Jesus states, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen."[162] This command identifies Jesus' primary mission and plans for the Christian church. The results show that for question eight, the majority of the pastors agree that evangelism is the center of the Lord's plan for the church. Two pastors disagreed with the question, and one pastor did not answer. Henry C. Thiessen, in his seminal work Lectures in Systematic Theology, identifies evangelism as the Lord's plan and central mission of the church:

> The great commission directs the church to go into all the world and make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:19; Luke 24:4648; Acts 1:8). The Scriptures do not direct us to convert the world, but to evangelize it. By this is meant that the church is debtor to the whole world, that is, that the church is under obligation to give the whole world an opportunity to hear the gospel and to accept Christ. We know that not all the world will respond to the gospel call, but the church is by duty bound to give the whole world an opportunity to know about him and to accept his salvation. God is today calling out from among the Gentiles a people for his name (Acts 15: 14), and he does it through the church and by his Spirit. This is to go on until "the fulness of the Gentiles has come in" (Rom. 11:25). No one knows when that will be, but that is the definite objective of Christ in which the church is to participate. Evangelization begins in a study of needs (John 4:28-38; cf. Matt. 9:36-

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162 Matthew 28:19-12, KJV.

38), and so every church should study missions. It finds expression in missionary intercession (Matt. 9:38), missionary contributions (Phil. 4:15-18), the sending of missionaries (Acts 13:1-3; 14:26; Rom. 10:15), and in going forth into the mission fields (Rom. 1: 13-15; 15:20).[163]

Notably, one pastor disagreed that the Great Commission is the central mission of the church. Another pastor disagreed with it being the central mission as well as it being necessary to the church. Thus, a majority considers the Great Commission to be the central mission of the church. Theissen adds that Christians are representatives of God's righteousness and sources of enlightenment in the world when he says,

> Jesus said that believers are the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matt. 5:13f.). By their influence and testimony, they hold back the development of lawlessness (cf. 2 Thess. 2:6f.). God holds back judgment because of the presence of the godly among the wicked (Gen. 18:22-33). Believers are to make known God's righteous requirements of man and the need for repentance and regeneration. To this end, God has made his people the custodians of his truth (2 Cor. 5:19; Gal. 2:7; 1 Tim. 1:ll; 3:15).[164]

Evangelism remains the mission, and the gospel message must be shared with the world. As noted by Question 8 responses, the majority of surveyors believe this to be true as well.

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[163] Henry C. Thiessen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), 332.

[164] Ibid., 332.

Q8 Does your church believe evangelism is the Lord's plan for the Church?

Answered: 20   Skipped: 1
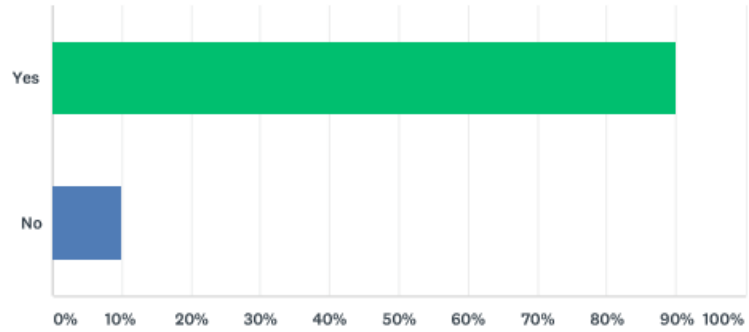
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	90.00%	18
No	10.00%	2
TOTAL		20

Q9 Does your church believe following the Lord's "Great Commission" found in Matthew 28:19-20 is the central mission for Church?

Answered: 21   Skipped: 0
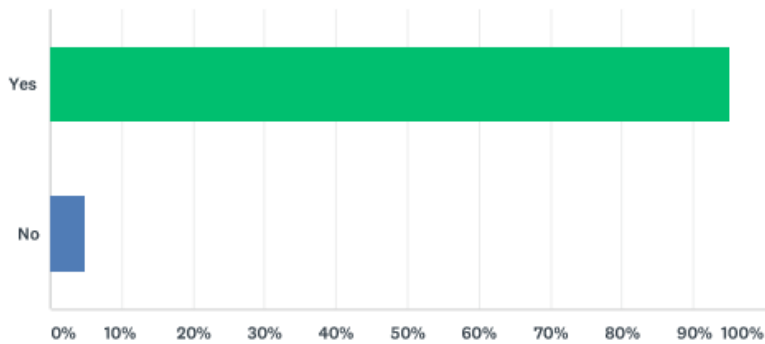
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	95.24%	20
No	4.76%	1
TOTAL		21

Conclusion

In conclusion, the data indicate a direct correlation between ineffective evangelism and insufficient church growth in the African American church (Appendix A) and that the African American church is not growing overall, similar to churches in general. The pastors' responses demonstrated a disconnect between the doctrinal belief of evangelism and the driver of growth of the African American church. Evangelism is not the key agenda for these pastors thus, concluding evangelism grows the church is insufficient. The results also show that despite evangelism plans, church growth remains stagnant or decreases.

A limitation of this research was that the majority of pastors surveyed did not answer the questionnaire. Many pastors said they had no time for the questionnaire, and some provided no reason. Thus, further research could obtain a broader pool of responses to increase the validity of the results or conduct additional studies to determine an accurate numerical value for the relationship between evangelism and the growth of the African American church. Last, based on the information gained from the questionnaires, the author proposes that there is a dysfunction within the African American churches in the Piedmont Triad area. On several other occasions when the author spoke with five non-surveyed African American pastors regarding church growth and evangelism, they all agree that African Americans depend on word of mouth and not evangelism for growth. If the views of the five pastors are real among the majority of African American pastors, African American congregations prefer to not send witnesses or send few to no witness to share the gospel within the African American community. Thus, the author asserts that the central mission and work of the church are disconnected. Based on what has not been accomplished in this research, further research should be conducted to increase the clarity and understanding of evangelism practices of African American churches.

This thesis project attempted to assess the relationship between evangelism and church growth. Chapter 1 defined the boundaries and limitations of this project as it pertained to the African American church and evangelism. Chapter 2 focused on the literary review regarding the African American church and its history, ministry practices, and growth over time. Chapter 3 demonstrated that the questionnaires indicated a connection between inadequate evangelism and minimum to null church growth. In Chapter 4, a possible solution was presented: a strategic plan identified by seven steps to promote church growth in African American congregations. By following these steps, the church will be able to become more effective in evangelizing and increase its membership. Each step is a building block for the next step and develops a process that produces an expected outcome for the church. Based on the questionnaire used in this chapter, the church's commitment to the Great Commission directly affects the life of the church.

Chapter 4

Biblical Model of Evangelism

Theology on Evangelism

Evangelism flows from the nature and person of God, and it is his initiative, plan, and provision. God acted; therefore, believers have a message to share with others.[165] First, God initiates his plan in the Gospel of John when Jesus says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."[166] Thus, evangelism is His initiation, that is, it is at the core of His heart when He sets evangelism into motion. The Apostle Paul continues, "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."[167] The Apostle Peter says, "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead, he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." [168] The Apostle Paul and Peter correctly identify evangelism as God's initiative, plan, and implementation.

Second, because of God's plan of salvation, He expects His children to share and embrace His mission to save nonbelievers. The Apostle Paul says, "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent?" As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good

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[165] Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary*, 410.

[166] John 3:16, NIV.

[167] Romans 5:8, NIV.

[168] 2 Peter 3:9, NIV.

news!"[169] God's plan and provision for evangelism are implemented through believers in Jesus as Lord and willingly determined to witness to individuals that have not heard the good news of salvation that they come to believe and serve him as well.

> For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. So, from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."[170]

To conduct evangelism, an individual must first understand its meaning. The aforementioned words of Apostle Paul's to the Corinthian church identifies the source, message, method, and mission for evangelism. In 2 Corinthians 5:14-17, Paul reveals the "Love of Christ" as the source of humanities' salvation. The word "compels" is the Greek action verb, *anankazo*, which means "to put constraint upon."[171] The compelling influence of Christ's love connects and binds believers to Christ. Therefore, the love of Christ is the power source of believers. Warren Wirersbe states, "When He died on the cross, Christ proved His love for the world."[172] His love energizes believers to live, serve, and witness for Him. The message is the total work of God performed through the death of His son. Wirershe provides two claims about Christ's death that should encourage an individual's faith. First, "Christ died that all might die."[173] Wirersbe shares

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[169] Romans 10:14-15, NIV.

[170] 2 Corinthians 5:14-21, NIV.

[171] Vine, *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, 117.

[172] Wiersbe, *New Testament*, 648.

[173] Ibid., 648.

that Christ's death is the identification of the believer, Christian, meaning Christ-like. Second, Wirersbe shares, "Christ died that all might live."[174] He concludes, "This is the positive aspect of our identification with Christ: we not only died with Him, but we also were raised with Him that we might," as Romans 6:4 states, "walk in newness of life."[175] Christ died so that believers may live in and through Him as their Lord and Savior. Then, they are no longer sinners but new beings in Christ.

Along with the love of Christ is the commission of Christ in 2 Corinthians 5: 18-21. The commission of Christ is to reconcile humanity to God. The word Reconcile in Greek is *katallasso*, which means to change or exchange.[176] W.E Vine shares, "In Christ, reconciliation is what God accomplishes by exercising His grace toward the sinful man on the grounds of the death of Christ in propitiatory sacrifice under the judgment due to sin."[177] Because of God's grace, individuals who commit sins, in their sinful condition and separation, are invited to be reconciled in Christ to God.

With the message Christ's love toward humanity, Christians are "ambassadors" for Christ. Ambassadors are representatives from one country sent to another country. Wiersbe states, "Since Christians in this world are the ambassadors of Christ, this means that the world is in rebellion against God. This world is an 'imperial province' as far as God is concerned. He has sent His ambassadors into the world to declare peace, not war."[178] Believers are the method

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[174] Ibid.

[175] Ibid.

[176] W.E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers), 513.

[177] Ibid., 514.

[178] Wiersbe, *New Testament*, 649.

through which the message of peace and salvation is delivered to the world. Because Christians understand their citizenship is in heaven, believers as ambassadors on earth are commissioned to invite humanity into a righteous relationship with God in Christ and through Christ.[179] Evangelism and the work of evangelism depend on believers believing in their purpose as ambassadors.

Defining Evangelism

Evangelism has taken on several meanings throughout the centuries. Evangelism is from the Greek word, *euangelion*, which means good news, and the verb *euangelizo,* to proclaim glad tidings.[180] Another Greek word that expands evangelism is *euangelsizomai,* which means to announce, proclaim, and bring good news.[181] As an evangelist, *euangelistes,* means a messenger of good and denotes a preacher of the gospel.[182] The Oxford American Desk Dictionary defines evangelism: "A passion [in] support of something."[183] Elwell provides a biblical meaning of evangelism, "The proclamation of the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ with a view to bringing about the reconciliation of the sinner to God the Father through the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit."[184] The Lausanne Covenant develops a comprehensive definition of evangelism:[185]

> To evangelize is to spread the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead according to the Scriptures, and that, as the reigning Lord, he now offers the forgiveness of sins and the liberating gifts of the Spirit to all who repent and believe. Our

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[179] McGee, *Thru the Bible*, 114.

[180] Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, 104.

[181] Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary*, 410.

[182] Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, 104.

[183] *Oxford American Desk Dictionary & Thesaurus*, 274.

[184] Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary*, 410.

[185] Ibid.

Christian presence in the world is indispensable to evangelism, and so is that kind of dialogue whose purpose is to listen sensitively in order to understand. But evangelism itself is the proclamation of the historical, biblical Christ as Saviour and Lord, with a view to persuading people to come to him personally and so be reconciled to God. In issuing the gospel invitation, we have no liberty to conceal the cost of discipleship. Jesus still calls all who would follow him to deny themselves, take up their cross, and identify themselves with his new community. The results of evangelism include obedience to Christ, incorporation into his Church and responsible service in the world.[186]

By evaluating these definitions of evangelism, the meaning and action of evangelism are clear: Christians are to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. They verbally share God's actions as performed through the incarnate life of Christ, His death, and His resurrection. The Apostle John writes, "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."[187] According to the survey, the pastors of African American churches understand that the central mission of Jesus Christ is to share the gospel, and the author asserts that this mission extends to the world.

Evangelism is the active voice of God spoken through the disciples of Jesus Christ to this world for all generations. Many Christians have been silent about their faith in Jesus Christ. This silence, in the author's opinion, affects Christian churches and nonbelievers in the United States and around the world. The greatest gift God gave to humanity is salvation, in which Jesus gave his life as the atoning sacrifice for the sin of all humanity, that is, through faith and belief in God's son, humanity can reconcile with God. This promotion of this message (i.e., the gift of salvation) is decreasing in US society and worldwide. The gospel provides vivid accounts of Jesus's mission as he walked on earth: He performed miracles; healed the sick, wounded, and diseased; raised the dead; and controlled nature.

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[186] Ibid.

[187] John 3:17, NIV.

At the end of His earthly ministry, Jesus predicts and fulfills his death, burial, and resurrection. After his resurrection, Jesus gives His great commission at least four times: (1) to Mary Magdalene leaving the tomb, (2) to the eleven disciples at Galilee's mountain, (3) to the eleven disciples in Jerusalem, (4) and the day of his ascension to heaven. Jesus is God's plan for salvation, the gospel message.

The sharing of the gospel message of Jesus Christ is the mission and responsibility of Christian believers, and inevitably the church. If evangelism is the mission of the church, African American churches have demonstrated their disinterest. As aforementioned, of the one hundred surveys sent to pastors, only twenty-one replied, and several pastors returned incomplete surveys. Among the responding pastors, the significant disparity is observed regarding evangelism in the African American church. If evangelism is God's plan and provision for reconciliation, the author feels compelled to change African American churches' evasive response to evangelism. Thus, to address this disparity, the author proposes that seven aspects be applied to strategic planning and plan implementation.

Evangelism's Message

Biblical Message of Evangelism

The biblical account records how God created man and woman, and their disobedience to His command. Their actions put them in total depravity with God. Because of God's Sovereignty and love for His creation, He provided, orchestrated, commanded, and oversaw a way for humanity's redemption back to Himself. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was sent by God to be the atoning sacrifice for all humanity. Jesus is God's plan of salvation for all. The Apostle John says, "For God so love the world, that he gave his one and only Son, that whosoever believe in him

should not perish, but have eternal life."[188] Because of God's love for humanity in the person of Jesus Christ, individuals who believe that God's love and work performed on the cross by Jesus have a renewed and reconciled relationship with God as Lord and King.

Authority to Evangelism

The disciples recognized their inability to fulfill the Great Commission on their own. They understood the commandment from Jesus promised both His presence and power. The most significant words of authority to evangelize the world are in Matthew's Gospel. The disciples were not sent out merely in their strength, and Jesus introduced His commission with these statements when Matthew records, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me, … I am with you always to the end of the age."[189] Jesus is the source and strength of believers willing to share the Gospel, and He assures His permanent presence. Therefore, the authority to evangelize is from the word of God. The Apostle Paul states that God was in Christ reconciling the world. Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead.[190] This is the centrality of Jesus Christ as God's plan of redemption for humankind.

Evangelism is Jesus' last teaching message and topic to his disciples and the world, and it is a command to past, present, and future disciples. The main teaching Jesus provides to his disciples before departing this earth was evangelism. Jesus instructs them as Matthew states, "Go make disciples of all nations."[191] Additionally, in Jesus' final moments, as recorded in Acts 1:8,

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[188] John 3:16, NIV.

[189] Matthew 28:18, 20.

[190] Romans 11:15, NIV.

[191] Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1998), 1061.

Jesus tells his disciples, "but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and the ends of the earth."[192] Jesus gave a directive to his disciples that will continue until his return.

From the directive of the great commission, there are two components evangelism and discipleship. First, evangelism means sharing the gospel. A person must hear and act on the gospel to become a disciple and follower of Jesus Christ. Evangelism is the method by which the gospel message is shared with humanity. By the drawing power of God through the Holy Spirit, an individual obtains salvation and becomes a disciple of Jesus Christ. Discipleship is Christians intentionally making disciples.

The Roman Road

The Roman Road is a collaboration of scriptures in the book of Romans that directs humanity toward salvation through the revelation of their sins, damnation, God's provision, and the believer's response. Christians understand the Roman Road as being a brief explanation of the Gospel. For example,

1. "For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God"[193]

In Romans 3:23, the Apostle Paul addresses the universal condition of all humanity for all time. Douglas Moo states, "Because all human beings have sinned, all are offered the opportunity to believe in Christ and so experience God's righteousness."[194] This verse reflects

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[192] Ibid., 1061.

[193] Romans 3:23, NIV.

[194] Moo, *Encountering the Book of Romans*, 83.

humans' state of being. Individuals that hear and read this verse are allowed to reflect on his or her sins and a disconnected relationship with God.

2. "For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."[195]

In Romans 6:23, Paul warns the Romans that a lifestyle of sin leads to death and destruction.[196] The term wage reflects compensation for services,[197] and there is compensation for unrighteous services. Death, in Greek, *thanatos*, is the righteous response to people's sins and was found to be a deserving expression of justice for their unrighteousness.[198] In contrast to the penalty for sin, God has provided a gift, in Greek *charisma,* meaning gracious favor granted, of eternal life in Christ.[199] The reception of this gift is due to a prompt response from the recipients, namely, believers.

3. Romans 5:8 "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."[200]

Romans 5:8 presents the complete picture of God's love toward His created humanity. The term demonstrates in Greek is *synistemi*, as in "prove to."[201] God proves to the people who have sinned His love for them on the cross as the atoning sacrifice, Jesus Christ.

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[195] Romans 6:23, NIV.

[196] Moo, *Encountering the Book of Romans*, 117.

[197] Chad Brand and Eric Alan Mitchell, ed., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2015), 1638.

[198] Ibid*.,* 406.

[199] Goodrick and Kohlenberger, *The Strongest NIV Exhaustive Concordance*, 1603.

[200] Romans 5:8, NIV.

[201] Goodrick and Kohlenberger, *The Strongest NIV Exhaustive Concordance*, 5398.

4. Romans 10:9-10 "If you declare with your mouth Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God hath raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with the heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved."[202]

The verses of Romans 10:9-10 are the response the Lord wants to receive in response to His love toward humanity. Wiersbe shares, "He, Paul, made it clear in … that salvation is by faith—we believe in the heart; receive God's righteousness, and then confess Christ openly and without shame."[203] Similar to new coverts during Paul's time, new believers must complete the same process by which an individual obtains faith and is saved.

Talbot Davis disagrees and argues:

> Many of you are familiar with the Romans Road, a collection of verses from that signature New Testament book designed to lead people on the "road" to salvation. It starts out with our Problem from Romans 3:23: For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. It then moves to our Peril in Romans 6:23: For the wages of sin is death . . .And to God's Provision in Romans 5:8: But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. The Romans Road culminates in our Response in Romans 10:9: That if you confess with your mouth "Jesus is Lord" and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. All very neat, tidy, and wrapped in a bow. Problem diagnosed, problem solved, souls saved. And all alien to the purpose of the book of Romans. Now: for the most part I support the theology behind the Romans Road. We are sinners in need of salvation and not, to paraphrase Andy Stanley, mis-takers in need of correction. Yet to read Romans through the grid of its "road" is akin to appreciating a pearl necklace by removing four individual pearls from it and admiring them and them alone. No, when you read Romans as a whole, it is clear that there is in fact a road—a primary thrust that repeats again and again throughout the letter. But that thrust is somewhat different from the "sin-provision-salvation" model so commonly held up. Instead the Real Romans Road starts in 1:16: I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believe: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. From there, it goes quickly to 2:9-11: There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For God does not show favoritism. Next, there is 3:9 and 3:29-30: What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the

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[202] Romans 10:9-10, NIV.

[203] Wiersbe, *New Testament*, 547.

uncircumcised through that same faith. And it all builds to 10:12: For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him. So, the Romans Road, then, is less about the eternal salvation of individuals than it is about the creation of a church community where once warring factions—Jew and Gentile—realize that in Christ there really is "no difference" between them. Paul was addressing a real church with real issues in real time and so paves his letter with a powerful, consistent road of ethnic reconciliation. The ground really is level at the foot of the cross. That is a road on which we should all take a good, long walk.[204]

Romans Road is considered a tool for evangelism or reconciliation. In summary, the author proposes that evangelism is clearly the directive of Jesus Christ, and the Apostle Paul clearly understands and acts accordingly. There are no restrictions to the gospel of Jesus Christ. God expressed His love for mankind with Jesus's death Salvation has been made available to all who accept it. Likewise, the author proposed that the African American church could benefit from using the Roman Road as a tool for evangelism and reconciliation. The verses provide an illustrative message of God's salvation for all.

Early Church Directive

Jesus gave this commandment of sharing the Gospel with His disciples. This directive was employed over 2000 years ago and continues as a command to the church today. Thus, churches must continue their commitment to the Great Commission of Jesus Christ.

Geographical Area

Jesus's instruction of the Great Commission expands from a central point to include all people, times, and generations. The command makes clear when Jesus gave His final address. Four geographical areas represent what the church is sent to evangelize: Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and all nations. As the center point, Jerusalem is the foundational area for the Jewish nation, the launching area for the church, and the root of Christ's journey. Jerusalem is central to

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[204] Tablot Davis, "Asbury Theological Seminary," 2019. accessed January 2019, https://www.lausanne.org/content/covenant/lausanne-covenant.

Christ's ministry, and ultimately mankind's salvation. Judea was the second area for the disciples to concentrate and was inhabited by Orthodox and Judean Jews, who share similar customs and lifestyles. Next, Jesus sent the disciples to Samaria. This area was considered distasteful and considered unethical by the Jewish people. They did not associate with Samaritans because they intermarried with Israelites, Assyrians, and foreign colonists who remained after the Assyrian's crisis. Last, the disciples were sent to witness and evangelize the world when Jesus states, "…to the end of the earth."[205] There are no limitations of distance and time regarding where the salvation message is to be shared. Therefore, the church must engage in evangelizing all willing people regardless of the culture in faithfulness to the Lord and his command. As more individuals believe in Jesus through the conversion of hearing the gospel by evangelism, the expansion of believers, coverts, and disciples will increase over generations.

Evaluations of Evangelism Effects

The early church understood the mission and message. The gospel message was an all-inclusive message; however, the growth of the church is not controlled by men but by the divine supremacy of the Lord. As Luke records in Acts 2, "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call…and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."[206] This example exemplifies that the disciples were chosen to serve in obedience to Jesus Christ and that the Holy Spirit has come and remains as the power source of the children of God. Darrell Guder shares, "Jesus made clear that his apostolic mandate was itself operative out of the relationality and plurality of the Trinity. He did nothing without the Father's direction; he did all the work of the kingdom through the

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[205] Acts 1:8, KJV.

[206] Acts 2:39-41, KJV.

power and anointing of the Spirit."[207] As the disciples continued to serve and witness the gospel as commanded, the Lord physically multiplied the church.

<p style="text-align:center">Strategic Planning</p>

The methodology of strategic planning is implemented in many organizations. This process helps an organization identify itself, focus its effort toward an expected future, and provides operation vehicle to reach the goal.[208] A strategic plan is a method of management that helps churches and organizations facilitate change and development through the use of seven steps that construct, develop, operate, evaluate, and direct an organization. Each step is a layer of development to completion and application. For organizations that want to grow and change, strategic planning is imperative because it is practical, addresses concerns, sustainable over time, and it integrates parts into a central focus. As an example, a trucking business startup can provide clarity.

Strategic Planning Example

A person starts ABC truck company. Step 1 is to develop a vision and set the mission for the business. Additionally, the vision and mission will lead to identifying the business's core values. Step 2 sets the objective for the company and illustrates the business at full operation. These objectives are benchmarks for the truck company at various points over the life of the business. Step 3 prepares the business for launch. This step assesses the operational needs to run the business, for example, the cost of trucks, fuel, payroll, and maintenance and the budget and financial capital. Step 4 selects the type of truck hauling to be performed and targets a customer

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[207] Darrell L. Guder, *Mission Church*, (Grand Rapids, MI; WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 187.

[208] Aubrey Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 25.

base based on the vision and mission of the business. Step 5 establishes the business. The trucks are working for the customers identified in Step 4. Step 6 evaluates the company's operation on a biannual and annual basis. This step identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the business, points out areas that need adjustment, and looks for growth opportunities by answering the question, how is the business doing. Step 7 builds on Step 6 by reviewing the evaluations and adjusting the business for continued success and development by adding elements that enhance the business and removing elements that hinder growth.

Applying Biblical Mandates to Today's Church

A Strategic Method for the Church

The author proposes that the African American church, by understanding and implementing the great commission, would grow and extend into the community and beyond. The vitality of new conversion can be infectious; yet, as they come to learn early in their discipleship journey, the vibrancy and vitality can be short-lived. Converts begin to realize that the gospel as not engaging in their daily life. The natural, physical, and social ramifications of life soon overshadow the gospel and lead to rejection. Some new believers come to despise or become offended by the gospel message. MacArthur states, "Eventually, as the disciple becomes more and more familiar with the gospel, that profound initial sense of wonder and amazement fades somewhat. The gospel is still good news, of course, but we begin to think of it as old news, and that sense of urgency is lost."[209] Evangelism is the key to church growth physically and spiritually. With this directive, Christians and pastors can develop a strategy that is a direct solution to the declining concern of the church and its membership.

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[209] MacArthur, *Evangelism*, vii.

The African American church would benefit from an assessment of the world condition as taught by Christ and by implementing evangelism to all nations. Jesus taught the severity of the world's condition and how to gain Christians by evangelizing the good news to all nations. In Matt 9:36-38, Jesus looked out and felt compassion for the lost, as Matthew writes, "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.'"[210] The disciples of Jesus Christ must share in the compassion and urgency to share the gospel of salvation to others; additionally, disciples are to pray for more disciples to join the mission of Christ to share the gospel. The call and the effectiveness of evangelism depend on the faith in and worship of God.

The following seven steps are for an African American church to consider while developing a strategic evangelism plan: Step 1, understand the mission; Step 2, set the objective for evangelism; Step 3, prepare for the mission, vision, and values; Step 4, presents the development of the Gospel; Step 5, implement the plan by beginning with small groups and migrating to the whole congregation; Step 6, evaluate the process on an annual basis; and Step 7, discuss future growth and evangelism expansion.

Step 1: Mission

Jesus Christ gave His mission to His disciples, "go and make disciples."[211] As they made disciples, new disciples continued to evangelize and make more disciples. This process is ongoing until the Lord returns. The author asserts that African American churches should

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[210] Matthew 9:36-39, NIV.

[211] Matthew 28:19, NIV.

participate in disciple-making, but according to the findings, many African American churches do not and that the church has stopped changing and growing spiritually through evangelism, resulting in a cessation of their movement toward God. Additionally, the findings demonstrate that the surveyed pastors do not prioritize evangelism in their African American churches. Thus, the author asserts that growth (i.e., spiritual and numerical) of the African American church could be realized through intentional evangelism.

A focus on evangelism would accomplish five strategic elements of growth development for the church. First, this focus would provide sensitivity to the Great Commission as the central mission given to the church by Jesus Christ—nothing is more pressing to the church than sharing the good news with the world. The church's foremost dedication to service should be to share the gospel. Second, this focus would reenergize hearts within believers regarding the purity of the Christian faith, which is the gospel. The gospel changes hearts and lives because it is the salvation gift from God and is the source of the believer's strength and courage to witness to others. Third, the focus would unite disciples to the global mission to evangelize willing individuals worldwide. Disciples from churches around the world collaborate on the same mission of spreading the gospel. The gospel was given to save all humanity; therefore, it has no limitations regarding people, borders, the destination of fulfillment, or timetable of completion. Fourth, this focus would increase the numerical and spiritual growth of the church as evangelism adds more disciples to His church until His return. The gospel grows the church by inviting people to accept the gospel and spiritually grows Christians as they witness the gospel manifested in themselves and others. Last, this focus would be a continuous strategy. Thus, the commitment to evangelize should be the goal of the church and the center of its ministry.

Step 2: Objective

Discipleship Readiness

The purpose of the author's evangelism plan is to energize African American churches to become intentional about faith and service. Christians are supposed to reflect on their conversion experience as a point of reference of God transforming power, and their story can be the point of engagement of sharing Christ with others. For example, throughout the Bible and church history, individual testimonies of God's saving grace have given rise to faith in knowing the Lord as Savior on the part of other individuals. The church is the witness and voice of the Lord Jesus Christ, and as such, the Lord places the message of salvation in the hand, heart, and voices of his believers to share with the world. Therefore, the African American church should also share in this service. The church has a purpose to reach humanity for Christ and should be engaged to witness in all aspects of its ministry.

For the church to be triumphant in evangelism, the church must have a plan that prepares Christians to embrace and accept their position as witnesses of Jesus Christ and the Gospel. The strategic plan must invoke worship, commitment, and praise to the Lord and engage their heart to share the Gospel as a lifestyle and purpose. This plan would place evangelism as the central priority of the church and continually encourage Christians to engage.

The Goal

The goal of the author's strategic evangelism plan for the African American church is to encourage Christians to share the gospel message of Jesus as lead by the Holy Spirit. God's message, carried throughout time from the early church until the present, were for those who live without hope of salvation. Evangelism is achievable by overcoming an individual's earthly discomforts and limitations by solely relying on the power and presence of the Holy Spirit to

lead. MacArthur declares, "The power of the Spirit in the gospel is not found in the messenger, but in the message."[212] For example, Phillip, inspired by the Holy Spirit, was led to the eunuch reading the Old Testament book of Isaiah.[213] As Phillip listened and allowed the Holy Spirit to control the situation, the eunuch received Jesus as Lord and His salvation for eternal life. The author suggests that Christians should follow this example of evangelism.

A sequential goal of a strategic plan is to be obedient to Christ and His command to all believers as the voice of Jesus Christ to the world and share His message of salvation with others. Encouragement is insufficient; therefore, the church must understand that practicing evangelism is obeying Jesus Christ's Great Commission. Obedience engages and enacts the power of the Holy Spirit within believers to do the Lord's will. Therefore, the church witnessed the power of God working to draw humanity on the basis of His gift of salvation and bring praise to Him by individuals who are obedient and evangelize. God desires obedience from His people, and the author asserts that the African American church should attempt to do so.

Step 3: Preparation

Core Mission

The core mission is rooted in the Great Commission of Jesus Christ. The author asserts that the African American church has one mission, and its accomplishment is related to vision and the interaction between the Holy Spirit and the believer. The church is guided by the Holy Spirit. The mission is simplistic in its wording; Jesus stated in Matthew, "go and make disciples."[214] Every believer is called to serve; thus, the African American church would achieve

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[212] MacArthur, *Evangelism*, 3.

[213] Acts 8:30, NIV.

[214] Matthew 28:19, NIV.

this mission through its obedience to God's word: encourage Christian service and teach evangelism as a connection to the core of the Christian faith and living.

Vision

The purpose of the strategic evangelism plan is to have all Christians adopt an intentional desire, willingness, and commitment to the Lord's command. In humility, Christians should share the same compassion as Christ through the message of salvation. The church accomplishes this by connecting the message of hope and obedience to the command of evangelism and trusting in the empowerment of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit enables the church to be an effective witness. Matthew reveals the vision for evangelism,

> Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."[215]

Jesus looked out, saw the sins of His followers, and was moved with "compassion." This compassion, in Greek, *eleos*, means "to feel passion with someone" or "to enter sympathetically into one's sorrow and pain."[216] The compassion for the lost is what Jesus instructs His disciples to have for all people. Therefore, as an expansion of Jesus Christ's earthly ministry, the church should do the same. The church in general and the African American church should see the world through the vision of Jesus Christ as compassionate servants, and by doing so, can extract the plan of Jesus Christ and continue to obey His will. This strategic evangelism plan envisions

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[215] Matthew 9:35-38, NIV.

[216] Brand and Mitchel, *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 325.

the African American church as a ministry compassionately engaged in witnessing the gospel of Jesus Christ in the communities and sending evangelists to help other churches evangelize.

US society, and as such the African American community, are affected by injustice, violence, drug abuse, gangs, poverty, low wages, malnourishment, and other disparities. Thus, to remedy these and other concerns, solutions are required. Notably, although the African American church is directly affected by these concerns, these concerns are also opportunities to compassionately witness the gospel. The African American church is an institution with the direct cultural understanding that can provide support. This strategic evangelism plan envisions the African American church evangelizing through these challenges in the community. Meeting the needs of people in their situation can be the best opportunity for sharing the Gospel. Helping people physically often opens individuals up spiritually to confession and concerns. Leaders should visualize which in areas the church can provide support to the community by collaborating with other organizations or by supplying support directly from the church. In addition, leaders should envision the impact the church can have in the community by using needed material substance to open the door to evangelism. The power of the Holy Spirit will provide guidance to the plan as believers embrace the vision.

Value

The value of the evangelism plan is the people served, and the people God saves. Today's Church is witnessing a decline in or stagnation of growth. The core value of the church should be the central mission, the Great Commission, of Jesus Christ. With this strategic evangelism plan, the mission remains content and is given value as the core ministry goal. The Lord said, "The

harvest truly is plentiful, but the workers are few."[217] No target group was provided. No demographics were selected. Regardless of culture or social standing, the gospel is for all and not reserved for one group. The Lord offers salvation to the world. The Apostle Paul says, "If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with the heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that profess your faith and are saved."[218] Christians should evangelize the totality of willing humanity and witness to whoever will listen to the good news. Thus, the author asserts that the core value of the African American church should be reaching people for Christ. Then, the church would uncover a measurable value that represents the community response to their presence and engagement.

The Evangelism Material

The Gospel is a timeless message of salvation to nonbelievers. The message remains the same, but the method of presentation may vary. Essential elements in an evangelism plan are as follows: connect with people, develop people spiritually, and multiply the church. Mass printing has been a suitable method for evangelism. Books and tracks effectively communicate the plan of salvation. As the church devises a plan and develops for training material, it should use materials that connect directly to its mission and vision and that focus on maintaining the core value of the plan. For example, the book *Share Jesus Without Fear*, by William Faye, is an evangelism teaching book and program used by many churches to train congregations and small group ministries in evangelism. Other programs are also available. Such programs are beneficial for churches that need help with developing a plan, training, or starting a plan. The African

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[217] Matthew 9:37, NIV.

[218] Romans 10:8-9, NIV.

American church could use previously printed material or develop their own materials. Notably, all materials should focus on the social, cultural, and spiritual factors of the community.

Cost Factor

The cost to the African American church must be evaluated against physical and material resources. People have limited time, and how they spend it must be considered in relation to evangelism. A physical resource means that a church has a budget. Every church allocates its physical resources of, for example, property and programs. African American churches should plan intentionally, financially, and physically to conduct the Gospel of Jesus Christ. More resources should be allocated to increase the church's attention to evangelism. Additionally, some material resources are not widely available or used within African American churches, for example, an evangelism plan. Therefore, because no point of reference in the literature is available to guide the church in developing a plan, this thesis project is the starting point. All the materials used will be new; therefore, the church should provide financial resources to offset the cost.

Step 4: Presentation

In preparation to present the Gospel, a believer should pray, train, assess, connect, present, and wait on the Lord. The service of evangelism is void without direct acknowledgment of the Lord. Time for prayer should be part of the preparation and presentation. Training Christians to speak the Gospel message from conviction and love is imperative. Training is the opportunity to convince Christians to share the gospel message they believe with conviction. Understanding the culture of individuals being witnessed should also be emphasized. Believers are led by the Holy Spirit to service, and they present the Gospel to willing listeners. Since being

instructed to be a witness, they too share the Gospel message that Jesus Christ is the Savior. Believers should wait for the power of the Holy Spirit to render the work of salvation.

Once a person receives the gospel message, the duty of the church and its members is to embrace new Christians. Evangelism is the first step in developing and growing disciples. Evangelism is not predicated on a one-time presentation of the gospel. Evangelism, as a central mission to the church, is the basis of an individual's relationship with Jesus Christ. Therefore, evangelism continues throughout the life of all Christians as a conviction and confession of faith and hope.

Step 5: Implementation

Soft Launch

In a soft launch, implement the plan in a small targeted group, identified as having a passion to share the gospel. Use the materials to teach the small group how to use the evangelism plan. Allow individuals to provide additional information and ideas to the evangelism plan to fit their personality because the purpose of the plan is to involve people in evangelism and not to teach a program. By using the small group training and implementation, this method provides a forecast of the positive aspects and negative challenges of the program and identify areas for improvement before implementation in the entire church. Evaluate the soft launch by performing Step 6 to obtain an initial adjustment to improve the efforts in the hard launch.

Hard Launch

A hard launch implements the evangelism plan church-wide. Every ministry should be made accountable for teaching and implementing evangelism as part of their service. The strategic evangelism plan is a means to focus the church on serving as Christ commanded. All ministries must be in alignment with this one mission. Give leadership to evangelism in every

worship service, church meeting, and classroom study to demonstrate the commitment to the Great Commission.

Step 6: Evaluation

After evangelism plan implementation, an annual evaluation is necessary to assess its effectiveness in growing the church and address two questions: deviation and achievement. Coutta says, "Is the change being implemented as planned or has it deviated off course… and how effective is the change, and is it achieving the desired results?"[219] The church must access its plan's potential strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. SWOT analysis is a tool used to evaluate the church's condition or the condition of any program[220] and identify what works and what needs to change.[221]

Strength

What part of the strategic evangelism plan was successful?

What was the advantage of using the materials chosen compared with past evangelism efforts?

Weakness

Which areas of the strategic evangelism plan should be improved?

In which areas was the plan poorly implemented?

Which parts of the plan should be eliminated?

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[219] Ramsey Coutta, *A Practical Guide for Successful Church Change* (Bloomington: Universe, 2008), 86.

[220] Ibid., 88.

[221] Ibid.

Opportunities

Is the church taking advantage of all available resources to conduct the strategic evangelism plan?

Has the plan resulted in church growth?

Has the plan resulted in the church's spiritual growth?

How can the church us the evangelism plan to create new opportunities?

Threats

What prevented us from achieving the goals of the strategic evangelism plan?

What are other evangelism efforts doing better?

What is the biggest threat to the health and vitality of the strategic evangelism plan and church growth?

Step 7: Future

After the African American church evaluates the implementation of its strategic evangelism plan by following the author's seven steps, they can consider new enhancements. The strategy is an ongoing process and procedure that should expand and contract as the evangelism ministry grows or shrinks. Opportunities for growth and realignment are always available to maintain the central focus of Jesus Christ's Great Commission. Church leadership can try new materials that provide different means to share the Gospel. Notably, the methods and techniques used may not be effective for only one group; thus, the process should be tailored to the target group. In summary, the author suggests that the African American church and other

churches supplant their current priority to implement this evangelism plan in an attempt to continuously motivate their membership in evangelism ministries.

Strategic Evangelism Plan Summary

Step 1 illustrates the meaning and method of the mission. Step 2 provides the objective of evangelism. Step 3 prepares believers in, for example, mission, vision, and values. Step 4 shows how to clearly and sensitively present the gospel. Step 5 institutes small groups and implements the plan in the entire church. Step 6 evaluates the process and procedures of the plan. Finally, Step 7 uncovers and cultivates opportunities for the future. This method of strategic evangelism planning can be used by any pastor and can help churches obey Jesus' command to witness the gospel to the world.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Many churches, including African American churches, have stagnant or declining membership, and increasing membership is challenging. God's plan for churches to grow is to follow the central mission to the church, the Great Commission of Jesus Christ. The goal of this thesis project was to observe a correlation between evangelism and church growth in the African American church, and none was observed. Thus, the author asserts that the pastors of the African American churches that do not follow the central mission of Jesus Christ to evangelize the community and the world will observe no significant measurable amount of numerical membership growth.

Jesus, while on earth, provided his disciples with many teachings. A key passage of scripture that directly pertains to the need for evangelism is in the book of Matthew. In small towns and villages, Jesus healed the sick and taught and preached the gospel. Thus, Jesus likely wants his followers to continue to share this same compassion and care for humanity. After his resurrection, Jesus reiterated this point with a greater emphasis on the Great Commission. Therefore, with a disciple's commitment to share the Gospel, "the Lord added daily those who were being saved."[222] If the African American church would continue their teaching of Christ, they would experience continuous growth as well. The church must act as commanded by Jesus Christ, which is to evangelize. If the church believes that the Great Commission is the central mission, it must do the work that it believes in and is called to do.

Disciples of Jesus Christ must continue to uphold the central mission of the church. Sharing the gospel continues to be a direct plan for church growth. Thiessen says that not all

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[222] Acts 2:47, NIV.

readers and hearers of the gospel message response to the call of salvation. Thiessen shares, "However, the church is bound by duty to give the whole world an opportunity to know about Jesus Christ and accept his salvation."[223] The church is obligated to respond to Jesus' call to be His "witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."[224] Therefore, the church has the responsibility to share the Gospel with unbelievers whenever possible. The church cannot deny Jesus Christ's call to witness the Gospel.

This study has shown that the annual growth of churches in general, and specifically African American churches, is stagnant or in decline and that the surveyed pastors of African American churches with a strategic plan for evangelism reported the same trends. Notably, many of the pastors believed in evangelism. The church size did not grow in proportion to the data provided by the pastors surveyed. The data of this thesis project show that many of the surveyed pastors had an unclear view of evangelism. The pastors recorded evangelism growth without a plan for evangelism. Others showed no growth with a plan for evangelism in place. Some pastors recorded evangelism growth with no change and in church size.

This study has limitations. First, the vast majority of surveyed pastors did not return the survey, or returned an incomplete survey. Thus, perhaps, the questions were unclear or so off-putting that they refused to participate. Further research may obtain a higher rate of response by conducting a pilot survey. Second, based on the data, the pastors may have not had the knowledge or ability to lead their congregations in a strategic plan for evangelism. According to the pastors' responses to the questionnaire (Chapter 3), the majority agree that evangelism is the central mission of the church. Notably, the pastors' responses have generated more questions

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[223] Thiessen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, 332.

[224] Acts 1:8, NIV.

than can be answered in the scope of this paper. The author concludes that the effectiveness of the African American church to evangelize is based on the understanding and relevance of evangelism to today's African American culture.

A third limitation is that no attempt was made to assess if African American culture and its complex experience with social justice influence today's size and growth of the African American church. A fourth limitation is that the distortions of the Gospel and the negative impact they have had on the church's understanding of its mission in the world may have affected the pastors' efforts to express the seriousness of a Christian's responsiveness to evangelism. A fifth limitation was that the survey did not assess the educational level of the pastor, which would have been helpful because the purpose of this project was to provide pastors and congregations of churches, including African American churches, a method to fulfill the call of Christ to evangelize the world with the Gospel message.

A sixth limitation was that the data provided to answer questions three and question seven were contradictory, that is, although all evangelistic efforts may not directly increase attendance at Sunday services, the author expected an increase in membership over the respective period. Thus, further research is necessary to validate the evangelism plans by and church growth of African American churches. This data might represent the need to address the retention of membership while embarking on outreach efforts. In addition, the data shows a need for leaders to lead their congregations as Christ commanded because Christ commanded his followers to serve as witnesses of the Gospel to the world for all time.

The strategic evangelism plan presented in Chapter 4 provides an outline for a church to implement evangelism. This purpose of this processing tool is to get congregations to be intentional about the call of Christ to witness the world and provide a starting point for leading

the church to fulfill the Great Commission as Christ attended. Evangelism should be a priority for the church, and resources are required for evangelism to flourish. Each step of the process leads the church's achievement of the next step. The seven steps are aligned to promoted evangelism within the church. There is always room for growth, change, and redirection; however, the mission and vision should never change.

Pastors and leaders must champion the plan before their congregation continually. A continued imperative for the Gospel of Jesus Christ is to share with the nonbelieving world. If the leadership focuses on evangelism, the church will be willing to complete the process. Pastors should continually teach the biblical mission of Christ to evangelize as part of their worship and teaching. In addition, pastors and leaders should be directly involved with the presentation and operation of the process. Jesus was a servant leader. All Jesus commanded his disciples to do, he did before them. Pastors should follow Jesus' leadership. Pastors must lead their congregation by directly serving alongside them. The leadership's presence gives vitality to the work being done.

Based on this study, the author asserts that African American church leaders should have a plan to evangelize. The proposed plan is an example for pastors and leaders to start a strategic evangelism process for their churches. African American pastors that remarked that the Great Commission is the central mission; thus, the church should implement a plan that is functional and relevant to the congregation. Pastors must lead congregations with the understanding that evangelism is God's plan for the reconciliation for humanity. The gospel is God's will to reconnecting sinner to a relationship with Him through the life and ministry of Christ Jesus. By developing a strategic plan for evangelism, pastors and church leaders have the opportunity to teach, grasp, test, implement, evaluate, alter, and renew the plan periodically. With a working plan, the church has the potential for physical and spiritual growth. Spiritual growth for believers

is from obedience to the call of Christ Jesus. By having a strategic evangelism plan in place, the church will show its commitment to Jesus' call to evangelize the world. In turn, the Lord will honor the church community for their commitment and obedience to Him by supplying additional believers to join them in their worship, witness, and service toward Him.

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Appendix A

Analysis of Questionnaires

Survey	How Long have you served as pastor at your current Church?	What is your average Sunday attendance?	What was your average Sunday attendance two years ago?	What was your average Sunday attendance three years ago?	What was your average Sunday attendance five years ago?	Growth	Does your church have an evangelism outreach process?	Does your church have a strategic plan in place for evangelism, that includes a mission statement, vision, core values, assessment, strategy, method of implementation and evaluation of the process?
1	3-7 years	100-200	100-200	100-200	100-150	increase	yes	Not Sure
2	7-10 years	200-500	200	200	200	null	yes	yes
3	3-7 years	50-100	50-70	55-70	n/a	null	no	no
4	0-1 years	20-50	65	75	50-75	decrease	yes	yes
5	7-10 years	50-100	50-100	100-200	100-200	decrease	yes	yes
6	1-3 years	0-20	0	0	n/a	null	yes	no
7	3-7 years	200-500	250	250	250	null	yes	yes
8	7-10 years	200-500	350	300	300	increase	yes	no
9	7-10 years	500+	550	500	450	increase	no	no
10	7-10 years	100-200	150	150	150	null	no	no
11	3-7 years	500+	500+	N/A	n/a	increase	no	no
12	7-10 years	500+	1000	N/A	n/a	increase	yes	yes
13	7-10 years	100-200	200+	200	170	increase	yes	yes
14	7-10 years	50-100	90	80	90	null	no	no
15	1-3 years	0-20	27	27	n/a	null	no	no
16	7-10 years	100-200	150	150	150	null	yes	no
17	7-10 years	20-50	185	180	170	increase	yes	yes
18	1-3 years	100-200	50	N/A	n/a	increase	no	no
19	7-10 years	100-200	125	145	150	decrease	yes	no
20	7-10 years	100-200	200	210	230	decrease	yes	yes
21	3-7 years	50-100	100	100	125	decrease	yes	yes

Survey	If you answered yes to question 5, how long have you had this strategic plan in place?	How many people have been converted through the church's evangelism outreach efforts in the past year?	How many people have been converted through the church's evangelism outreach efforts in the past two years?	How many people have been converted through the church's evangelism outreach efforts in the past three years?	How many people have been converted through the church's evangelism outreach efforts in the past five years?	Does Your church believe evangelism is the Lord's plan for the church?	Does your church believe following the Lord's "Great Commission" found in Matthew 28:19-20 is the central mission of the Church?
1	n/a	3	12	37	64	yes	yes
2	1-3 years	10	n/a	n/a	n/a	yes	yes
3	n/a	3	n/a	n/a	n/a	yes	yes
4	3-5 years	12	12 or 14	12	12 or 15	yes	yes
5	7+	8	10	9	12	yes	yes
6	n/a	0	n/a	n/a	n/a	yes	yes
7	7+	30	n/a	n/a	n/a	yes	yes
8	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	yes	yes
9	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	yes	yes
10	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	yes	yes
11	n/a	20	n/a	n/a	n/a	yes	yes
12	7+	150	n/a	n/a	n/a	yes	yes
13	1-3 years	9	0	0	0	yes	yes
14	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	no	no
15	n/a	0	0	0	n/a	yes	yes
16	n/a	n/a	15	25	40	Yes	Yes
17	7+	3	5	5	6	yes	yes
18	n/a	0	n/a	n/a	n/a	No	yes
19		0	0	0	2	n/a	yes
20	5-7 years	3	5	1	10	yes	yes
21	1-3 years	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	yes	yes

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

November 13, 2017

Jeffrey Dennis
IRB Exemption 3003.111317: The Effectiveness of the African American Church Evangelism Outreach Process

 Dear Jeffrey Dennis,

 The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

 Your study falls under the exemption category 46.101(b)(2), which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:101(b):

 (2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

 Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by submitting a change in protocol form or a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Exemption number.

 If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible changes to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

 Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
The Graduate School

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