The Power of a Personal Testimony Booklet: Increasing Gospel Witness in Everyday Life

A Thesis Project Report Submitted to
the Faculty of Liberty School of Divinity
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Ministry
Department of Evangelism and Church Planting

by

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Lynchburg, Virginia
February 20, 2021
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THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT


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Evangelism is a key component of the Great Commission and a major responsibility for every Christ-Follower. The practice of personal evangelism, however, is frequently neglected by a majority of Christians. This project will initially examine the current state of personal evangelism in America and the scriptural expectation for all Christians to be frequent communicators of the gospel message. The ultimate purpose of this project is to demonstrate that a member of LivingStone Community Church can increase their Gospel witness in everyday life through the use of a written Personal Testimony Booklet. This pocket-sized booklet consists of two components. The first is a description of the three stages of one’s personal testimony. The second component consists of a unique presentation of the gospel message based upon that person’s spiritual journey. The goal of this thesis will shed light on the value of writing and distributing a personal testimony booklet. Practical suggestions will be offered for how to help church members develop and implement this evangelism method. Action research will primarily examine the success of this evangelism tool in increasing gospel witness in everyday life through surveys and interviews.

Word Count: 187

Keywords
Evangelism, Gospel Literature, Gospel Witness, Personal Evangelism, Personal Testimony Booklet, Spiritual Autobiography
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<td>PTB</td>
<td>Personal Testimony Booklet</td>
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<td>SBC</td>
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Before Jesus ascended into heaven, he challenged his disciples to continue the work that he had started. He instructed them to “be his witnesses” in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). Over the years, this mission has been passed down from one Christian generation to the next. While personal evangelism is the responsibility of every believer, it has been frequently neglected by many Christians.¹ This thesis will initially examine the current state of personal evangelism in America but will concentrate more specifically on the evangelistic activity of members of LivingStone Community Church. The ultimate purpose of this project will be to demonstrate that members of LivingStone Community Church (LCC) can increase their gospel witness in everyday life through the use of a written Personal Testimony Booklet (PTB). While LCC’s corporate evangelism plan will include a variety of methods, perhaps no other method, has a greater potential to help church members overcome common obstacles in personal evangelism and encourage proactive gospel witness than a Personal Testimony Booklet.

Ministry Context

The ministry context for this thesis centers on the membership of LivingStone Community Church in Colonial Beach, VA. LCC is a member of the Southern Baptist Convention of Virginia (SBCV) and is a three-year-old church plant in a small, rural town. The church consists of about thirty covenant members and averages fifty in attendance on Sunday mornings. As the pastor, this author first arrived in Colonial Beach six years ago to accept the pastorate of another church in town. Unfortunately, after three years, the church experienced a

¹ This concept is further explored and fully documented under subheading “Problem Presented,” page 9.
split over the authority of God’s Word. The pastor and many of the conservative members left to start LivingStone Community Church. In doing so, this author agreed to continue shepherding these precious members, moving Sunday services down the street to the local community center. LivingStone is unique as a church plant; however, in that the average age of its membership is approximately 60 years old.

Colonial Beach Demographics

Colonial Beach, Virginia, is a small town located on the Potomac River. Approximately 3,500 residents live in the town with an additional 1,500 people in outlying homes within a two-mile arc to the south. This means that LCC’s overall target population is around 5,000 people (3,500 in town, 1,500 outside). In addition, Colonial Beach is considered a summer vacation spot for residents of northern Virginia, and the local population swells by 20%-40% during the summer months. Many people own a secondary residence in town and visit during the weekends. According to the 2010 census, approximately 65% (3,250) of the local population has no religious affiliation, 10% (500) belong to a mainline denomination, 10% (500) identify as Catholic, and 15% (750) consider themselves to be Evangelical Christians.2

Outreach Biography

Considering LCC’s origins and the spiritual maturity of the believers who felt led to form the nucleus of this new church plant, it is regrettable to admit that active gospel proclamation has been limited to a minority of church members. LCC members express strong agreement with the Great Commission on a theological level, yet personal evangelism is gravely absent. Even with a continuous weekly emphasis and modeling by a pastor with an evangelistic gifting, little progress

has been made within the church body over the past three years. While many have verbalized a heart for the lost, few members have exhibited maturity in relation to the following qualities: (1) Feeling equipped as an ambassador of Christ; (2) Regularly praying for those who are not saved; (3) Having a thorough understanding of the gospel message; (4) Interacting regularly with lost people and seeking to cultivate friendships with those they meet; (5) Boldly and lovingly taking advantage of opportunities to share the gospel weekly; and (6) Expressing an overall intentionality to live on mission for Christ. In the past three years, the church has focused on corporate outreach opportunities while simultaneously highlighting individual responsibility to share the gospel as part of one’s normal weekly lifestyle. This multi-level approach for both corporate and personal evangelism is summarized below.

**Corporate Evangelism: New Resident Outreach**

One method of corporate outreach that LCC has adopted involves visiting new homeowners who have recently moved to the area.³ A visiting team warmly welcomes each homeowner and presents a house-warming gift that usually includes a $10 certificate to a local eatery, an invitation card (information on the church), and a written gospel presentation from the pastor. Teams are trained to engage in friendly conversation to find out more about the new residents and make them feel welcome to the area. The ultimate goal is to switch to spiritual things as the Holy Spirit leads. Sometimes the meetings are short. At other times a conversation

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³ *Bless Every Home: How to be a Light for Christ in your Neighborhood.* Affiliated with the SBC of Virginia. Four ways your church can bless every home: Prayer; Care; Share; Disciple. Accessed January 18, 2020. [https://blesseveryhome.com/](https://blesseveryhome.com/). A monthly list is purchased from the county clerk of court for a small sum. Because the list contains new home purchases at the county level, we narrow the list to include only homes within our immediate 2-mile area. Our updated list usually averages about 10 homes each month. Over the past two years, LCC members have visited over 200 homes. The gospel in written form has been presented within each home packet. Only about 10% of homes deserve a follow up and only 25% of those follow-ups lead to a significant relationship established with the church (e.g. salvation, eventual membership, or attendance). This ministry is an adaption of Bless Every Home, encouraged by the SBC of Virginia.
may last over an hour. Ideally, teams are able to do a combination of the following: (1) Find out where new homeowners stand spiritually; (2) Share some information about LivingStone Community Church; (3) Pray for personal needs; and (4) on rare occasions share the gospel verbally with interested homeowners (the gospel in written form is included in each packet). Notes from each visit are cataloged, and follow-up visits are arranged if the initial meeting went well and a meaningful connection was established. This ministry has typically attracted the participation of approximately 25% of LCC’s church membership at one time or another and averaged about ten homes per month. It is generally understood that cold calling “is not a fruitful methodology for reaching people for Christ,” but that new arrivals to an area are a generally receptive group to whom churches should reach out. As relates to this thesis, one problem discovered by this author was that while team members almost universally extended invitations, the gospel was rarely, if ever, communicated. As an intermediate step toward greater gospel witness, this author framed a gospel presentation, in letter format, to be inserted in each welcome packet.

Servant Evangelism Projects and Events

The second component of LCC’s corporate evangelism strategy consists of specially planned outreach events that provide LCC members the opportunity to demonstrate love toward their community and open doors for possible gospel conversations. Since this author believes that the most effective evangelism endeavors occur at an individual level, these corporate outreach events have been used sparingly in an attempt to equip new Christians, increase church-wide evangelistic momentum, and expose the Colonial Beach community to LivingStone’s

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Gary L McIntosh, Growing God's Church: How People Are Actually Coming to Faith Today (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2016), 107, 128.
unique church family. The goal has been to utilize one servant evangelism project in the life of the church every two months, though summer months usually provide the opportunity to do more.

During one servant evangelism project, LCC partnered with a local community group hosting *a free* Saturday night outdoor movie for the community. Also, free of charge, LCC was able to provide snacks, drinks, and balloon modeling (animals, etc.) for those who attended. Before the movie, participating church members were encouraged to serve the community while proactively seeking to initiate conversation with attendees to cultivate friendship and discern their spiritual condition. As each personal interaction dictated, members were advised to offer a listening ear, an encouraging word, a meaningful prayer, an invitation to church, and/or share some gospel truth as appropriate. The highest objective, of course, was that the Holy Spirit would orchestrate an opportunity for church members to share a simple but clear gospel presentation.

Another servant evangelism project that LCC has conducted in the past involved partnering with the local McDonalds to offer free ice cream cones (and animal balloons for kids) to all patrons entering the establishment during a particular window of time on a chosen night of the week. The spiritual goals remained the same as the project described above. Similarly, during each of the past two summers, this author has encouraged members to join him in handing ice-cream certificates to beach-goers. Purchased from an ice-cream shop located just a block away from the beach, the coupons have proved to be a great way to meet new people and strike up a conversation, not to mention a refreshing way for beach-goers to conclude their hot afternoon. After handing out the coupons, teams were instructed to ask individuals in each party if there were any burdens or requests that they could pray for before moving on. In many cases, a
positive response to prayer led to further spiritual conversation and an opportunity to present the gospel.

**Individual Evangelism: The 3 Circles**

Professor Jim Stitzinger states, “The gauge of a church’s individual effectiveness is obedience on an individual level. The gospel commission is a call for individual disciples to engage individual sinners.”

To accomplish this, LivingStone Community Church has identified “The Three Circles” as an effective method of sharing the gospel on an individual level. Having been introduced to “The Three Circles” model through lectures in Liberty’s School of Divinity EVCP 840 course, this pastor decided to share this witnessing method with his church hoping it would become the official template of personal evangelism for many church members. Up to this point, multiple methods had been taught. It was believed that equipping members in using this one method would offer the church an official standard for personal witness. Training commenced for several weeks, engaging members on three primary levels: Sunday mornings, small groups, and through 1:1 discipleship venues. Videos were shown; live presentations were offered. Volunteers were even solicited to present in front of the church what they had practiced privately. The gospel tract “LIFE: 3 Circles Life Conversation Guide” was passed out to aid in further review and practice.

Since the initial presentation, the pastor has had several members share during a corporate worship service their experience in using “The Three Circles” while out in the community. One member shared how God led her to present “The Three Circles” to a

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6 The lecture containing “The Three Circles” gospel presentation was offered on week 4 of EVCP-840 offered by Liberty University School of Divinity.

stranger at the laundromat, who subsequently made a decision for Christ. However, despite ongoing emphasis, initial enthusiasm has died down and this method has not offered a long-term solution to helping a majority of LCC members walk as regular gospel witnesses.

LCC’s Vision

The excitement of living in a small town and envisioning the possibility of revival changing the dynamics of LCC’s local community is thrilling. This possibility is lost in places where a single church is faced with the momentous task of reaching a large city. A small town like Colonial beach is a different story. LCC’s goal has remained centered on reaching 100% of its target population (5,000 Residents – 500 Evangelical Believers = 4,500) with the gospel message on a personalized level. It is LCC’s prayer that 10% (450) would experience a new-birth through responding to the gospel message. Even though the 2010 census revealed that 35% of the community population identified to some degree with Christianity, it is this author's contention based on six years of local pastoral ministry that only one-third of those who profess to be Christian/Catholic are born-again believers. This means that approximately 90% of residents in and around Colonial Beach do not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.  

LCC remains committed to reaching these residents in addition to the thousands of visitors from northern Virginia who come to town during the summer months. To see this vision accomplished, personal gospel witness must increase. Following a collaborative effort between church members and this researcher, the implementation of a unique evangelism tool was selected as the next step in pursuit of this vision.

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8 Within the Colonial Beach community, there are many Catholics, members of liberal, mainline churches, and people who identify as “Christian” but do not attend church anywhere. Many of these individuals are “hoping” in salvation by good works and do not have an accurate understanding of the gospel. They are not living for Christ in any meaningful way nor exhibiting the characteristics of genuine salvation described in 1 John.
Problem Presented

The Lack of Evangelism and Church Health in America

Thom Rainer, in his book, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church*, divides American churches into four main categories. According to Rainer, only 10% of churches are healthy. The remaining 90% show symptoms of sickness, are very sick, or are dying. In another source, Rainer laments that approximately 80% of nearly 400,000 American churches are either declining or have plateaued. Southern Baptist Churches are not fairing much better. In a recent study of 1,000 Southern Baptist churches, Rainer found that 65% were in decline or had plateaued. Of the 35% that were growing, only 6-7% were experiencing growth primarily through conversions. The rest, as Reggie McNeal so eloquently points out, were growing in size as a result of “the migration of Christians moving from one church to another…cannibalization of smaller membership churches by emerging superchurches.”

Reporting on a 2019 Lifeway research project involving 2,500 protestant churchgoers, Aaron Earls highlighted the finding that only 4% reported sharing the gospel an average of at least twice monthly. 55% of respondents had not shared at all in the past six months, and 25%

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said they had shared only once or twice in that six-month period.\textsuperscript{14} These numbers appear to
coincide with statistics gathered by the Barna Research Group. A 2013 study revealed 52\% of
born-again Christians and 31\% of “evangelical” believers had not shared the gospel at all in the
past year.\textsuperscript{15} A 2018 survey found that only 64\% of practicing Christians believe sharing their
faith is the responsibility of every Christian, while 29\% said evangelism was the local church’s
responsibility rather than their own.\textsuperscript{16} Additional research conducted by George Barna revealed
that only 1\% of all adult believers in America feel they have the “gift” of evangelism, and only
4\% say sharing their faith with nonbelievers is the most important objective in their lives.\textsuperscript{17}
Personal evangelism is simply not a priority for a majority of believers.

The Lack of Evangelism and Church Health at LCC

LivingStone Community Church is not growing. While there are undoubtedly several
factors involved, one important consideration is the issue of personal evangelism. Only a small
handful of church members are regularly engaging the lost as faithful gospel witnesses even
though evangelism is the responsibility of every believer. The willingness of LCC members to
serve, extend invitations to attend church service, engage in spiritual conversations, or even offer
to pray for the lost is certainly praiseworthy. Still, none of these activities constitutes biblical
evangelism. Biblical evangelism involves the proclamation of the gospel message, accompanied

\textsuperscript{14}Aaron Earls, “Evangelism More Prayed for Than Practiced by Churchgoers.”

\textsuperscript{15} Barna Group. “Is Evangelism Going Out of Style?” In subcategory: Research Releases in Faith and

\textsuperscript{16} Barna Group. “Sharing Faith Is Increasingly Optional to Christians,” In subcategory: Research Releases
https://www.barna.com/research/sharing-faith-increasingly-optional-christians/

by a lifestyle that affirms that message and must be present in the life of every member of LCC.¹⁸

To achieve this goal, several evangelism obstacles must be overcome. LCC members admit to struggling with apathy, business, fear, and a lack of intentionality. Some are unsure of their ability to communicate the gospel accurately. Others recognize how difficult it is to engage a lost person long enough to present the life-transforming truth of Christ entirely. Ultimately, the problem is LivingStone Community church members have fallen short of Jesus’ command to “be” witnesses and are not sharing the gospel message as frequently as they should with the lost around them. To help overcome these hurdles, an additional method of evangelism is suggested that will equip and empower LCC members to be more proactive in sharing their faith on a long-term basis.

**Purpose Statement**

After decades of sound research, well-known Christian author and analyst George Barna shared an important finding in his book, *The Habits of Highly Effective Churches*. He claimed that what separated highly effective churches from most others was their ability to engage in evangelism strategically.¹⁹ In other words, they were intentional, knowing that people do not come to Christ accidentally. With respect to this truth, the objective of this thesis is to focus in on one part of LCC’s strategic evangelism plan, the intentional use of a written Personal Testimony

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¹⁸ Dave Early and David Wheeler, *Evangelism Is* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 183. Effective evangelism involves both *Proclamation* of the gospel and *Demonstration* of the gospel (this last term Earley refers to this as *Affirmation*) “Proclamation describes giving a clear explanation of the gospel to a non-Christian while affirmation describes living the character of Christ. Proclamation is preaching the gospel with our lips. Affirmation is preaching the gospel with our lives. Proclamation is doing. Affirmation is being. Proclamation is telling the truth. Affirmation is living the truth. Effective evangelism, especially of secularized people, requires both proclamation and affirmation” (183).

Booklet in reaching the lost for Christ. The purpose of this thesis project is to enable LivingStone Community Church members to share the gospel more frequently through the use of a Personal Testimony Booklet. In fact, the writing and distribution of a PTB has a number of excellent advantages that will enable LCC members to grow in spiritual maturity and overcome common obstacles to personal evangelism.

**Basic Assumptions**

One of the underlying assumptions that undergirds this thesis project is the belief that a majority of people would be willing to read a pocket-sized booklet of 20-50 pages. According to a 2018 study, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics found that Americans between the age of 15-55 generally spend an average of only six to eight minutes a day reading.\(^{20}\) The figures are a little higher for those fifty-five and up.\(^ {21}\) In addition to age, both race and education are significant factors.\(^ {22}\) Based on this research, the assumption is that most of the people a witness meets, develops a personal connection with, and then offers a personal testimony booklet to, will take the time to read the booklet.

The second assumption inherent in this evangelistic model holds that church members are more likely to pass out gospel literature that is personal in nature rather than generic gospel tracts.

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\(^{21}\) The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that the average time spent reading each day for those between the age of 55-65 is sixteen minutes. For those 65 years old and up, the average time jumps to between thirty-five and forty-eight minutes.

\(^{22}\) Those with white ethnicity were found to read an average of 17.5 minutes a day while those of African American ethnicity only 7 minutes. This statistic is significant because the local mission’s field of which LivingStone Community Church is a part is comprised of 78% white residents and the current demographic of our church is currently white. The study also found a correlation between education level and time spent reading daily. The more educated a person was, the more time they devoted to reading. The average white resident with at least some college or higher was found to spend between 16-30 minutes reading daily.
or material about someone else’s Christian experience. For clarification, the intended purpose of a personal testimony booklet is not designed for mass distribution to absolute strangers. Gospel tracts are better suited for such a purpose. Instead, a PTB is a resource to be utilized by members who have cultivated at least some degree of friendship with a lost person but have not been able to share the gospel with that person yet verbally. The concept of a personal testimony booklet assumes a measure of personal pride in one’s testimony and a greater willingness to proactively distribute it because of the personal time and energy invested. This assumption may later be tested in the course of this thesis project.

**Definitions**

**Evangelism** - According to Mack Stiles evangelism may be defined as the task of "teaching (heralding, proclaiming, preaching) the gospel (the message from God that leads us to salvation) with the aim (hope, desire, goal) to persuade (convince, convert)."  


25 Packer., 41.

Evangelism first involves *verbal proclamation* of biblical truth where Christians make themselves “mouthpieces for God’s message of mercy to sinners.”

As described earlier, evangelism is not an umbrella term that refers to all that the church does to serve its community. Good works motivated by love may help to prepare the heart of potential listeners and increase the likelihood that they positively respond to the gospel message, but evangelism is restricted to verbal communication of the gospel message alone. Apart from this specific message, biblical evangelism has not taken place.
The second component of evangelism involves heralding the *good news*. Christians are sent by God into the world to extend an offer of forgiveness and restoration to rebellious mankind. As Packer explains, the message “begins with information and ends with an invitation. The invitation is God’s summons to mankind to come to the Savior and find life” through the biblical means of repentance and faith. For a more thorough description, please refer to the following definition, “Gospel,” below.

Third, evangelism has one primary objective: *conversion*. The ultimate goal is to help listeners understand how they can be forgiven and restored in their relationship with God through Jesus Christ and persuade them to make a decision for Him. While evangelism’s ultimate goal is conversion, Early, Packer and Stiles all recognize that the requirement of a response in those who hear the message should not be included as part of its definition. The results of biblical evangelism are entirely up to the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. Early encourages witnesses to think of evangelism as a “process leading to an event.” Effective evangelism is similar to the journey couples go through leading to their wedding day. Two independent parties first meet and grow in their knowledge and trust of one another. Similarly, before people make a serious commitment to Christ, they enter a season of investigation. Thus, evangelistic success involves finding out where people are at on their spiritual journey and helping them take one step closer to “an eternal marriage relationship with the heavenly Bridegroom Jesus Christ.”

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26 Packer, 91.


29 Ibid.
Gospel - The clarity and accuracy by which the gospel message is proclaimed is an essential measuring stick determining effective evangelism. As representatives of the King, Christian ambassadors will be held responsible for the accurate delivery of the message that has been entrusted to them. The gospel is so fundamental to the Christian faith that it cannot be taken for granted. To engage in effective evangelism, a clear understanding of the gospel message is crucial and must be briefly defined here.

The gospel consists of four essential ingredients summarized best by the four words: God, Sin, Christ, Response. First, the gospel is about God, who he is, His character, holiness and sovereign Creator and Sustainer of life. Secondly, the gospel is about sin, how all humans have fallen short of God’s moral standard of holiness. They are guilty, condemned criminals, alienated from God and helpless to change both their nature and their eternal situation on their own. Third, the gospel is about Jesus Christ, the incarnation of God in human flesh. God entered His creation as a man to save men from eternal judgment by the substitutionary atonement accomplished through the cross of Calvary. The gospel involves Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection from the dead. Finally, the gospel calls for a human response. God commands all people to repent and believe the claims of Christ. Repentance begins with a change of heart and mind. It is an act of surrender, a turning from sin, and a forsaking of self. Faith, on the other hand, constitutes the flip side of the same coin. Faith speaks of a total commitment involving three aspects of one’s being: the mind, the emotions, and the will. It compels one to personally entrust themselves to Jesus Christ, to yield in total submission, and to commit one’s life to His promises completely.

Personal Testimony Booklet - The term Personal Testimony Booklet (PTB) will be used to refer to a 4” x 6” pocket-sized booklet of approximately 20-50 pages composed of two major

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parts. The first part will consist of a description of the author’s personal testimony detailing three stages: (1) what their life was like before they encountered Christ; (2) the circumstances describing how they came to hear the gospel and respond personally to commit their life to Christ; (3) and a description of the transformation that has taken place after entering into a personal relationship with Jesus. The second part of the personal testimony booklet consists of a thorough presentation of the gospel message as summarized above, accompanied by an invitation for readers to accept Christ.

**Limitations**

**Sampling Pool**

One of the limitations of this thesis involves the target population for this project. LivingStone Community Church consists of approximately thirty covenant members with another twenty attendees on average each Sunday morning. The research conducted for this project will take place within this ministry context. Secondly, this thesis has been designed to explore the effectiveness of a very specific evangelism tool: a Personal Testimony Booklet. Because of the extensive energy and time required to help each willing member develop their unique PTB, the most realistic sampling pool for this project would be ten church members. It is the goal of this author to secure the participation of a minimum of ten church members who are willing to write their personal testimony booklet, utilize it as a viable method of evangelism for three months, and participate in this evangelism study.

**Time Constraints**

The work of writing and distributing one’s personal testimony booklet has already begun. Based on information gathered thus far, it has been possible to determine the average length of
time it takes for a typical booklet to be completed. This figure represents a significant investment of time and energy not only for the author but also for any additional editors as well. The approximate time to write, edit, and finalize a personal testimony booklet based upon completed booklets thus far is three months. This time consideration is one of several factors that limits the potential sampling pool for this project.

**Delimitations**

**Missional Evangelism vs. Attractional Evangelism**

While there are many popular evangelism models and strategies utilized by churches today, this thesis will focus exclusively on the biblical command of personal “missional” evangelism rather than “attractional” evangelism. In this project, missional evangelism is being defined as an individual believer’s personal responsibility to go out and share the gospel message with the lost around them. In contrast, attractional evangelism may be best thought of as a method that seeks to attract the lost to a church service or event to have a staff minister or pastor share the gospel with the lost in attendance.

**A Narrow Focus: One Method of Personal Evangelism**

Personal evangelism may look different depending on such factors as one’s culture, personality, training, level of maturity, and spiritual background. There are many methods of gospel presentation. It is not the purpose of this project to argue for or against these methods. In fact, it is this author’s belief that effective “fishers of men” will learn to incorporate several evangelism methods into their toolbox to be used as each situation determines. The specific goal of this project is to explore a unique method of personal evangelism involving written gospel literature and its validity as an effective form of communicating the gospel message to the lost.
The First Stage of the Great Commission: Evangelism

Innumerable factors play a part in the spiritual health and growth of the Kingdom of God and more specifically, the local church. However, the central mission remains clear. Matthew 28:19-20 captures Jesus's command, “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” Thus Jesus calls His disciples to Make, Mature, and Multiply additional disciples for His glory. The first part of fulfilling this Commission centers on making disciples. It is the intention of this paper to remain narrowly focused on the responsibility of LivingStone Community Church members in fulfilling this initial step (Making Disciples) through proactive gospel witness. The narrow focus of this paper should not be interpreted to mean that the tasks of maturing and multiplying disciples are less important. Space, however, is limited, and only the first of these three components of the Great Commission will be addressed.

**Thesis Statement**

While LCC’s corporate evangelism plan will include a variety of methods, perhaps no other method has a greater potential to help church members overcome common obstacles and encourage proactive gospel witness than a Personal Testimony Booklet. Members will grow in their scriptural understanding of the gospel and in their ability to communicate it clearly and accurately. They will come to recognize the sovereignty of God in the process of salvation. They will be strengthened in their confidence that God can and will use their testimony to draw others to Christ. Finally, church members will grow in their boldness to engage the lost with gospel truth, accepting personal responsibility to help fulfill the Great Commission. If members of LCC

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31 NIV version unless otherwise noted.
will commit to the process of writing and distributing a Personal Testimony Booklet, they will likely begin sharing the gospel with increased frequency.
Chapter 2
Conceptual Framework

This chapter provides an overview of the theological and theoretical foundations for personal evangelism and seeks to address why a lack of gospel witness constitutes such a significant problem for LivingStone Community Church. To begin, a review of precedent literature will take place. The research conducted by various experts in the field of personal evangelism and gospel literature will be examined. The literature review will systematically trace this thesis’ line of research from the current problem to the specific evangelism method proposed by this project. A survey of various practices, models, and theories will aid in pinpointing a specific gap in evangelism methodology. Following the literature review, a scriptural argument will be made for personal evangelism, the use of written gospel literature, and the value of a personal testimony for use in sharing the good news. These three subjects will serve as the legs upon which the proposed implementation design of this thesis stands.

Literature Review

Introduction

This literature review is designed to walk readers through successive stages of material, resources, and information that helped this author discover the need for a Personal Testimony Booklet as a viable evangelism tool for members of LCC. Since the initial foundation for this project relies heavily upon an accurate assessment of LCC’s current evangelistic landscape, a number of statistics will be provided. In addition, scholarly resources will also be used in support of this thesis project, specifically in the area of personal evangelism and various factors that may hinder it. Finally, several published pieces of gospel literature will be examined in an effort to discover a gap in evangelism methodology. The survey of such literature will demonstrate the
need for a Personal Testimony Booklet as a new method to help overcome common obstacles of evangelism and increase the frequency of gospel witness.

Focusing in on the Problem

A major problem exists in American Christianity today. While there is undoubtedly much activity going on within the average church, personal evangelism is absent from the lives of most church members. This problem is nothing new and is certainly an issue that LivingStone Community Church struggles with as well. Dave Early and David Wheeler reference statements by Bill Bright and James Kennedy lamenting on how few Christians share their faith regularly, 2% and 5%, respectively.32 William Fay believes that the actual number may be a bit higher, between 5% - 10%, with 90% of Christians choosing “the sin of silence.”33 Well-known Christian statistician Thom Rainer has also weighed in on the frequency of personal evangelism. In all his years of research, he has found only 5% of professing Christians engage in sharing the gospel message on a “consistent basis.”34 Finally, a 2019 study by Lifeway supports the above research by showing that only 4% of Christians share their faith regularly (defined as twice per month or more), with 55% of respondents admitting they had not shared their faith at all in the past six months.35 This finding was similar to a Barna survey that reported 52% of born-again

32 Dave Early and David Wheeler, Evangelism Is (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 35.


Christians admitted they had not shared the gospel at all in the past year and that 27% did not even feel they had a responsibility to do so.\(^{36}\)

While the absence of personal evangelism in the lives of many church members, including those at LCC, is a problem universally recognized, experts diverge in their assessment of what underlying factors have contributed to such a predicament. Some like Owen Strachan, fear that such low polling numbers may be partially explained by the likelihood that many who profess to be Christians are not be genuinely born-again.\(^{37}\) Of course, he is not the only one to suggest this. Aubrey Malphurs cites a George Barna study from 2001 revealing the group’s assessment that over 40% of those who attended church services on Sunday morning lacked clear evidence of being born-again, even though they professed to believe in Christ.\(^{38}\) In similar findings, Thom Rainer discovered that upwards of 50% of church members, when asked two diagnostic questions, failed to show evidence in their response that they had been genuinely saved.\(^{39}\) Mack Stiles supports Rainer’s assessment and describes how a great number of Christians he has encountered, once thought they were believers, only to discover years later after studying the gospel, that they had never actually experienced a new-birth earlier on.\(^{40}\) Undoubtedly, it is crucial to ensure LCC members have been personally transformed by Jesus

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\(^{40}\) Mack Stiles, Evangelism: How the Whole Church Speaks of Jesus (Wheaton: Crossway, 2014).
Christ before they can be expected to share the good news with others. The process of writing their PTB will help participants grow in their understanding and assurance of salvation.

While it certainly seems likely that one reason for such low personal evangelism activity is related to a portion of church membership who profess to be “Christians” yet are unregenerate, there are also other explanations. A previous Lifeway research survey revealed that only half of protestant church-goers firmly held to the belief that Jesus was the *only way* to eternal life.\(^{41}\) Thus, looking at the problem from a slightly different angle, *gospel clarity* is also a concern. David Gustafson argues that the gospel message is so fundamental to the Christian faith that it must not be assumed or taken for granted.\(^{42}\) He offers multiple examples of common perversions of the biblical gospel message, including the one mentioned above which suggested there were multiple paths to salvation. In many personal evangelism encounters, states Rainer, “the gospel has been diluted to meaninglessness.”\(^{43}\) Churches have shied away from mentioning scriptural necessities like “repentance” and “sin” in favor of “false gospels” that focus exclusively upon prosperity and self-esteem.\(^{44}\)

Barna also discovered similar findings. After looking over the results of one extensive survey conducted on evangelism, Barna concluded, “A large majority of non-Christians in the United States do not hear the gospel during a typical year. Worse, when they do have the Christian faith verbally presented to them, shockingly few hear a biblical form of the gospel.”\(^{45}\)


\(^{43}\) Rainer, “Christendom,” in *The Complete Evangelism Guidebook*, 257

\(^{44}\) Ibid.
According to Barna, the gospel message is often distorted and is rarely communicated with theological precision. Add to this David Bell’s research on gospel presentations, and the picture becomes even bleaker. Bell has spent considerable time investigating gospel presentations from a wide variety of sources and defining the essential elements of the biblical message. He concludes that much evangelism in the United States is defective in content and theologically shallow.\(^ {46}\) This means gospel perversion is one issue that demands attention, but gospel absence is also another. Bill Fay expresses his concern with Christians who are content to “drop gospel hints” but refrain from actually sharing the life-transforming good news of Christ.\(^ {47}\) Many churches have become institutions of social service at the expense of being a light for the good news amid a sea of darkness. They may mention the name Jesus, offer to pray for the lost, or even engage in spiritual conversation, but ultimately, they are unable or unwilling to share an actual presentation of the gospel message. Based on feedback from experts, helping LCC members define the gospel accurately and overcome common hurdles in sharing their faith must be a mandatory second step.

Another issue relevant to this thesis is a biblical understanding of the Great Commission. Though the Great Commission is one of the major pillars supporting personal evangelism, it is little understood by many church members. Referencing a Barna study from 2007, Early and Wheeler were shocked that 75% of so-called “born again” Christians could not accurately define the Great Commission. Ten years later, George Barna, in a 2017 study, revealed no


\(^{47}\) Fay, 8.
improvement. Only 17% of churchgoers understood and were able to explain the Great Commission.\(^\text{48}\) This lack of a scriptural understanding of both the Gospel and the Great Commission has led to the belief, for many church members, that they are engaging in biblical evangelism when, in fact, they are not. Similar to Bill Fay, Gary McIntosh addresses this common problem by describing church members who participate in all kinds of religious activity, various programs, and even community-focused ministry, but sadly fail to communicate the life-saving tenants of gospel truth.\(^\text{49}\) Many congregations fall into this category states Aubrey Malphurs. They list evangelism as a core value because it is expected, even though no one has been won to faith in Christ in years. Evangelism in such churches has become more of an aspirational value than an actual value.\(^\text{50}\) Congregations remain under what John Rothra calls “an evangelism delusion,” excelling at social service and self-promotion in an attempt to grow their church, yet failing to actually embrace the Great Commission leading to Kingdom growth.\(^\text{51}\)

Not only have some experts in the field of evangelism focused on the spiritual condition (saved/unsaved) of church members and the apparent lack of knowledge regarding the Great Commission and the gospel message, but others have suggested that a popular church model is also partly to blame. Jared Wilson argues that “attractive churches” do more harm than good when it comes to creating a biblical culture of personal evangelism.\(^\text{52}\) The attractive model


\(^{49}\) Gary McIntosh, Growing God's Church: How People Are Actually Coming to Faith Today (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2016), 61.

\(^{50}\) Aubrey Malphurs, Advanced Strategic Planning (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), 106.


\(^{52}\) Jared Wilson, The Prodigal Church (Wheaton: Crossway, 2015).
which seeks to invite the lost onto church grounds through an event or program unintentionally
trains both new believers and church members to reject the biblical responsibility to “go” out
themselves and share the gospel. Instead, that biblical injunction has been subverted to the
convenience of merely inviting people to “come” to a church service or event. Such an
attractional model effectively inoculates members against “missional” evangelism cautions
Samuel Thigpen.”⁵³ Instead of taking personal responsibility, the attractional church model
conditions members to believe that the Great Commission takes place best on church premises. It
convinces members that, at the very most, they are only responsible for inviting the unchurched
to a program or event. At the very least, members do not have to do anything at all. Official
channels of church advertisement will get the word out, and once in the building, it becomes the
staff’s exclusive responsibility to share the gospel with visitors. As the Barna Group reports,
“Increasing numbers of Christians believe it is the responsibility of the local church—not their
job—to do the work of faith-sharing.”⁵⁴

While God has certainly used both an attractional and missional evangelism paradigm to
reach the lost, LCC’s vision is to raise up mature disciples who take personal responsibility for
sharing the gospel message. It is this author’s conclusion that such a goal will be best achieved
through cultivating a missional mindset. Though LCC has chosen to embrace a comprehensive
strategy in pursuit of the lost as described in the “Outreach Biography” section above, LCC has
decided to prioritize a “go and tell” emphasis.

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⁵⁴ Barna Group, Reviving Evangelism (Adobe PDF eBook directly from Barna, 2019), 89.
The Power of Personal Testimony and Gospel Literature

In an effort to encourage church members to share their faith, a variety of evangelism tools and training programs have been made available over the years. In the lives of those who genuinely desire to be faithful gospel witnesses for Christ, one of the biggest hurdles to overcome is fear. In fact, Mack Stiles feels this issue is the most significant hurdle for American Christians to overcome in sharing their faith.\(^{55}\) To help address the problem of fear, two evangelism approaches have been suggested by experts.

The first involves encouraging Christians to share their personal testimony as a safe, simple, and non-threatening way to introduce the claims of Christ. Alvin Reid is one professor in this camp. As a firm advocate of using one’s personal testimony to initiate a gospel encounter, Reid knows a Christian’s story builds immediate trust and relational connection.\(^{56}\) Others, like Thomas Roatch, also see tremendous potential in the use of a personal testimony as a primary means of individual evangelism because sharing one’s story with confidence is natural.\(^{57}\) Even when considering evangelism among various cultures of the world, a personal testimony captures the attention of others, creates interest, and is never considered argumentative. There is no reason to fear offending others when sharing one's personal story. Thus, personal testimonies are universally enjoyed regardless of culture. For example, Sigurd Kaiser and Brother Yun report on the tremendous power in which personal testimonies are used in the vast harvest fields of China

\(^{55}\) Stiles, 106.


\(^{57}\) Thomas Roatch, “Effective Personal Evangelism for Today's Church” (DMin diss., Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011).
as a primary means of helping many come to Christ.\textsuperscript{58, 59} Reid and Delos Miles both devote an entire chapter in their evangelism textbooks to the use and effectiveness of this method.\textsuperscript{60, 61}

While personal testimonies are most often communicated verbally between thirty seconds to three minutes, both Reid and Miles also discuss the value of a longer, usually written form of testimony, which they refer to as a “spiritual autobiography.” This expanded version includes more detail and usually takes 15-25 minutes to share verbally or, when written out, consists of at least 2,500 words or six to ten pages double-spaced. While full-length Christian autobiographies in book form are common, few Americans have time to read something several hundred pages long. This is one reason Reid advocates for a shorter, pocket-sized, version that could be passed out when attempting to witness for Christ in everyday life. In fact, Bill Fay includes something of this nature in the appendix of his book \textit{Share Jesus Without Fear}. His testimony is 2,740 words long and concludes with a simple invitation to receive Christ.\textsuperscript{62} A similar concept relevant to this subtopic is found in Thom Rainer’s book, \textit{The Unexpected Journey}, which catalogs the stories of how twelve individuals from different faith backgrounds found Christ.\textsuperscript{63} Of equal interest is Jim Cymbala’s \textit{The Rescue}, a book containing the salvation testimonies of seven different church members from the Brooklyn Tabernacle.\textsuperscript{64} Miles does an excellent job tracing the history of an evangelistic autobiography from the four Gospels through the earliest days of


\textsuperscript{60} Reid, \textit{Evangelism Handbook}, Chapter 12.


\textsuperscript{62} Fay, 185-192.

\textsuperscript{63} Thom Rainer, \textit{The Unexpected Journey} (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005).

\textsuperscript{64} Jim Cymbala, \textit{The Rescue} (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017).
church history up to the present day. He even inserts his own autobiography of approximately 2,500 words as a template for readers to grasp the nature of this evangelism tool for reaching the lost.

The second approach to overcome fear in personal evangelism involves encouraging church members to distribute the gospel in written form rather than trying to share it verbally. At the simplest and shortest level, thousands of gospel tracts are available to Christians from such well-known publishers as Crossway, Chick Tracts, and Way of the Master. In fact, there is a robust history behind using gospel literature to win the lost. While today’s gospel tracts are rather short (2-8 pages the size of a business card), slightly longer presentations of the gospel can be found in booklet form. A perfect example is a 63-page 4”x 6” booklet entitled, “One Second After You...” by evangelist Mark Cahill. Climbing one step higher on the literary ladder of detail, many books like Peace with God by Billy Graham offer a thorough and theologically sound explanation of the gospel. It should be noted that a variety of well-known Christian leaders throughout history, like George Whitfield and Hudson Taylor, attribute their salvation to written gospel material of various lengths.


68 Mark Cahill, One Second After You... (Stone Mountain, GA: Mark Cahill Ministries, 2010).


70 Arnold Dallimore, George Whitefield (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 16-17.

71 Howard Taylor, Hudson Taylor In Early Years (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1912).
A Gap in the Literature

When surveying the different levels of literature within the two fields of “gospel presentation” and “personal testimony,” a noticeable gap appears. The development of a written booklet (a medium between a gospel tract and an autobiography book) that incorporates both a meaningful personal testimony and a detailed presentation of the gospel is virtually unexplored as a viable tool for personal evangelism. As discussed, there are various written levels of personal testimony and various written levels of gospel presentation, but there is a lack of literature that combines the two in a balanced fashion. While Reid and Miles’ concept of a written “Spiritual Autobiography” comes close to the idea proposed by this thesis, several other authors have also arrived at the same general concept.

The first and perhaps the most famous example is Charles Spurgeon. Spurgeon valued written gospel literature and wrote a booklet entitled “My Conversion” describing his own story of coming to faith in Christ. True to his personal style, this 56-page booklet offers a comprehensive depiction of the gospel and describes the sovereign process by which God led him to faith in Christ.\(^{72}\)

A second and more modern example is by author Roscoe Barnes. Barnes has published his own personal testimony in pamphlet form, printed on an 11” x 17” sized paper and consisting of eight columns (4 each side).\(^{73}\) While Barnes’ personal testimony is engaging, and he explains the primary points of the gospel using several key scriptures, the pamphlet is not designed to


offer an in-depth explanation of the gospel message. He also does not have space to address questions that many unbelievers generally have about various gospel truths.

Finally, publisher Mike Shreve has come closest to the concept that this thesis is proposing, a 4” x 6” Personal Testimony Booklet. Mike’s personal testimony “mini-book,” as he calls it, skillfully combines his personal story from Buddhism, with various scriptures to help readers understand Christianity and bring them to the point of salvation through Christ.\textsuperscript{74} It is professionally printed with a colorful exterior and consists of a total length of sixty-two pages in a 3.5” x 5.5” format. Shreve has even had the opportunity to publish booklets for several other clients, including Pastor Jay Haizlip’s booklet entitled, “The Hooked Up Life.”\textsuperscript{75} However, if there is a weakness in this medium of evangelism literature, it seems to fall on the side of including sufficient gospel content rather than the side of sharing one’s story of personal transformation. It will be essential that both sides are emphasized adequately in the booklets of LCC members.

Conclusion

This review of literature has shown there is a grave absence of personal evangelism in the lives of many Christians today. Members of LivingStone Community Church are no exception. Experts have pointed out the need to ensure that church members have been genuinely saved, can articulate the biblical gospel, and are convinced of their personal responsibility in helping to fulfill the Great Commission. Rather than emphasizing an attractional model as the primary

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{74} Mike Shreve, Founder and CEO of Deeper Revelation Books, Interview by author, phone conversation, 12 November 2019. https://deeperrevelationbooks.org/cms/index.php?page=testimony-mini-books-basic-info
\item \textsuperscript{75} Jay Haizlip, \textit{The Hooked Up Life} (Cleveland TN: Deeper Revelation Books, 2013). Jay Haizlip is the pastor of “The Sanctuary World Outreach” in Costa Mesa, CA.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
means of evangelism, LCC must embrace a missional mindset that encourages members to personally “go and tell” the gospel message themselves. This literature review has also pointed out the need for an evangelism model that addresses these issues and aids LCC members in overcoming their fears. A Personal Testimony Booklet does just that.

When it comes to evangelism literature, books are too long and tracts too short. Personal testimonies tend to be deficient in gospel content, and gospel content alone is deficient in establishing relational connection. In light of this review of literature, a pocket-sized booklet that harmonizes these factors (gospel content and personal testimony) written by church members, edited and reviewed by church staff, published, and distributed to family, friends, strangers, and co-workers would offer a unique way to increase gospel witness in the lives of average Christians. This thesis intends to explore this gap in current evangelistic methodology.

Theological Foundations

The Great Commission and Personal Evangelism

Jesus's mission was clear from the start. He began His public ministry with the declaration: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me because He has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free…” Every aspect of Jesus's ministry centered on this central

76 Richard Greene has posted a nice article on his website keystoneproject.org entitled “The Problem with Attractional Evangelism” in which he lists five major dangers of relying upon this model as a church’s primary means of evangelism: (1) It does not make disciples, it attracts consumers; (2) It tends to be very expensive and resource intensive; (3) It is not easily reproducible; (4) What you win them by is what you win them to; (5) It creates a weak point of connection between the target group and the church. For more information visit https://keystoneproject.org/the-problem-with-attractional-evangelism/

objective, announcing the good news and demonstrating the Kingdom of God had come.\textsuperscript{78} Jesus sought to reveal God to humanity and reconcile sinful man with their heavenly Creator.

Eventually, Jesus’s passion and commitment were passed on to all of His disciples as recorded in Matthew 28:19-20. It is here that Jesus commissioned his followers to “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” He expected his followers to carry on his mission after he was gone. He even recruited them with the promise to make them fishers of men and charged them to “be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”\textsuperscript{79} Just as he had been sent by God and had obeyed, Jesus commanded his disciples to follow in his footsteps. “The mission of the disciples flowed out of Jesus’s mission. Since the earthly work of Jesus was to bring eternal life to lost humanity, this is the continuing mission of his witnessing band of believers, now the church,” writes McIntosh.\textsuperscript{80}

As faithful conduits of the Father’s love, the disciples would continue Jesus’ mission by sharing their personal testimony (what we have seen and heard) as the Holy Spirit worked supernaturally to support the truthfulness of their gospel-centered message.\textsuperscript{81}

Lest the reader misunderstand, it is essential to point out that the Great Commission was not just for the first generation of disciples. Pohill writes, “the role of witness is the key role for every disciple. All who have encountered the risen Christ are commissioned to be witnesses.”\textsuperscript{82}


\textsuperscript{79} Mark 1:17; Acts 1:8.

\textsuperscript{80} McIntosh, 34.

\textsuperscript{81} Acts 4:20 “As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.” Acts 22:15 “You will be his witness to all people of what you have seen and heard.” 1 John 1:3 “We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard…”

Though this ought to be clearly understood (for apart from the faithfulness of each subsequent generation, the current Christian generation would not be here today), it would still be beneficial to look at this command in Matthew 28:19-20 a second time. Jesus said, “go and make disciples…teaching them to obey everything I commanded you.” The first generation was to pass on Jesus’ command [The Great Commission] to the next generation of disciples whom they won to the Lord instructing that second generation to do the same with their disciples (the third generation) and so on down the line.

“Evangelism is the inalienable responsibility of every Christian community and every Christian person. We are all under orders to devote ourselves to spreading the good news, and to use all our ingenuity and enterprise to bring it to the notice of the whole world,” states J.I Packer.\(^{83}\) In fact, a close look at Ephesians 4:11-12 reveals that the “office” of evangelist exists for the purpose of serving the body of Christ by “equipping the saints for the work of the ministry” (evangelism). Those with the gift of evangelism are not to pursue the lost by themselves. Their primary calling, according to these verses, is to train the whole church so that together, the body of Christ proactively engages in evangelism.

With slightly different terminology, Paul argues for this point in 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 as he calls all believers within the church to the ministry of reconciliation. He emphatically states that all Christians have been commissioned as ambassadors for Christ. Commentator David Garland offers insight into this last term, “[The Ambassador] does not act on his/her own authority, but under the commission of a greater power and authority who sent them…[they are] divinely authorized to announce to the world God’s terms for peace.”\(^{84}\)

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\(^{83}\) Packer, 31.

The book of Acts is filled with examples of zealous Christians who functioned boldly as ambassadors (witnesses) for Christ and the resulting explosion of the early church which took place as a result.\textsuperscript{85} Liberty professor Dr. David Wheeler writes in his book \textit{Evangelism Is}, “The gospel spread to the entire world when normal, obedient, non-apostles shared Jesus.”\textsuperscript{86} His statement references Acts 8:2, which makes a clear distinction that it was not the apostles who first began to spread the gospel throughout the Roman empire but regular believers. Persecution forced the church to scatter, and those new Christ-followers who left Jerusalem “went about preaching the word” as Acts 8:1-4 describes. This is the reason church growth expert Thom Rainer states, “Thriving churches have the Great Commission as the centerpiece of their vision while dying churches have forgotten the clear command of Christ.”\textsuperscript{87} Evangelism is to be done by all. Every disciple is to be equipped for the work of the evangelistic ministry in light of Jesus’ commission. To not follow through on such a command is to yield to the influence of sin and Satan.\textsuperscript{88} There are some things that can only be done this side of heaven. One thing Christians can’t do in heaven is share their faith with a non-believer.\textsuperscript{89} Once they step into eternity, they’ll never have another chance to talk to a lost person about how to find forgiveness and eternal life in Christ.

\textsuperscript{85} Acts 1:8; Acts 2:14-41; 3:12-26, 4:2-4, 12-13, 20, 31, 33; 5:20, 28, 32, 42;

\textsuperscript{86} Dave Earley and David Wheeler. \textit{Evangelism Is}, 21. Dr. Earley and Dr. Wheeler are keen to point out that Acts 8:1-4 makes it clear that as persecution erupted in Jerusalem, the good news spread throughout the region by normal believers while the apostles remained in the capital city.

\textsuperscript{87} Rainer, \textit{Autopsy of a Deceased Church}, 40.

\textsuperscript{88} Packer, 78.

\textsuperscript{89} Mark Cahill, \textit{One Thing You Can’t Do in Heaven} (Rockwall, Texas: Biblical Discipleship Publishers, 2005), 17.
Effective Personal Evangelism

Effective personal evangelism depends upon four pillars. No member at LivingStone Community Church has a right to expect success without the incorporation of these four biblical characteristics into the very core of their weekly faith walk. Together they form the foundation upon which effective evangelistic success may be expected. Each is a necessary ingredient for increasing gospel witness.

#1 Communicating the Gospel

In chapter three of his book, Green spends time dissecting three key Greek words that describe the full spectrum of a believer’s evangelistic responsibility. First, κηρύσσω which is often translated, “to preach or openly proclaim,” presents the image of a herald who joyfully announces good tidings of a coming kingdom.\textsuperscript{90} Secondly, μαρτυρέω often translated “to bear witness or to testify” was used in ancient times primarily within a legal context. The word was frequently used to describe testimony offered about facts and events on the one hand, and truths vouched for on the other. In both cases, writes Green, “the personal involvement and assurance of the person making the witness was an important element.”\textsuperscript{91} Finally, εὐαγγελίζω is often translated “to preach the gospel, to preach good tidings/news.” The gospels make it clear that the “good news” centered on the death and resurrection of Jesus which offered universal redemption to those who would repent and believe. The good news proclaimed victory over evil and sin by the power and authority of heaven. It involved declaring these tidings of good news and joy. All three of these words support Paul’s explanation in Romans 10:14-15 of the process God has ordained for the salvation of souls. In order to call upon Christ for salvation, people must first be

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{90} Green, 77-79. \\
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid., 106.
\end{flushright}
given the opportunity to hear the good news. This will never happen unless Christians take the
initiative to go and proclaim such news. Biblical evangelism involves verbal witness of gospel
truths by obedient believers.

#2 The Biblical Motive for Evangelism

The ultimate motive for evangelism is love, of which there are two sequential degrees. The first and highest love, which motivates a believer to actively share the gospel arises from their personal salvation experience. Having been redeemed by the grace of God and now enjoying the intimate love of their Heavenly Father, such divine love compels a disciple to respond with love in return. Birthed by the Holy Spirit’s presence, comes an all-consuming desire to see God glorified and to pursue Him with all one’s heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Secondly, experiencing such divine love compels believers to respond by reflecting that love horizontally toward those who are lost. J.I. Packer comments, “If we ourselves have known anything of the love of Christ for us, and if our hearts have felt any measure of gratitude for the grace that has saved us from death and hell, then this attitude of compassion and care for our spiritually needy fellow men ought to come naturally and spontaneously to us.”

God is glorified when believers celebrate his grace and make known the saving work of Christ to others. It is these two commands of scripture that sequentially constitute the heart’s foundation for all evangelistic activity.

#3 The Role of the Holy Spirit and Prayer

According to Packer, there are two primary obstacles that work against evangelistic success. The first is “man’s natural and irresistible impulse to oppose God (sin).” The second

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92 Packer 77.
of these two obstacles is Satan’s constant efforts to undermine faith and to keep sinners on the wide path leading to destruction. Both of these obstacles must be overcome. Apart from supernatural power, however, neither can be. All evangelistic efforts engaged in solely by human strength and ingenuity will fail. There are no special techniques that guarantee results. All success ultimately rests squarely upon the grace of God. Only God can free captives from satanic and sinful bondage. Only God can raise the spiritually dead. Only he can open the eyes of the spiritually blind, grant an understanding of truth, draw a sinner toward repentance and faith, regenerate their heart, and persist in transforming that person into His own likeness. Church growth expert Gary McIntosh states in support, “The enthusiastic acceptance of pragmatic methods, strategies, and models during the past has left the impression among observers… that church growth is more about strategy than the Spirit’s working.”\(^{94}\) Nothing could be further from the truth. Kingdom growth simply cannot take place apart from the Holy Spirit. This is one reason why the Apostle Paul so frequently offers and requests prayer. Such passages as Colossians 4:3, “pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ…that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak” reflect Paul’s complete dependence upon God.

It was Jesus commenting on this very theme who stated, “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him” and later in John’s gospel, “…apart from me, you can do nothing.”\(^{95}\) With this truth in mind, the church should be moved to pray, for it is clear that “with man this [salvation] is impossible, but with God, all things are possible.”\(^{96}\) Prayer must be an

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\(^{93}\) Packer, 106.

\(^{94}\) McIntosh, 86.

\(^{95}\) John 6:44; 15:5.

\(^{96}\) Matthew 19:26.
essential ingredient in the life of LivingStone members because “only the sovereign Holy Spirit
in us and in men’s hearts can make our preaching effective to men’s salvation, and God will not
send his Spirit where there is no prayer.”97

There has been no greater demonstration of this reality than among the work of God’s
people in China. Having spent seven years teaching theology in China and traveling throughout
the country, professor Sigurd Kaiser clearly articulates the role prayer has played in the
explosion of Christianity. In fact, he lists private and public prayer as a significant reason for the
extraordinary growth Christianity has seen in China.98

Should this be surprising? Of course not. With over thirty years of experience studying
revivals, Dr. Gregory Frizzell, author of How to Develop a Powerful Prayer Life, noticed the
same common denominator in regards to all the powerful movements of God throughout history:
“the practice of much time in daily prayer.”99 Two other experts, Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson,
relate how strategic prayer efforts have always been a critical component of church growth. In
their book, Comeback Churches, which surveyed 300 different congregations, the two report that
prayer was the most valued of seventeen transformation factors responsible for church
revitalization.100

A survey of the New Testament church in the book of Acts confirms the truth that prayer
was a central practice and was vitally important to the spread of the gospel message.101 Fervent,

97 Packer, 121.
98 Kaiser, 35-47.
101 Acts 1:14, 2:42, 3:1, 4:24, 6:4-6, 10:9, 14:23, 16:13-16; 21:5, Romans 12:12; 1 Corinthians 7:5; 1
Corinthians 14; Ephesians 1, 3, 6:18; Philippians 4:6; Colossians 1:3, 4:2, 12; 1 Thessalonians 3:10, 5:17; 2
Thessalonians 1:11; 1 Timothy 2:8; Hebrews 13:18-19; James 5:13-16.
unified prayer in conjunction with bold evangelistic efforts led to the salvation of thousands.\textsuperscript{102} Therefore, a commitment to private and corporate prayer must be an absolute necessity if evangelistic success is to be expected on both an individual and corporate level at LivingStone Community Church.

**#4 A Life that Reflects the Message**

“The culture does not want the powerless God of the modern church,” says Reggie McNeal in his book *Present Future*.\textsuperscript{103} Without a story of personal transformation evidenced by a lifestyle of Christ-like holiness, radical love, and an unswerving commitment to truth, unbelievers lack a compelling reason to listen to the “good news” Christians claim to possess. To earn the right to share the gospel with others, Christians need to live the gospel. To cite McNeal once again, “it is not superior reasoning but superior living and superior loving that is the best approach to engaging the culture with the attractiveness of the gospel.”\textsuperscript{104} In other words, it is a vibrant relationship with Christ and a life that manifests Christ, which helps to softens hearts and creates a platform for sharing gospel truth. “The most clear and accurate gospel presentation is muted,” says professor Jim Stitzinger, “if unbelievers identify you by patterns of sin instead of patterns of righteousness…a changed life is compelling proof of salvation.”\textsuperscript{105}

Christians should be known for their radical generosity, service, and kindness. Why? Because Christ was, and his Spirit now resides in them. Steve Sjogren, Dave Ping, and Doug

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{102} Acts 2:41, 4:4, 24-33; 5:14.
\textsuperscript{103} McNeal, 6.
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., 61.
\end{flushleft}
Pollock hone in on this approach to evangelism that takes into account the world’s need to physically see Christ’s love and kindness. In their book *Irresistible Evangelism*, the three authors argue for Christians to illustrate the gospel message by serving others in practical ways. In doing so, Christians can become “a living representative of God’s heart toward people.”

Written Gospel Literature of the New Testament

In a historical sense, the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and many of the various letters written by Paul and other New Testament authors serve as examples of written gospel literature. As Green explains, gospel witness from the very beginning was not limited to just verbal testimony. Those who could write penned a literary record of gospel truth and a description of Jesus’ activity. One noteworthy example of literary gospel testimony is the Gospel of John. The purpose of John’s gospel for example, could not be more clearly stated than in the verse John 20:31, “These were written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God and that by believing you may have life in his name.” Green’s study of the New Testament writings has led him to thus conclude,

[they] were written…as a testimony from the lips of many witnesses collected together by the author and arranged in order to show what sort of person Jesus was, to give the evidence on which the disciples had followed him and had adjudged him the Messiah and Son of God, and by the strongest possible implication challenge the readers to make the same act of faith in Christ as they themselves had done.

Not only may the gospels be considered written presentations of the good news of Jesus Christ, but such writings as Paul’s letter to the Romans has historically been classified as an excellent

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107 Green, 346.

108 Green, 347.
written presentation of the gospel as well. This observation was made by none other than the great reformer Martin Luther who acknowledged that the plain meaning of Paul’s text in Romans was about justification by faith and “how a sinful human being can get into right relationship with a perfect and just God.”

A Scriptural Foundation for Personal Testimony

The New Testament contains several examples of the use of personal testimony in the context of gospel witness. Only two will be briefly mentioned here. One of the most well-known examples in the gospels involves Jesus’ restoration of the demon-possessed man. After he was healed, the man asked Jesus if he could go with him. Jesus responded, “Return home and tell how much God has done for you.” Luke carefully relates how the man joyfully obeyed. He shared all over town what a difference Jesus had made in his life. In reflection on this account, Marshall notes that this story functions as a “paradigm of what conversion involves: the responsibility to evangelize” by sharing one’s personal testimony relating to the activity of Christ in their own life.

Another example and the one most relevant to this thesis comes from the Apostle Paul. Twice, the book of Acts records Paul sharing his testimony as a means of connecting with his listeners and reasoning with them from the platform of his own personal experience. In


110 The demon-possessed man (Luke 8:38-39); The woman at the well (John 4); The man born blind (John 9); The disciples (Acts 4:20, 5:32) and even John’s introduction to his first letter (1 John 1:1-3) In each of these cases, personal testimony/witness was offered regarding what Jesus had done in that person’s life.


113 These testimonies may be found in Acts 22:1-21 and Acts 26:1-29
regards to the first example in Acts 22, Paul was unable to proceed further than a description of his God-given calling to preach the good news to the Gentiles. But it is Paul’s summary of Jesus’ words to him in verse 15 that is important. “You (Paul) will be my witness to all people of what you have seen and heard.” In obedience to this heavenly charge, Paul obviously thought it would be most effective in this setting to begin by first sharing his personal testimony before transitioning to explain the gospel. Acts 26 offers even more insight.

On this occasion, before King Agrippa, Paul again begins by sharing his personal testimony. He intimately connects this act to the divine commission he received from Christ at his conversion. It is here; however, in Acts 26:18-20 that readers gain more insight as to Paul’s ultimate goal, for a presentation of the gospel immediately follows. Thus, Paul’s method of witness establishes a biblical precedent. In his effort to act as a herald of the gospel, Paul first testified to the power of the gospel in his own life before switching to explain how the gospel could transform the lives of his hearers. Both personal testimony and gospel witness go hand in hand for the first is a personal description of the truths which comprise the second.

Theoretical Foundations

Introduction

Sixteen years ago, God radically changed this author’s life. Christ became his eternal treasure. Helping others enter into a similar “saving” relationship with Jesus became this author’s supreme passion. Over the years, the question, “What investment of my life will make the greatest eternal impact?” has reverberated again and again in this author’s heart. In response, the Holy Spirit has repeatedly whispered, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and love your neighbor as yourself.”\(^{114}\)

\(^{114}\) Matthew 22:37-39
In the past year, this author has spent considerable time in reflection and examination. It has been heart-rending to estimate that since being saved, this author has passed by well over 150,000 people without attempting to share with them an eternal hope in Christ – and this is by someone who has the gift of evangelism. By the grace of God and the Holy Spirit’s deep conviction, steps have been taken to change this trend. Three verses from the book of Acts have repeatedly stood out as a basis for such change and a source of motivation. In Acts 5:28, the religious leaders screamed at Peter and the apostles, “We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name…yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching!” Similarly, Acts 6:13 reveals that another disciple, Stephen, was a man who “never stopped speaking” about the name of Jesus. Finally, Acts 19:10 records the depth of the Apostle Paul’s ministry in the statement, “This continued for two years so that all the residents of Asia heard the Word of the Lord…”

Ultimately this author’s vision is two-fold. First, to become someone who is consumed with sharing the gospel with as many people as possible. Secondly, to pastor a church body who embraces the same goal. As the reader has already seen, LivingStone Community Church is nestled in a small community of approximately 5,000 people. If the pastor and members of LCC were to live as zealously in their gospel proclamation as the early disciples, there would be nothing stopping the mathematical plausibility of “all residents” hearing the gospel within a reasonable period of time. In fact, if 25 disciples were confidently equipped, and proactively engaged in just two gospel conversations (or distributions of one’s PTB) per week, it would take approximately two years for “all residents” of Colonial Beach to hear the Word of the Lord. Is it not realistic that if LCC were to faithfully pray and boldly share, God would honor such efforts by granting salvation to a large percent of the local population?
With such a vision in mind, the question arises, is there a method or model LivingStone Community Church should adopt in order to increase gospel witness and saturate their town with the good news of Jesus Christ as evangelist Darrell Robinson suggests? With so many corporate and individual methods of evangelism available, it would be wise for any church to formulate a comprehensive strategy as LivingStone has that would seek to reach people in a multiplicity of ways. However, if exponential impact is ever to be expected, personal one-on-

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115 Darrell Robinson, Total Church Life: How to Be a First Century Church in a 21st Century World (Nashville: B & H Publishers, 1997). Robinson recommends a strategy of total participation of the church’s membership in witness for total penetration of the gospel within a specific community (147).

He states, "Personally sharing Christ with every individual is the mission of a local church...Each local church should define a definite geographic area and/or area of influence for total penetration with the gospel." (155). Part of that process as described by Robinson in step four involves, “Saturate the primary area with the gospel. Confront every person in that circle (2 mile radius) with the claims of Christ on his or her life” (156).

“Your plan must be saturation. You are probably already broadcasting the gospel seed, but you must thoroughly sow the field of the church’s primary area so that every person is touched with a witness for Christ” (164). In fact, Robinson suggests that every member of the community should receive a personal visit, gospel tract, information about the church, a mail-out, etc. at least once every six months (164). “If there is to be a harvest, much seed-sowing must be done. Saturation is the general broad-casting of the gospel “seed” in an area. If we sow sparingly, we will reap sparingly. If we sow bountifully, a bountiful harvest can be reaped. Many churches attempt to reap a harvest where little seed sowing has been done. Thus, relatively few people are reached” (171).


In 2007 Lifeway study, over 800 Senior ministers nationwide were asked about the activities their church held in the past year specifically for the purpose of evangelism and community outreach. The response provides significant insight into the kind of efforts churches were engaged in which they considered to be evangelistic. The following were listed as the most common methods:

- Food pantry or food-oriented donations (73% of churches); Vacation Bible School (70%); Holiday food programs such as Christmas or Thanksgiving baskets for poor families (65%); Literature such as tracts or magazines (59%); Events such as block parties and festivals (56%); Musical events or concerts (51%); Mailings or fliers (50%); Nursing home or retirement center visits (49%); Invite a friend to church day (42%); Revivals or crusades (40%); Evangelism training classes or groups (38%); Door-to-door visitation within the community (37%); Community cleanup days (31%); Online efforts such as blogs or websites (27%); Audio or visual products such as DVDs (26%); Prison ministry (25%); Booths at community events such as the county fair (20%); Homeless outreach (24%); Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts (20%); Blood drives (17%); After-school programs for kids (14%); Sports programs (11%)
one evangelism must become a frequent practice among most church members. If statistically, only 5% of Christians are engaging in at least two gospel conversations a month, how does this author, as pastor of LCC, get more members engaged in gospel witness on a more frequent basis?\textsuperscript{117} If the greatest obstacle to overcome is fear, is there a method that more readily addresses this hurdle and helps members overcome it? Historically, two solutions have been tried: the utilization of written gospel literature and the power of using one’s personal testimony. Each approach has its own strengths and weaknesses as a potential evangelism tool.

\textbf{Written Gospel Literature}

From the time of the apostles, literary evangelism has been prevalent.\textsuperscript{118} Scholar Michael Green has extensively researched early evangelistic literature of the first and second centuries and mentions several examples in his book \textit{Evangelism in the Early Church}.\textsuperscript{119} The dynamic of gospel literature changed dramatically; however, with the invention of Gutenberg’s printing press around 1450. In fact, it was recorded by his biographers that Gutenberg’s motivation was evangelistic in nature:

\begin{quote}
God suffers because of the great multitudes whom His sacred Word cannot reach. Religious truth is captive in a small number of manuscript books that guard the treasures. Let us break the seal which holds the holy things; give wings to the truth that by a means no longer written at great expense by the hand that wearies itself, but multiplied by an unwearied machine, it may fly to every soul born in the world.\textsuperscript{120}
\end{quote}

Unfortunately, churches typically engage in these activities with very few participants who are proficient in gospel witness. They believe they are being “evangelistic” and feel good about the activity and enthusiasm generated yet in reality the gospel is rarely if ever proclaimed. Thousands of man-hours go into planning and serving in such ministries while personal evangelism training is often neglected.

\textsuperscript{117} Earls, “Evangelism More Prayed for Than Practiced by Churchgoers”

\textsuperscript{118} Refer to the “Written Gospel Literature of the New Testament” section under the heading “Theological Foundations” above.

\textsuperscript{119} Green, 350-351. Such well-known names as Ignatius, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement and Tertullian.

\textsuperscript{120} Emily C. Peason, \textit{Gutenberg and the Art of Printing} (Boston: Noyes, Holmes and Company, 1871), 10.
Thus, since the invention of the printing press, gospel literature of all kinds (e.g., tracts, pamphlets, and books) has been produced and distributed in an effort to evangelize the world. Small tracts proved to be an exceedingly popular and cost-effective method of gospel distribution. Gospel literature certainly advanced the cause of the Reformation throughout Europe. Martin Luther himself was a prolific writer of tracts and booklets and many were impacted by reading his material. Since the founding of America, gospel literature has been used to advance the cause of Christ, especially through the formation of tract societies. John Wesley was arguably the founder of the first tract society, “The Society for the Distribution of Religious Tracts Among the Poor,” in 1782. Historical research by Lisa Shaver investigated religious tract distribution in the nineteenth century in the United States. Based on her findings, religious literature began to explode as a popular method of evangelism after the formation of several tract societies in the early 1800’s so that by the mid-century hundreds of millions of pages had been distributed.

Chaplain William Jones' 600-page volume on religion in the Confederate Army during the Civil War repeatedly describes the valuable role that gospel tracts, pamphlets and books played in leading soldiers to Christ. Jones mentions, in particular, one pastor by the name of Rev. W. J. W. Crowder of Raleigh, North Carolina who oversaw an effort to print millions of pages of gospel tracts for circulation within the army. The effectiveness of gospel tracts circulated

121 Barnes, 23.
among the Confederate Army during the Civil War may best be summarized by Dr. Geo W. Leyburn:

Never in my view, was there such an opening for evangelism by the press. The Word of God in the form of a pocket-Bible was the first thing sought after, and the hymn-book came next; but it was generally necessary... only to show one's self, with a packet of tracts or religious papers, in the corner of an encampment and begin to give out some of them, and you would be very soon surrounded by an eager crowd, asking for something to read.  

As a personal method of evangelism, gospel tracts have value. Handing out gospel literature is generally thought of as an approach that decreases the element of fear. It is also possible to share the gospel more frequently as compared with face-to-face verbal conversations. There have been a number of people throughout history who were saved through the use of gospel literature. One famous example is Hudson Taylor. Another example is George Whitfield.  

Roscoe Barnes in The Guide to Effective Gospel Tract Ministry mentions gospel tracts playing a primary role in George Muller (the great prayer-warrior), John Bunyan (author of The Pilgrim's Progress) and Dr. Geo W. Leyburn. 

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125 Jones, 490. Jones goes on to quote many other chaplains and tract distributors who passed out religious tracts in saloons, on the streets, hotels, field hospitals and among the camps of the Army (213). He states that it was estimated the American Tract Society alone was responsible for publishing over 50 million pages of tracts during the war (159). The Evangelical Tract Society published and circulated over 100 different tracts (158). In total, Jones records there was no way to accurately determine the full number of tracts, booklets and books distributed during the war but states, "it is not an overestimate to say that hundreds of millions of pages were sent out by the different societies" (156). "If it could be known by us here now how many souls have been saved by this agency [means] doubtless the announcement would fill us with surprise and rejoicing. Hundreds and thousands, we verily believe, have in this way obtained the Christians' hope, and are now occupying some place in the great vineyard of the Lord..." (158).

126 Howard, Taylor. Hudson Taylor In Early Years: The Growth of a Soul (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1912), 66-68. Howard Taylor includes an extended excerpt from Hudson Taylors personal reflection upon the night he was saved through the reading of a gospel tract. Of important note, Hudson describes how his mother's prayers were instrumental in his salvation. In fact, she had locked herself in her bedroom to pray for her son's salvation (refusing to come out until God granted her assurance) at the very moment Hudson picked up the gospel tract and began to read it. What was the booklet that Hudson Taylor read? It was entitled "Poor Richard" and contained 2,460 words.

127 Arnold, Dallimore. George Whitefield (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 16-17. Dallimore includes a personal reflection by George Whitefield on a gospel booklet that was instrumental in his coming to Christ. The booklet was entitled, "The Life of God in the Soul of Man" by Henry Scougal and was approximately 126 pages at a 4"x 6" format.
Pilgrim’s Progress), Admiral Coligny (leader of the Reformation in France), Richard Baxter (English puritan leader), and William Wilberforce (the great emancipator of the slaves in the British Empire) coming to Christ. In fact, Barnes devotes page after page to listing testimonies received by such organizations as The American Tract Society, Chick Publications, and Bill Bright’s evangelism ministry all describing people who found Christ through written gospel material. Perhaps this is why Charles Spurgeon was such a firm believer in the use of gospel tracts as an effective means of evangelism. He is quoted as saying:

I well remember distributing them in a town in England where tracts had never been distributed before, and going from house to house, and telling in humble language the things of the kingdom of God. I might have done nothing, if I had not been encouraged by finding myself able to do something… [Tracts are] adapted to those persons who have but little power and little ability, but nevertheless, wish to do something for Christ. They may not have the tongue of the eloquent, but they may have the hand of the diligent. They cannot stand and preach, but they can stand and distribute here and there these silent preachers…there is a real service of Christ in the distribution of the gospel in its printed form, a service the result of which heaven alone shall disclose, and the judgment day alone discover. How many thousands have been carried to heaven instrumentally upon the wings of these tracts, none can tell.

Ray Comfort, author of the popular evangelism approach Way of the Master, is also a big proponent of gospel literature. He and his team distribute thousands of gospel tracts each year. His website, “Living Waters,” sells dozens of unique tracts. Comfort summarizes the value of tracts by stating:

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128 Barnes, 23-25.
129 Barnes, Chapter 2.
130 Spurgeon, Charles. The Soul Winner (Louisville, Kentucky: GLH Publishing, 2015), 80-81. “When preaching and private talk are not available, you have a tract ready, and this is often an effectual method…a telling, touching gospel tract may often be the seed of eternal life; therefore, do not go out without your tracts.”
• They can do the witnessing for us, especially when we are too timid to speak.
• They speak to individuals when they are ready; people don’t read it until they want to.
• They can find their way into people’s homes when we can’t.
• They don’t get into arguments; they just state their case.\textsuperscript{132}

Comfort also quotes Joey Hancock of the American Tract Society claiming, “Fifty-three percent of all who come to Christ worldwide come through the use of printed gospel literature.”\textsuperscript{133}

Similarly, Barnes states,

Tracts can go places where the human voice and technology cannot travel. Tracts never flinch. They never compromise the message, get tired or discouraged. They work while the author sleeps. A tract never loses its temper. It can get inside a home even when its author can’t. Tracts always catch people in the right mood. They hang around long after we are dead so that we continue to have a ministry beyond the grave.\textsuperscript{134}

While gospel tracts have had a long history of proven effectiveness, there are some significant limitations.\textsuperscript{135} Many gospel tracts are short and do not have the space to go into great detail about the gospel message, even leaving out critical elements like God’s holiness or judgment and eternal punishment. At times they can stimulate more questions than they answer and though they tend to be creative, often including helpful illustrations, generally tracts are impersonal in nature. Where gospel tracts fail, literature of a greater length and genre has stepped in to assist.\textsuperscript{136}


\textsuperscript{133} Comfort, 197

\textsuperscript{134} Barnes, 11-12, 33.

\textsuperscript{135} Bell, “Tracts to Christ: An Evaluation of American Gospel Tracts.” Bell discusses at great length the strengths and weakness of seven popular gospel tracts in presenting the essential elements of the gospel message based upon 37 evaluation questions. His research is particularly helpful in showing how gospel tracts can fall short of communicating the essential ingredients of the good news in an accurate and thorough manner.

\textsuperscript{136} In presenting a framework of 37 evaluation questions for analysis of gospel presentations in various tracts, Bell recognizes that “no presentation is likely to excel in all areas. One that did excel in all areas would probably be too long for practical usefulness in a single evangelistic encounter” (page 172).
There are thousands of evangelistic books available today that offer a more thorough presentation of the gospel message than what popular tracts are able to provide. Billy Graham’s 270-page book *Peace With God* is one example. Characteristic of Graham’s evangelistic preaching, the book targets a wide spectrum of potential readers and effectively walks them through a journey of gospel discovery. Every author takes a unique approach. *More than a Carpenter* by Josh McDowell maintains the same overall objective of winning the lost to Christ but engages readers in a scientific manner characteristic of his own logical, scholarly mind. *One Heartbeat Away* by Mark Cahill is presented in a simple down-to-earth tone. The book is full of illustrations, examples, quotes, scriptures, and practical everyday analogies meant to identify with the common person and walk them through a step-by-step process of discovery and faith in Christ. While books are a great resource for those who will read them, the Pew Research Center found in a 2019 survey that 22% of American women and 32% of American men had not read a single book in the past year. In addition, books are more expensive to publish and harder to carry around and hand out in mass. Evangelistic books have their niche in sharing the gospel with certain types of seekers, but they are not known to be the simplest and most effective tool to assist in personal evangelism.

The Use of Personal Testimony

While written gospel literature has been used with effectiveness to win people to Christ adding a personal story of faith can increase the relational nature of any gospel presentation. Is there validity in using a personal testimony or spiritual autobiography to share truths about Christ? Early Christians certainly thought so. Scholar Michael Green explains how the disciples

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of the first and second century “were not embarrassed to add their personal testimony to the message they delivered…This personal testimony of the truth of the message was an integral part of Christians witness. It is found everywhere in the literature of our period.”

Every major expert in the field of evangelism feels strongly about the value of personal testimony as a means of enhancing gospel presentation. "Stories captivate us with characters who seem so much like us, plot lines that give us fresh eyes to see life around us, vivid descriptions of parts of the world we've never visited, and probing questions that force us to declare what we really believe" Hybels states. He goes on to explain how all humans have an affinity for stories, which is why Jesus chose to communicate so much truth using such a medium. "Your simple, straightforward before-and-after explanation of Christ's work in your life can have a profound impact...you will be absolutely amazed by the power of your own story once you have been diligent to hone, shape, and refine it." In acknowledging the importance of testimony in the context of evangelism, Roatch references Revelation 12:11 as evidence of the power in a personal testimony. Reid concurs with this assessment describing the powerful result of the New Testament disciples partnering objective truth about Christ with their subjective personal stories of how Jesus changed their lives. He states, “The message of the cross, when paired with a changed life, is still the most formidable weapon for storming the gates of hell.” He continues by explaining that it was the apostles changed lives rather than their message that

138 Green, 316.

139 Bill Hybels, Just Walk Across the Room (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 115.

140 Ibid., 130-131.

141 Roatch, 59. Revelation 12:11 “”they overcame him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony…”

142 Reid, 48.
profoundly impacted the ruling council of Jewish leaders in Acts 4 and that their testimony provided evidence that the message they preached was indeed true. Finally, Rebecca Pippert offers great insight in her comment, "The world hungers perhaps without even knowing it - for examples of evidence in people's lives. They want to know if God works. Has he brought us identity and meaning? Have we experienced his love in ways that fulfill and complete us? We can do this when we learn how to share our own Christian experience."

To grant the reader an idea of the spectrum of personal testimonies that have been written for the sake of advancing the gospel, the following examples are offered. R.A. Torrey's collection of articles known as The Fundamentals includes reproductions of several testimonies including a one by New York City attorney Philip Mauro and another by the famous C.T. Studd. Recent books entitled The Unexpected Journey by Thom Rainer and The Rescue by Jim Cymbala contain a total of twenty stories of how people from all walks of life and even religious backgrounds came to faith in Christ. The two books certainly offer inspirational reading for anyone thinking about writing their own testimony. They do not, however, clearly present the gospel message. Bill Fay, the author of How to Share Jesus Without Fear, chose to include his personal testimony in the appendix of his book with a short appeal for readers to surrender their

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143 Ibid., 49.

144 Rebecca Pippert, Out of the Salt Shaker and into the World (Downers Grove, IVP Books, 1999), 219.

145 R.A. Torrey, The Fundamentals. Posted on the website BlueLetterBible.com, Accessed January 31, 2020. https://www.blueletterbible.org/commentaries/torrey_ra/; C.T. Studd’s testimony is found in the 88th chapter and is approximately 3,100 words almost entirely focused on his life before Christ and his conversion. Philip Mauro’s testimony is found in the final chapter and comprises of nearly 5,050 words. Mauro offers his story while leaning heavily toward incorporating spiritual truths and utilizing nearly one hundred scripture references in support of his gospel presentation.

146 Jim Cymbala, The Rescue (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017); Thom Rainer, The Unexpected Journey (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005).
lives to Christ and a suggested prayer. While the testimony itself was fantastic and truly showed how Jesus transformed his life, a clear gospel presentation was lacking.\textsuperscript{147}

As a member of Ravi Zacharias’ ministry team, Nabeel Qureshi’s written personal testimony entitled, \textit{Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus} is structured to lead readers along a journey of discovery first into what Islam teaches but then by following Nabeel as the case for Christianity slowly convinces him that Jesus is Lord.\textsuperscript{148} The book is heavily polemic/apologetic in nature and equally presents an in-depth description of Qureshi’s journey to salvation as well as a case for Christianity in the face of Islam. The book, however, is 275 pages, and something of this theological caliber would be unrealistic for most Christians to write.

As a final example, Maryanne McMellon is a personal friend and graduate of Liberty University with a Masters in Family and Marriage Counseling. In 130 pages, her testimony \textit{Broken No More} describes a captivating journey from abuse, addiction, and loss to hope and healing in Christ.\textsuperscript{149} However, like many other pieces of literature centered on personal testimony, the book lacks a thorough and theologically sound presentation of the gospel.

\textbf{A Happy Medium: A Personal Testimony Booklet}

A Personal Testimony Booklet is a 4” x 6” pocket-sized booklet of approximately 20-50 pages composed of two major parts. The first part consists of a description of the author’s personal testimony, while the second part consists of a thorough presentation of the gospel message addressing many of the essential elements described in Bell’s research. A PTB seeks to

\textsuperscript{147} Fay, \textit{Share Jesus Without Fear}. It must be noted that in the context of his book, Fay did clearly present the Gospel and that the purpose of his testimony was not to include another in-depth gospel presentation. The written testimony that he included in the back of his book was 2,743 words long.

\textsuperscript{148} Nabeel Qureshi, \textit{Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus} (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014).

fill the gap as a medium between gospel literature and personal testimony literature, between material that is either too short or too long. Because of its personal nature, the booklet is designed to build rapport with the reader by enabling them to connect with one or more aspects of the author’s story. The booklet concept is not totally new, but it is uncommon.

Perhaps the best historical example comes from Charles Spurgeon, the prince of preachers who, as mentioned above, valued written gospel literature. He published a similar-sized booklet of 56 pages describing his own testimony and story of conversion.150 True to his personal style, this booklet offers a comprehensive depiction of the gospel and the process by which God sovereignly used to lead him to Christ. This booklet serves as an example, on one extreme, of the maximum length a PTB should be.

Publisher Mike Shreve developed a similar idea several years ago in merging the personal testimony concept with a gospel presentation. Shreve’s own personal testimony “mini-book,” as he calls it, skillfully combines his personal story from Buddhism, with various scriptures to help readers understand Christianity and invite them to place their faith in Christ.151 It is professionally printed with a colorful exterior and consists of a total length of around sixty pages in a 3.5” x 5.5” format. Shreve has even had the opportunity to publish booklets for several other clients including Pastor Jay Haizlip’s “The Hooked Up Life.”152 In this author’s opinion however, these two booklets fall short of the kind of thorough gospel presentation that Bell encourages in his dissertation.153


Ultimately, the purpose of a Personal Testimony Booklet is to capture a reader’s attention, relate to that individual reader in a meaningful way, and then present the gospel in a clear, compelling, and unique manner through the author’s personal faith story. The goal is to offer a full gospel message that ensures anyone reading the booklet has all the truth they need to biblically repent and place their trust in Christ. Because of its size and nature, the purpose of this thesis is to explore the practicality of inviting members of LivingStone Community Church to write their own booklets for use as tools in personal evangelism.

Benefits of a Personal Testimony Booklet

A well-written Personal Testimony Booklet has the potential to overcome a number of significant obstacles. Much of what is wrongly categorized as evangelism today is in fact, simply an invitation to church, an act of kindness performed in Jesus’ name, a spiritual discussion or perhaps an opportunity to pray for someone at work. Assuming a church member is well equipped and experienced as a gospel witness, there still exists an overwhelming chance that most spiritual conversations will not result in a thorough presentation of the gospel message. The opportunity to spend fifteen, thirty, or even sixty minutes sharing the gospel with a friend or stranger is a rare luxury. Professor Timothy Beougher of Southern Seminary believes that gospel booklets can be effective for this reason. According to Beougher, "a gospel booklet is something you can leave with someone. I have started many gospel conversations that I was not able to finish, so I have simply put a booklet into someone's hands, knowing that they have the gospel that they can look over later.”154 Just imagine trying to engage in conversation with a couple

153 Just as Bell recognized, the Holy Spirit has used many tracts over the centuries to bring people to Christ, despite that gospel literature being noticeable weak in a number of essential areas.
behind you in the check-out line at Walmart, two families connecting at the playground, or a delivery man dropping off a new appliance to your home. With the aid of a PTB, a resource is now available in the event that a longer conversation about the gospel cannot practically take place. After some friendly conversation, perhaps a spiritual question and a brief sixty-second testimony, a booklet can offer a Christ-centered witness even after both parties are compelled to go their separate ways.

The benefits of a Personal Testimony Booklet are extensive. The process of writing one’s own “spiritual autobiography,” as Reid calls it, and including a written presentation of the gospel, equips Christians to gain a greater understanding of the gospel message itself. It also helps them to deeply grasp and appreciate what Christ has done in their own life. It enables them to clearly and succinctly choose the right words to describe their experience. Though each booklet contains a thorough presentation of the gospel, it is presented in a way that remains unique to that author’s perspective and personal faith story. Because a booklet is not just a generic gospel tract, recipients are naturally inquisitive, and trust is established with the reader as they encounter a transparent description of the author’s journey. This evangelistic method also makes it easier to share the gospel. Once the booklet is printed, it perfectly states what the Christian wants to say and can be given to family, friends, co-workers, and strangers. Recipients can read it immediately or at a time later on that works well for them. Christians are not pressured to force a gospel presentation face to face when time or circumstances are not in their

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155 Early and Wheeler, 249. In chapter 30, Wheeler mentions that he has his evangelism students write out the three parts of their testimony for Evan 101 at Liberty University. He relates how many students eventually appreciate the exercise because they gain a deeper understanding of what God has done for them and their confidence in sharing their verbally testimony grows as well.
favor. All an individual has to do is briefly establish a friendly connection, swing to spiritual things, share a quick sixty-second summary of their spiritual story, then offer a copy of their booklet to the person they have met. Because many Christians are afraid of not knowing what to say during a witnessing encounter, a Personal Testimony Booklet offers the perfect solution. It says everything precisely as it should because it has been written and edited beforehand.

In addition, the contact information of the author (and/or church info) can also be included in the back of the booklet so that readers who are genuinely touched by the testimony and gospel message can reach out in response. It is always encouraging to hear that one’s faithful efforts have born spiritual fruit. And the value of a PTB, once completed, would only require minor adjustment at any time in the future. It would be a permanent personal evangelism tool that would outlive its author. A finished booklet could be distributed for years, even after its author had passed away. Finally, because of the nature of today’s printing process, an electronic format of a PTB is created in each case. Participants also have the option of sharing their PTB electronically if they find it advantageous to do so. Electronic copies can be attached to an email or even posted on a church web page in the hopes that God would reach visitors to the site who read it.

Conclusion

To reach Colonial Beach for Christ, exponential impact is necessary. The only way for that to take place is for normal church members to embrace and prioritize gospel proclamation. This calling is the first major stage of the Great Commission. While strategies may vary, and ideas for creating opportunities to share the gospel are unlimited, LivingStone Community Church is excited to investigate the unique approach of combining a personal testimony with a
thorough presentation of the gospel message in booklet form as a primary method of saturating their town for Christ.
Chapter 3

Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the specific methodology selected by this researcher to address the thesis problem and then describe to the reader the implementation of this design. First, a review of the project’s problem statement and several interrelated factors will be provided. Then the intervention design itself will be described in detail. This will be followed by an explanation of the process that was used to set-up and conduct the research and several difficulties encountered. Action steps taken during implementation will be listed. A description of the participants and all forms/surveys used for data collection will also be provided. Finally, this chapter will contain an overview of the data analysis plan. IRB approval has been granted for the intervention design and its proposed implementation.

Intervention Design

A Review of the Problem

As the pastor of LivingStone Community Church (LCC), this author has enjoyed the privilege of partnering with LCC church members during the past six years in an effort to develop a comprehensive evangelism strategy to reach the surrounding community. This strategy comprises several evangelism methods on two different levels, a corporate level, and an individual level. However, a significant hurdle exists that pertains to both. A majority of church members have proved either unwilling or unable to engage in a regular practice of personal evangelism. After investigation, a number of reasons for this were discovered. First, there is

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156 See Appendix K
157 See Chapter One, pages 2-7.
the element of fear: fear of stepping out of one’s comfort zone; fear of what a person’s reaction might be; fear of rejection, failure, and persecution; fear of not knowing what to say, getting stuck during the conversation, or missing some important element of the gospel message during the conversation.

Closely related to this element of fear is a lack of gospel knowledge. This category would include members who are confused about the important elements of the biblical gospel and are not comfortable articulating God’s plan of salvation to others. A third factor that hinders personal evangelism is the lack of opportunity. Many church members have not cultivated a significant web of relationships that include the unsaved. In fact, only a few senior members of LCC regularly interact with those who are lost outside of their immediate family. In addition, the COVID pandemic has severely limited the ability of participants to connect in meaningful ways with members of their community. After social distancing requirements were put in place, opportunities for social interaction have become more limited. Overall, few friendships and few weekly interactions with unbelievers have led to fewer opportunities for potential gospel witness.

Next there is the hurdle of busyness to overcome. In today’s world, everyone has so much to do, that an in-depth conversation is rarely feasible in the hustle and bustle of everyday life. This is true for both Christians and non-Christians alike. Christians may feel the biblical conviction to evangelize but get swept up in the busyness of life and neglect to exercise intentionality. A repeated habit of this will often lead to a spirit of apathy settling upon a church congregation. This, in turn, causes the membership to grow cold toward the Great Commission. These issues are not the only obstacles that exist. Additional hurdles related to a lack of personal

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158 See Appendix D: Evangelism Hinderances Concept Map listing factors related to the lack of gospel witness.
gospel witness in the lives of individual believers are diagramed in the “Evangelism Hindrances Concept Map” found in Appendix D.

If a local church is to grow, evangelism must be a priority. The very core of evangelism is the gospel message. While a tremendous amount of activity can take place among church members, if the gospel is not accurately and thoroughly shared on a regular basis, the Holy Spirit lacks the key ingredient needed to transform the local community. The core problem this project seeks to address is a lack of gospel witness among church members who struggle with interrelated combinations of the subfactors described above. After a collaborative effort of investigation and discussion, a unique evangelism method is proposed to address this core problem: A Personal Testimony Booklet (PTB). The purpose of this unique intervention design is to help church members overcome several evangelism hurdles and become more frequent communicators of the gospel message.

The Details of the Intervention Design

A Personal Testimony Booklet is a unique witnessing tool that can be incorporated into the evangelism toolbox of any member who wishes to write one. It will be published in a 4” x 6” pocket-sized booklet format of approximately 20-50 pages. The booklet itself will be composed of two major parts. The first part will consist of a description of the author’s personal testimony detailing three stages.

(1). Describe what your life was like before knowing Christ. This section will include providing an overview of a participant’s quality of life before knowing Christ. What fears,

159 Participants will be encouraged to prioritize details about their spiritual journey that work best to clarify the gospel message. Following the pattern of the Apostle Paul in Acts 26, Randy Newman offers some great suggestions for how to weave together a person’s individual story with the Gospel story. See: Randy Newman, Unlikely Converts (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2019), 99-101.
struggles, trials, or circumstances played a role in preparing the individual to come to Jesus Christ for salvation? Some participants may desire to share major experiences throughout their life that had a significant impact on them spiritually. For example, a near-death event, the trauma of sexual abuse, feelings of insecurity as a teenager when their parents divorced, or even observing blatant hypocrisy while attending religious services as a child. It would also be appropriate in this section, if applicable, to include an overview of one’s religious experiences or spiritual background. For example, “I grew up attending Catholic mass as a child…” or “My parents were first-generation Muslim immigrants from Saudi Arabia. We maintained a strong household belief that Christianity was a perversion of the pure teachings of the Prophet Muhammad.” The goal of section one is to provide readers with an honest description of the unique characteristics of a participant’s life in the hope that readers will be able to identify on a personal level with several facets.

(2). Describe the process of how you came to know Christ as your personal Lord and Savior. This section begins to hone-in on the internal and external factors that led to conversion. Here PTB writers should describe what opened their eyes to their need for Christ. How did they arrive at a knowledge of their own sinfulness? Were they afraid of God’s judgment and of spending eternity in Hell? Did God bring into their life key individuals who played a significant role in their conversion? Was there an aspect of the gospel that touched the participant most? Individuals should be prepared to describe where, how, and why they made a decision to surrender their life to Jesus Christ.

(3). Describe what your life has been like since coming to know Christ. In this section, individuals will be asked to describe the transformation that has taken place after entering into a personal relationship with Jesus. One way to do this is to contrast one’s life before salvation to
one’s life after. What changes have taken place? For example, perhaps a participant once struggled with a lot of unforgiveness. They might share how experiencing divine forgiveness softened their heart and allowed them to forgive people in their past who have hurt them. Or perhaps the things they used to love (e.g., Drinking and Sexuality Immorality) they have now come to despise, and the things they used to despise (e.g., Sobriety, Self-control, and Purity) they have now come to love. It is recommended that participants highlight several characteristics, if possible, to provide readers with evidence of the transformative power of Christ. Growth in and the manifestation of such spiritual qualities as love and peace would certainly provide a contrast to a participant’s previous struggle with anger and fear before conversion. The goal in this section is to offer readers hope that the power of Christ can change a person no matter what their situation. For more information, the handout: “Guidelines for Writing One’s Personal Testimony Booklet” may be found in Appendix A.

The second part of the PTB consists of a thorough presentation of the gospel message and an invitation for readers to respond to Christ. As described in Chapter One, the gospel message consists of four essential ingredients summarized best by the four words: God, Sin, Christ, Response. First, the gospel is about God, who he is, His character, holiness and sovereign Creator and Sustainer of life. Secondly, the gospel is about sin, how all humans have fallen short of God’s moral standard of holiness. They are guilty, condemned criminals, alienated from God and helpless to change both their nature and their eternal situation on their own. Third, the gospel is about Jesus Christ, the incarnation of God in human flesh. God entered His creation as a man to save men from eternal judgment by the substitutionary atonement accomplished through the cross of Calvary. The gospel involves Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection from the dead. Finally, the gospel calls for a human response. God commands all people to repent and believe
the claims of Christ. Repentance begins with a change of heart and mind. It is an act of surrender, a turning from sin, and a forsaking of self. Faith, on the other hand, constitutes the flip side of the same coin. Faith speaks of a total commitment involving three aspects of one’s being: the mind, the emotions, and the will. It compels one to personally entrust themselves to Jesus Christ, to yield in total submission, and to commit one’s life to His promises completely.

Often Christians may be tempted to present Christ as the “solution” without first describing the “problem” and the eternal consequences of sin. Since misperceptions regarding salvation exist among the lost and Christian language is often misunderstood, clarity here is essential. To assist participants in framing their personalized presentation of the gospel, Appendix B lists 37 questions reproduced directly from the analytical framework of David Bell’s Dissertation “Tracts to Christ: An Evaluation of American Gospel Tracts.” Analysis questions correspond with each of the four gospel presentation steps above and also include some questions helpful in evaluating the overall impression of the PTB. While no presentation of the gospel may perfectly address all 37 items on the checklist, it is still a valuable resource to help writers think through the various components of the gospel. In addition, Appendix C contains suggested scriptures that correspond with the four subjects of God, Sin, Jesus Christ, and Man’s Response. Several additional scriptures are listed for participants to use in describing Satan, explaining the gospel in different ways, and illustrating changes that take place after conversion. While participants are not required to use any of the scriptures listed, they will be encouraged to incorporate five to ten verses into their PTB that show biblical support for the claims they make.

To be considered complete, booklets should include personal and church contact information on the inside back cover. This way, in the event a reader places their faith in Christ or has follow-up questions, a means of connecting with the author is available. It is also a good
idea to provide a picture of the author (with additional family members if desired) on the inside back cover. This adds a face to the story, making the PTB more personable to readers. On the outside back cover, authors will be encouraged to list a few questions or descriptive statements to entice recipients to take the time to read their booklet. The front cover should display a title of the author’s choosing, but preferably one that encapsulates their personal story and catches the attention of readers (for example, “From Brokenness to Blessing; How I lost Everything and was Transformed in the Process”). In addition, PTB authors will be encouraged to create an exterior design for both the front and back cover of their booklet. The design should look professional and appealing. It is recommended that the design support the author’s chosen title. The best way to explain the intervention design to prospective participants and help them conceptualize the evangelism tool is to make booklets available to church members as they are completed. Appendix J offers an example of a completed booklet that may serve as a template for other participants.

The Process of Implementation

The purpose of this section is to explain the process of partnering with project participants toward the writing of their own PTB. The following timeline is offered to help readers understand the exact course taken by this author and the eight major stages which led up to the present time. Initially, the first Personal Testimony Booklet was begun in May 2018 before this thesis project was officially started. That booklet was completed in February 2019 after ten months of slow progress. Upon its completion, a second booklet was begun in March 2019 based upon the pattern of the first booklet. This second booklet was completed three months later in May 2019. It was the experimentation with and completion of these two booklets that eventually
birthed the idea for this thesis project. Following the Lord’s guidance, this author then initiated a series of eight implementation steps for the project as explained below:

1. First, this pastor preached a series of messages on the Great Commission and the duty of all Christians to embrace the biblical responsibility of personal evangelism. This series was begun in during the July/August timeframe of 2019 and was intended to create the theological foundation for this thesis project. In the context of this series, the pastor described the church’s evangelism strategy and the ideal vision of seeing every member personally involved in sharing the gospel regularly.\textsuperscript{160} The purpose of this effort was to lay a foundation for the project among potential church participants. As part of the message series, the pastor expounded upon the nationwide problem regarding a lack of personal evangelism among professing Christians. This was intended to show why action in the area of gospel communication was needed. It was also intended to allow the Holy Spirit to bring a measure of conviction upon those whom God desired to use at a greater level. Since evangelism is officially a core value of the church and is emphasized quarterly as an essential characteristic in the life of a Christian disciple, this series consisted of a special effort to reengage members and call them to action. The preaching series referred to above consisted of the following five messages:

Message #1: “What is Your Ambition?”

This message focused on a believer’s pursuit of: (1) Knowing God; and (2) Making Him Known. The first part was based upon the scriptures John 10:14-15 and John 17:3 and focused on the pursuit of knowing and enjoying God in a personal,

\textsuperscript{160} This strategy was described in detail in Chapter One under “Outreach Biography.”
relational way. The second part of the message was based upon the scriptures John 17:4, Philippians 2:21, Romans 15:20 and 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12 and the call to live for the interests and glory of Jesus Christ. The purpose of this first message was to re-center members on the twin pillars of their Christian journey: **Being and Doing**. The first and greatest priority for a Christian is to cultivate their relationship with God (**Being**). From that comes the desire for others to experience the same relationship and the willingness to make Christ known through evangelism (**Doing**). The goal of this message was to have members walk away with a renewed sense of responsibility that they are first to grow in their faith and, secondly, share their faith with others.

**Message #2: “God’s Vision”**

This second message was intended to build upon the first by encouraging members to envision what **Knowing God** and **Making Him Known** might look like within their current context and local community. Based off Nehemiah’s vision in Nehemiah 1-2, this message was broken into three parts: (1) **Reflecting upon God’s Vision for Colonial Beach** by painting a picture of what could be to members of the church; (2) **Reviewing God’s Vision for LCC** by looking once again at the church’s purpose and vision statements as a Christian community; (3) and finally spending time challenging members to **Consider God’s Vision** for them personally and how that mission should fit into the framework of the other two. Finally, potential barriers that would prohibit these three visions from materializing were addressed, and some practical suggestions for application offered. The goal of this message was to renew vision and reignite members with an outwardly-focused, Kingdom-minded perspective.
Message #3: “Be a Light”

After the foundation laid in the first two messages, this third teaching focused exclusively on evangelism and the divine call to participate in the Great Commission. The sermon was based off of Isaiah 49:6; Matthew 5:14-16; and 2 Peter 3:9 but also referenced Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 1:17; Luke 19:10; Acts 1:8 and 8:2-4; Romans 10:14-17; and 2 Corinthians 5:17-20. Examples were offered to illustrate the incredible need for gospel truth, salvation, and hope among many Americans today. An argument for the necessity of evangelism was made. Members were challenged to love others by being a light in the darkness of their culture and community. Statistics portraying the apathy of many Christians toward evangelism were given in the context of this message. Common objections were addressed before closing with some practical suggestions to help members think about where and how they could best share the gospel in a natural way in the context of their everyday lives. Members were challenged to evaluate their own evangelism efforts in light of this message and the inner voice of the Holy Spirit.

Message #4: “Testimony Time”

This message built upon the call to personal evangelism during the previous Sunday by inviting members to consider one of the easiest evangelism methods: using their Personal Testimony. The two main passages of scripture for this message were Acts 22 and Acts 26, both of which record the Apostle Paul’s testimony. The purpose of these passages was to present a biblical example of the three aspects of a personal testimony and its effectiveness as a powerful method of evangelism. This provided church members with a great foundation from which to understand the concept of a PTB and how the booklet could help. For example, church members followed the three stages of a personal
testimony by first looking at Paul’s life before meeting Christ, then the circumstances involving his conversion, before finally observing the changes which took place to follow. Focus was directed toward Jesus’ commission of Paul as a witness of the death, resurrection, and hope found in the Messiah alone and Paul’s use of his testimony to accomplish this task. In the second part of the message, members were challenged to think through the three stages of their own testimony and to ask God to give them an opportunity to use their testimony, as Paul did, to share the message of Christ. The end of this message provided the most natural opportunity to initially present some information on the concept of the Personal Testimony Booklet, as explained below in step two.

Message #5: “The Divine Gift of Salvation”

As the final message in the series, the purpose of this sermon was to clarify the gospel itself. This message utilized Mark 1:15 and Ephesians 2 as the main passages for exposition. While message #4 was designed to address the first part of a PTB (The Personal Testimony), this message was designed to address the second aspect: What is the gospel message believers are commanded to share? Functioning in conjunction with the previous message, messages #4 and #5 provided a biblical foundation for the creation of a PTB. In fact, these two messages led directly into the second step in the process of implementation. As with the end of message #4, the conclusion of this message also provided another opportunity to share with the congregation this researcher’s project and the proposed PTB design.

2. Secondly, at the end of “Message #4: Testimony Time,” approximately ten minutes were devoted to sharing with church membership a rough framework of what would eventually become the contents of the Recruitment Letter found in Appendix F. This began with an
update on the author’s educational progress as a student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University and included an explanation of the evangelism research that would eventually need to take place to meet all degree requirements. The concept of a “Personal Testimony Booklet” was described to church members as an evangelism option that might help them share the gospel more often and overcome some common evangelism hurdles. This was in accordance with what was previously described in “The Details of the Intervention Design” section above. The two example booklets, previously completed, were made available to church members by providing a stack of both booklets on a table near the church exit. This was accompanied by the exhortation toward church members to pick up a booklet on their way out, read it, and then pass it on to someone else they might know who could benefit from hearing the gospel. Some of the benefits of creating and utilizing such a booklet as a personal evangelism tool were described at this time. The pastor also explained how this specific project was intended to help overcome a number of common obstacles to personal evangelism and enable members to increase the frequency by which they shared the gospel in everyday life.\footnote{Please see Appendix D for an \textit{Evangelism Hinderances Concept Map}.} Interested members were encouraged to notify the pastor after service or contact him during the week to signal their desire to participate. Furthermore, an email summarizing what had been shared on Sunday was sent out on Monday morning. The email included pdf copies of both booklets and encouraged church members to reply if interested.

The following Sunday, at the conclusion of “Message #5: The Divine Gift of Salvation,” this pastor again took advantage of yet another opportunity to share a presentation on the PTB concept with those present. Hard copies of the two previously
finished booklets were again made available for members leaving service. A second email was sent out on Monday morning summarizing what had been shared the last two Sunday’s and encouraging interested members to reply. A pdf of both booklets was attached to the email so that all members would have electronic copies if desired. Using these two booklets as a model made it easier to describe the various components of a PTB to the church by illustrating the concept visually to those who were interested.

3. Third, for those individuals who vocalized their willingness to participate, the pastor set up a personal meeting with each participant. All meetings took place at either the participant’s home or in the pastor’s office. The meeting provided an opportunity to explain an overview of the process once again and encourage individuals to see their commitment through to the end. At this time, hard copies of the “Guidelines for Writing One’s Personal Testimony Booklet” sheet found in Appendix A; the “Essential Elements of the Gospel Message” sheet found in Appendix B; and the “Suggested Scriptures for Inclusion in One’s Gospel Presentation” sheet found in Appendix C were distributed and summarily explained to each participant. An appropriate target date for completion was also discussed with necessary affirmation given to jumpstart individual motivation and effort.

At this stage, it was important to ask participants to provide a verbal summary of their testimony. This exercise helped the pastor identify key elements that he thought should be a part of a participant’s story from side issues and which did not play a major role in advancing the gospel storyline. Hearing a participant share their verbal testimony allowed this author the opportunity to make initial recommendations and ultimately expedite the writing process. For example, one participant described, as a key element to
be included in their booklet, the pain of experiencing adultery and initiating a divorce from their previous spouse. In light of this revelation, this author spent time discussing with the participant how to offer readers a unique perspective of the gospel and of biblical truth based upon such a key personal experience. (i.e., encouraging the participant to say something like the following in their PTB under section three of their testimony:

The Bible describes sin in terms of adultery. Even after I was saved, I continued to struggle with sin in several areas. Learning to trust God and depend entirely upon him for my security and joy was definitely a process. For a season, I continued to give in to temptation and offer my heart to a variety of other things instead of pursuing Jesus as my greatest love. Despite my “infidelity,” Jesus never gave up pursuing me. He never divorced me as I had once done to my spouse years ago. Remember, I have experienced the pain of infidelity, and I walked away from my marriage because of it. But amazingly, Jesus hasn’t treated me the way I treated others. The Bible says in Romans 8:38, that once we come to Christ in faith, absolutely nothing can separate us from His love. God will always love us. He will never leave us. We are saved and sanctified by grace, which means His fidelity is not contingent upon our ability to live a perfect Christian life. Over time his grace and love captured more and more of my heart, and as a result, I have found a greater sense of fulfillment in Christ than ever before. The things that used to tempt me – no longer do. I have found all I need in Jesus Christ!

Thus, key elements of a person’s story were defined as powerful experiences that a majority of readers could identify with in some way and would offer a down-to-earth means of illustrating biblical truth and/or gospel content. To offer one more example, a certain participant planned to include a description of an experience they once had in court when they were younger. The experience was used later on in the booklet as a practical, down-to-earth illustration to explain important gospel elements (i.e., using a courtroom analogy where God is the judge, Satan is the accuser, the participant is the criminal – guilty of sin, and Jesus is the defense attorney). In this way, the participant found it easier to describe the good news: how a guilty sinner could be forgiven and
declared innocent by God because of the sacrifice of the Jesus, the defense attorney.

Thankfully, this storyline came to light during the initial meeting and was flushed out before the participant ever put pen to paper.

Finally, during this initial meeting a questionnaire was distributed to each person. This first questionnaire, which appears in Appendix H, was later formatted slightly before being submitted for IRB approval. Individuals were asked to fill out the Part I: Questionnaire during the meeting. The completed questionnaire was then filed in a binder designated for that individual.

Lest the reader get the impression that only one round of recruitment was necessary for this project, additional clarity will be offered. In response to this researcher’s initial recruitment effort, four individuals replied by expressing their willingness to participate. All four individuals began during the August/September timeframe of 2019, immediately following the July/August message series described above. Of the four participants who began, one individual dropped out after only writing the personal testimony portion of their booklet. The other three individuals successfully worked through the entire process to finalize their booklets in November 2019, December 2019, and January 2020. When booklet #3 was finalized in November 2019, this author was able to take on another participant who had previously expressed interest. That participant began in November 2019 and finished in May 2020.

With booklets #1-5 completed as of January 2020, a second appeal was made by this author toward individuals who he knew were evangelistically minded and who he thought would benefit from such an evangelism tool. Reaching out on a one-to-one basis, four more participants volunteered to develop their booklets in February/March of 2020.
Of the four individuals who began, again only three finished. All three finished in May of 2020, leaving enough time for the three-month implementation period to occur throughout the summer (June 2020 – August 2020). As of May 2020, a total of eleven participants had begun writing their PTB but only nine fully completed the project.

4. Fourth, a team of two editors were recruited as part of the editing team to review booklets. One member of the team had a college degree in English and offered experience in the area of writing and editing. The other editor was a mature Christian who had a strong mastery of gospel theology and was a good writer. Together with the pastor these two editors formed the “editorial team.” As participants worked on their booklets, they were encouraged to submit a rough draft to the editing team for review in two parts: first, their personal testimony section and second, their gospel presentation.

Since the writing process required an extended period of time, this researcher made it a point to check in with each participant every one-to-two weeks for an update and to offer assistance as needed. This vital connection occurred at times before or after Sunday service, at a small group meeting during the week, through email correspondence, or by means of a phone call. Whatever the method, it was important to ask how they are doing, what section they are currently working on, and what personal goals they had set up to complete the next section of their booklet in a timely manner. This researcher also asked if there was anything he could do to assist the participant in successfully meeting their target goal at each step in the process. As a part of the editing phase, every participant was assigned their own three-ring binder and printouts of submitted material were individually filed. Each submission was dated to log progress. All submissions, once edited, were returned with proposed corrections/suggestions.
Even though both editors were strong Christians and were encouraged to write their own booklets, neither editor did. The timeline of working on nine full booklets and two partial testimonies over the span of two years was mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually exhausting. It was certainly helpful to have two volunteers who were willing to look through booklets and make suggestions/corrections. At times all three people on the editing team worked on a particular booklet. At other times, especially when multiply booklets were under review, it was not feasible to have more than two editors work on any one booklet. As will be reported further in the Results Chapter below, the average booklet took about five months to complete. The writing ability and theological maturity of a number of participants was not significantly high. This resulted in more rounds of editing and periods of instruction by the pastor in an effort to use the booklet process as a discipleship opportunity. Such interactions required patience and sensitivity.

5. Fifth, suggestions for improvement were noted and the manuscript returned.

Recommendations for improvement ranged from encouraging writers to develop a particular aspect of their storyline to cutting out an unnecessary “rabbit trail” that it was perceived as a distraction from the booklet’s overall purpose. Sentences often needed rewording for increased clarity and sometimes a word like “repentance” needed to be further defined. It was important to ensure that each participant’s spiritual testimony was communicated clearly and succinctly at a reading level readily understood by a wide audience. Each booklet also had to offer a biblically accurate and thorough presentation of the gospel message. Several rounds of editing took place with each participant to ensure that each booklet was balanced and well written. Because this project served as an
opportunity for discipleship, a generic gospel template was not provided to participants, though doing so would have certainly offered a less time-consuming approach. Each participant was expected to wrestle with creating their own gospel presentation and refining that presentation with the help of the “Essential Gospel Elements” sheet in Appendix B and “Suggested Scriptures for Inclusion in One’s Gospel Presentation” sheet found in Appendix C.

6. Sixth, once participants finished their final draft, they were asked to design a unique front and back cover for their booklet to match their storyline and title. They were also required to frame a simple biography to go on the inside back cover. This often included information about their family, work experience, education, or past ministry activity. It was also necessary to insert personal and church contact information for the purpose of follow-up. After this step was reviewed by the pastor/editor, the participant was able to move on to the final step: publication.

7. At this stage, a publishing company was needed. The online company recommended by this author was Christianprint.com. Though participants were given the freedom to utilize any publishing company they desired, all chose to follow this author’s recommendation. Christianprint.com proved to be both convenient and financially reasonable. An account with Christianprint.com was set up for each participant. A pdf of the booklet was created and emailed to the company, and any formatting adjustments were worked out directly with a representative from Christianbooks.com. In the one case when a misprint took place, credit was granted for all one hundred booklets and the participant received a second shipment of one hundred “corrected” booklets for free.
8. Finally, participants were encouraged to select the number of booklets desired and their preferred payment method. It is important to note that the nature of this evangelism tool required significant funds. Thus far, LCC has found that the publishing of 100 booklets through Christianprint.com cost approximately $3 per booklet. While the price per booklet slightly decreased depending on the total number of booklets ordered, the average price for 100 booklets (which was the recommended order for a participant’s first printing) with shipping and taxes included, totaled around $325. While financial assistance was offered to participants if needed, all participants elected to pay for booklets from their personal funds and no financial assistance was required of the church.

**Difficulties Encountered During the Writing Process**

During this researcher’s frequent interactions with participants several difficulties were encountered. First, this author’s dual role as both pastor and research leader certainly created a conflict of interest. As the participant’s pastor, it would have been wrong to focus entirely on completing the booklet to the exclusion of pastoral matters. Sometimes the subject of the booklet took a back seat to other issues as the “pastoral hat” was needed. At these times, shepherding of a general nature took place. At other times, the focus was all business and good work sessions occurred that significantly helped to advance the booklet process.

A second point of conflict arose when offering feedback during the editing process. At times this author was conscious of some participants struggling with hurt feelings as the editing process was underway. This occurred when two perspectives collided on how to best present one’s story and when suggested changes were needed in refining an individual’s text. Thankfully, conflict of this nature was superficial and did not inhibit the long-term relationship between the pastor, editors, and church participants.
Another difficulty during the course of this project was maintaining participant enthusiasm over such a lengthy period of time. Of the eleven participants who initially started, many were tempted to give up at one point or another. In fact, two of the eleven did eventually throw in the towel. Both had finished the first part of their booklet but, for various reasons, declined to go further. This was unfortunate because the testimonies were excellent. Both individuals would likely have had a powerful gospel impact using their PTB. It is this author’s hope that at a future time, both individuals will renew their effort and complete their PTB.

Finally, closely related to the difficulty just described was the somewhat awkward position this pastor found himself in in regards to motivating participants. Unlike college students who are able to devote their full-time attention to school, most participants had jobs and a busy family life. This is the primary reason why progress was so slow. Checking in on participants weekly proved to be too frequent. Oftentimes, this researcher found a participant might go an entire week without working on their booklet at all. If such inactivity was allowed to progress beyond two weeks, however, the fear was that a participant could begin to get out of the habit of writing altogether. This fear on several occasions proved to be true. On the flip side, sometimes it would take two weeks for both the pastor and another editing team member to look over a booklet manuscript and make changes/suggestions. On one hand, there was a desire to expedite the process, and on the other, a recognition that flexibility and sensitivity were needed to account for both the participant's and editing team’s pace of life. Adding to the difficulty of motivating participants, this author experienced mixed feelings in having to balance a genuine desire in seeing participants create and utilize their booklets solely for personal evangelism purposes and the ulterior motive of desiring to see participants successfully complete the project for the sake of the author’s research. This personal conflict was best justified by the belief that
writing the booklet would benefit both participant and researcher. Overall, the opportunity to hear a member’s testimony and work together over such an extended period of time was rewarding for both pastor and church member.

**Utilizing a Personal Testimony Booklet**

Once a participant finished his or her Personal Testimony Booklet, a three-month period of implementation began. Since personal evangelism rarely takes place on a weekly basis in the lives of most Christians, a time period of several months was chosen. During this time, participants attempted to utilize their PTB’s as an evangelism tool for sharing the gospel message. It was hoped that allowing participants three months to experiment with using their PTB would offer adequate time to gauge its effectiveness and gather enough data to form an initial conclusion. Ideally, a timeframe of one year would have provided the best measurement of the effectiveness of such an evangelism tool, but such a timeframe was simply unrealistic for every participant in this project.

A two-pronged strategy was employed to aid participants in the implementation of their new evangelism booklet. First, a handout entitled “Suggestions for Effective Distribution” was made available to participants to help them engage the lost and utilize their booklet for maximum evangelistic impact. This sheet addressed such important topics as friendliness, initiating conversations with lost people, transitioning a conversation to a spiritual subject, sharing a brief version of one’s personal testimony verbally, and how best to create interest before offering a booklet to the unsaved.

In addition to this summary sheet of guidelines, more practical training was planned. Since the objective was to recruit church members in successive rounds it was important to

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162 This handout may be found in Appendix E.
highlight the importance of evangelism before the church body regularly. Encouraging testimonies incorporated into LCC’s Sunday morning worship services helped with this. These testimonies were selected and shared for the purpose of offering descriptive details about how, when, and in what manner a PTB might best be used as an evangelism tool. As this researcher conducted his weekly check-in with each participant, those who are in their three-month implementation period were asked about their experiences. Those who responded by describing an exciting encounter were asked to share it publicly.

For example, one testimony that was shared was by a participant who initiated a conversation with another mother at the park while their children played together on the playground. After some initial small talk, the participant was able to transition to spiritual things and ask the stranger about her religious background. During the conversation, an opportunity to share a brief version of the participant’s personal testimony arose, which she did. Being well-received, the participant proceeded to offer the mother her PTB to read and make plans to meet at the park again next week for more discussion.

Hearing these kinds of stories and seeing participants testify with excitement at how God guided the conversation and empowered them to be a witness kept motivation high and the importance of evangelism front and center. Even occasional testimonies of missed opportunities (for example, the participant didn’t think to place the tip for their waitress inside a copy of their PTB instead of just laying in on the restaurant table) offered a teaching moment for others in the church. These open and honest times of sharing on Sunday mornings encouraged and helped to educate church members and other booklet participants who were currently in either the three-month implementation stage themselves or who were still writing their booklets. In total, six testimonies were shared during a Sunday morning worship service.
Finally, brief training opportunities using the medium of simple skits/reenactments provided participants with a visual example of what a witnessing interaction might look like based on actual encounters. Rather than something formal in nature, these opportunities to “role play” offered further instruction and practical simulations for participants to gain experience. For example, in the restaurant scenario just mentioned, this researcher suggested to the participant that together they rewind the clock and practice (before the church) what the individual could have said and done to have had a greater evangelistic impact on the waitress. The hope, of course, was that if anyone found themselves in a similar situation (like eating out at a restaurant after church service that Sunday), they would be more prepared for a successful gospel interaction. In total five skits were conducted on Sunday mornings from January 2020 through July 2020. Three of these skits spontaneously arose from participant testimonies and occurred on the same Sunday. For example, one participant who is a nurse, shared a testimony of giving out two of her booklets to her assigned patients. After sharing, it seemed best to help the church get a clearer idea of the actual communication which took place, especially since some people had questions about how a person could share the gospel so openly in a work environment without jeopardizing their job. To respond to this question and help the church understand how the participant was able to successfully navigate the conversation without offending the patient, their family members, or their employer, the pastor assumed the role of the patient and together reenacted the scene. By doing so, many in the church grew in wisdom. Hopefully this prepared them to more effectively share a testimony under similar conditions in the future.

The other two reenactments (of the five) were initiated by the pastor himself. In both cases personal evangelism encounters experienced that week were reenacted by the pastor and described in detail. This hybrid testimony/training opportunity walked church members through
the encounter and resulting evangelism conversation. Combined, the guideline sheets, the testimonies, and the reenactment/skits offered participants the encouragement they needed to step out in their own ministry contexts and engage lost friends, family members, and strangers in personal evangelism using their booklets.

How Results will be Measured

In an effort to incorporate a strategy of data triangulation, there were four steps taken to collect research information for this project. First, an initial questionnaire was administered to members who had volunteered to participate (see Appendix H). This occurred before they began writing their Personal Testimony Booklets and was filled out during the initial meeting with the pastor. This questionnaire was designed to measure a participant’s current evangelistic efforts in order to provide a quantitative baseline for the study. First, the questionnaire asked individuals to rate their habit of handing out gospel materials (like tracts) on a scale from 0 (Not at all) to 6 (very much so). The two questions which followed specifically sought to identify the frequency by which gospel literature was shared during both a one and three-month period of time previous to participants beginning their booklets. To do this, participants estimated their own evangelism activity in handing out gospel tracts and/or other gospel literature during these two time periods.

The second half of the Part 1: Questionnaire sought to ascertain the frequency by which the gospel was communicated verbally during one-to-one encounters within the timeframe of one month and three months. Participants were again asked to estimate how many occasions they had to verbally share the full gospel message during the three months before they wrote their PTB. The final question, as part of the first questionnaire was designed to increase understanding of evangelism habits by asking participants to estimate the number of times they were able to verbally share the full gospel message during the timeframe it took to complete their PTB. For
example, a participant might respond by stating that it took five months to complete their booklet and that during that time, they had four opportunities to present the gospel.

*The Part 1: Questionnaire* was handed out directly to participants during the initial pastoral interview. After receiving the individual’s results, the questionnaire was filed in a binder designated for that particular individual. In addition, responses for each participant were electronically cataloged in accordance with the instructions provided under the “Identifying Individual Participants and Cataloging Information” section below. After completing their booklet, participants were contacted with a phone call and asked the final question on the sheet which pertains to evangelism activity during the period of time spent writing the booklet. As participants finished their booklets and began the three-month period of implementation, they were made aware of two additional research instruments that would be needed to collect additional data. At the end of three months they were told a second questionnaire would be administered in addition to a personal interview.

As participants finished their three-month period of implementation both of these two survey instruments were conducted and recorded. Unlike the first, the second questionnaire contained some preliminary questions of a general nature designed to gather information such as the title of their booklet, how many words comprise their booklet, and how long it took to complete. Utilizing the same practice as the *Part 1: Questionnaire*, this second questionnaire was also electronically cataloged as part of the master copy then filed in the individual participant's specific binder. The main purpose of this second questionnaire, however, was to measure both written and verbal evangelism practices to see if any remarkable change occurred in either or both of these areas. Two questions specifically asked participants about opportunities they had to share the gospel *verbally* during the three-month implementation period. Another question
sought to measure written gospel impact by discovering how many booklets were passed out during the three-month implementation timeframe. The focus of the questionnaire centers on gaining an understanding of the manner in which PTB’s were passed out and securing total numbers for sub-categories like: number passed out on a 1:1 basis, number passed out in bulk, number passed out to family and friends, and number distributed electronically. Finally, the questionnaire will conclude with several questions designed to determine a participant’s willingness to continue using this evangelism method, whether their evangelistic confidence increased due to this project, and if they grew in their understanding of the gospel message in the process.

Third, a personal interview was also scheduled with each participant, three months after the completion of their PTB. The interview provided participants an avenue to share how they felt the intervention design and its implementation impacted their spiritual maturity and evangelism habits. Participants were asked such questions as,

1. What factors led to your decision to write a PTB?
2. How has writing a PTB benefited you and what lessons have you learned in the process?
3. Do you feel you are making a greater contribution to advancing the Kingdom of God now verse before? If so, why?
4. From your perspective, what are the greatest hurdles you feel must be overcome or addressed to be an effective witness for Christ?
5. Do you feel like your PTB helped you overcome any of these hurdles?”

The questions that are part of the Part 3: Personal Interview were designed to capture a participant's self-assessment of the effectiveness of the PTB in helping overcome evangelism hindrances and sharing the gospel more frequently. Participants' answers will add weight to the quantitative aspect of the study in parts one and two. Furthermore, these questions were designed to determine if participants experienced spiritual growth in the process of implementing their booklets. By asking participants to describe in their own words, the value, if any, they received
from writing and adopting such a unique witnessing method, it is the hope of this researcher to qualitatively assess this thesis’s intervention design as a viable evangelism tool. It is also desired that this interview help in gaining a greater understanding of the nature of evangelism and the best way to utilize a PTB for maximum success. Responses during the personal interview will be helpful in evaluating the overall evangelism method and offering recommendations for improvement in Chapters Four and Five. The Part 3: Personal Interview sheet may be found in Appendix H. Since the COVID outbreak in the spring of 2020, the final four participants were emailed the Part 2: Questionnaire and the Part 3: Personal Interview questions. The personal interview for these final individuals did not take place in person but the researcher instead made a phone call to discuss and record their answers.

Finally, personal observations, reflections, and journal records will also be considered. This author has kept notes on lessons learned during the design and implementation of this evangelism tool in a personal notebook. Journal activity included personal ideas for improving the PTB process, common obstacles participants faced on their PTB journey, and recommendations for enhancing the study based upon questions that arose from observing and collecting data. Notes were eventually color-coded with a highlighter according to the categories of: (1) Weaknesses of the PTB Design; (2) Benefits/Strengths of the PTB Design; (3) Improving the PTB Process and Design; (4) Evangelism Lessons Learned in the Course of this Research Project; (5) Best Application Practices; (6) Suggestions for Other Ministry Contexts. This will make it easy to sort notes, analyze thoughts and observations, and offer a report on these six key categories at the end of this thesis.

In addition, a portion of this journal activity was also devoted to bracketing out biases and presuppositions and identifying any slippages or silences in the data. This author has a
passion for evangelism and holds many strong beliefs regarding the subject. Coming into the project, this author acknowledged a pre-existing hypothesis regarding the overall outcome of the implementation design – suspecting that it will slightly improve evangelism activity, at least for the short term. This researcher is also the pastor of the participants who were engaged in this project meaning some role conflict exists. He has a long history with some participants and has addressed the subject of personal evangelism (including much of the material in this thesis) on various occasions in the past.

**Identifying Individual Participants and Cataloging Information**

Within the context of this research paper, especially in regards to Chapter Four, participant identities will remain anonymous. To identify and catalog information, each participant was issued a number from #1 - #11 based upon the date they began their booklet. The two participants who dropped out were removed but were eventually added back in as #10 and #11. Their responses to the *Part 1: Questionnaire*, filled out before their efforts were suspended, will be included in Chapter Four.

For every individual who agreed to participate, a small three-ring binder was used to record all material received from that individual. Using tabs, the binder was divided into subsections with each section labeled. On the outside, the binder listed the individual's name on both the front cover and spine. On the inside under the first tab, a participant’s signed *Consent Form* was filed. Under the second tab, all editions of their PTB during the process of editing were filed. Under tab number three, four and five, the *Part 1: Questionnaire, Part 2: Questionnaire, and Part 3: Personal Interview* were filed in that order. All binders have been stored securely in a filing cabinet in the researcher's office. The list that identifies participants with their assigned number has been kept private and secure.
As participant questionnaires were returned, responses were compiled electronically to form a master copy of both the *Part 1 & 2: Questionnaire*. Within the master copy, participants were referred to by their assigned numbers. Under each question the participant’s number will be listed followed by their response. This will allow for easy comparing and contrasting of data received by all participants under each question. While *Part 3: Personal Interview* will follow the same general pattern, the responses will be significantly lengthier. In addition to answers being recorded beneath each’s participant’s number, this researcher will also add personal notes from the interview if needed after each participant’s response. Unlike the first two parts, answers given under each question in this section will ultimately be sorted according to major themes when presented in this paper. For example, if half of participants reported a specific answer to the first question, these responses will be noted and lumped together. In this way, common responses and themes will be identified.

**Data Analysis Plan**

Data collected through the two surveys and personal interviews will be presented in the next chapter in the same order. Participant responses to each question will be disclosed while individual identities will remain anonymous using assigned numbers. After each question a summary statement will be given explaining the relevance of the findings and its meaning in relation to this project. Some of these summary statements will be short but in the case of several questions in Part 2, lengthy interpretations of the data can be expected. Several illustrations will accompany the findings offering readers a better way to visualize and interpret the numbers. Data received for several of the questions in this second survey will be compared to information gathered during the first survey in an effort to assess the value of a PTB as an effective evangelism tool.
Specifically, question #1 on the Part 1: Questionnaire filled out before project implementation will be compared with responses from questions #9 and #10 on the Part 2: Questionnaire filled out after the project. These questions will help discern any change in the willingness of participants to hand out gospel material in an effort to share their faith. Furthermore, answers given for Question #3 on the Part 1: Questionnaire will be compared with responses for Question #6 on the Part 2: Questionnaire to determine if any change has actually taken place in gospel literature distribution practices. Questions #5, #6, #7, and #8 on the Part 1: Questionnaire which deal with opportunities to verbally share the gospel over a three-month period, will be compared to questions #7 and #8 on the Part 2: Questionnaire to see if participants increased their verbal gospel witness. Overall, the objective of these questionnaires is to compare gospel witnessing practices (verbal and written) before writing a PTB with the behavior of participants after writing their booklet to see if evangelism frequency increased.

In regards to the final interview, answers to the eight questions will not be reported per individual participant but will be grouped according to theme. Common responses and any reoccurring themes will be addressed by the author at the end of Chapter Four. In addition, any qualitative data gathered through the interviews will be combined with personal reflections and summarized collectively in the categories of: (1) Weaknesses of the PTB Design; (2) Benefits/Strengths of the PTB Design; (3) Improving the PTB Process and Design; (4) Evangelism Lessons Learned in the Course of this Research Project; (5) Best Application Practices; (6) Suggestions for Other Ministry Contexts. These categories will be found at both the end of Chapter Four and within the Conclusion of Chapter Five. Participant answers and personal journal reflections will also be used in Chapter Five to offer suggestions for further study related to the problem and ministry project.
Chapter 4

Results

This chapter will outline the results gleaned from the four data collection methods presented above. Quantitative information from the first two questionnaires will be creatively presented using various illustrations. Qualitative findings from the participant interview and from personal journal activity will be summarized and explained. This chapter aims to accurately present the findings of this research design and then evaluate the research to determine what changes, if any, resulted from the project’s implementation. Did the proposed intervention design adequately address the original problem statement? What were the strengths and weaknesses of the design, and how well did it address the original thesis statement? These questions and several others will be examined toward the end of the chapter.

Research Participants

It is important to begin this chapter with a brief review of the ministry context, the requirements for this study, and the final participation level among LCC members. Before launching this research project, it was understood that the proposed implementation design would require an extensive commitment from each participant and the pastor/editor team. This certainly proved to be the case as question three on the Part 2: Questionnaire proved in great detail. Initially, eleven individuals agreed to participate. Each filled out the Part I: Questionnaire and began to work on writing their PTB. The goal of this research project was to secure the participation of twelve members. The eventual response by eleven participants was thus encouraging because this figure constitutes approximately 30% of LCC’s total membership, a significant feat of participation for any church congregation. Ideally, for a project of this nature,

163 Full responses to the Part 1 and 2 Questionnaire may be found in Appendix I
a larger participation size would have been better. However, this ideal was limited by the current size of LCC, the nature of the proposed intervention design, and the extreme sacrifice asked required of participants and the editing team. Though eleven individuals filled out the Part 1: Questionnaire and completed the first half of the writing requirement, two individuals chose not to continue further. Both finalized the testimony portion of their booklet, which was excellent in content and would have formed a great foundation for each booklet. However, for various personal reasons, the two participants stopped short of writing up a gospel presentation to add to the booklet and completing the project according to the guidelines provided. Multiple attempts to encourage the individuals to finish and offers of assistance were to no avail. Thus, nine individuals were able to follow through with the entire project, and their responses to all three sections are recorded below. In the case of the Part 1: Questionnaire, responses from the two candidates who dropped out will also be included as #10 and #11.

On a separate note, of the eleven initial participants, seven were male, four were female. This was not what this researcher would have expected, knowing a little about gender communication styles. The assumption entering this thesis was that more women than men would embrace the PTB concept out of a passion for sharing their story and a desire for meaningful connection. The age range for participants was representative of the church congregation: one person in their 20’s; three people in their 30’s; two people in their 40’s, two people in their 50’s; one person in their 60’s; one person in their 70’s; and finally one participant in their 80’s. The two individuals who did not complete the project were both males, one in their 50’s and the sole participant in the 60’s age range.
Research Results

Part 1: Questionnaire

Two questionnaires and one interview were used to measure participant transformation during the course of this study. The first questionnaire was administered to participants during the fourth stage of the Implementation Process described in Chapter 3. This questionnaire consisted of eight questions and was answered by all eleven initial participants before any of them began working on their booklets. The first four questions measured the frequency by which participants shared written gospel material in the previous three months. The second set of four questions focused on opportunities participants had to verbally share the gospel message during that same period of time.

The first question asked participants to rate their habit of sharing the gospel using written material such as tracts, books, and pamphlets on a scale from 0 (Not at all) to 6 (Very frequently). Four individuals responded with a “0,” three with a “1,” one person with a “2,” and the final three participants with a “3.” These findings revealed that most of the participants were not in the habit of regularly and intentionally passing out religious material. This reality became even more evident once participant responses to the next two questions were considered. In the month immediately preceding the PTB project, only four individuals were involved in distributing gospel material. Participant #11 gave out one gospel pamphlet. The remaining three individuals (#3, #5, #6), all of whom rated the first question a “3,” were primarily involved in distributing gospel tracts. When asked to estimate the average number of religious materials distributed in the past month, two of the three mentioned three tracts or less, with only one individual reporting approximately twenty tracts.
When the time period was increased to three months in question three, again, only one participant reported a significant use of gospel material at approximately sixty tracts distributed during those three months. Many of these, it should be noted, were left in public places anonymously. The fourth question in the first half of the Part 1: Questionnaire asked individuals to report any electronic gospel sharing methods. However, not a single participant reported attempting to use an electronic format to communicate the gospel in the three months before beginning on their PTB.

After reviewing the results from the first four questions, findings show that gospel literature distribution was non-existent or minimal at best for every participant except one. Collectively, members of LCC were simply not in the habit of trying to evangelize using gospel literature. This is significant for the simple fact that, from this researcher’s perspective, a majority of those who volunteered for this project were mature believers with a strong philosophy of evangelism. Even among this group, however, the practice of gospel literature distribution was not common.

In regards to the second half of the Part 1: Questionnaire, participants were next asked to estimate how many occasions they had had the opportunity to verbally share the full gospel message (i.e. Romans Road, 3 Circles, 4 Spiritual Laws, etc.) during three different time periods before they wrote their PTB. The time periods selected were one month, three months, and six months. These next three questions were designed to discover the average number of gospel conversations participants engaged in monthly. According to the numbers reported, no participant averaged more than two gospel conversations per month during the six-month time period preceding the PTB project.
Based upon estimates given by participants over the past six months, LCC member participants collectively reported sharing the gospel and average of .59 times, per person, per month. This average was a bit higher when derived solely from actions reported during the three-month timeframe (.575) and slightly lower than the average based upon what was reported in the one-month timeframe immediately preceding the start of the PTB (.636). If responses by Participant #1, the most active witness based upon self-reporting, are removed from the equation, the average would become .45 gospel conversations per person, per month. In reflection upon these numbers, it seems fair to say that LCC participants averaged approximately one gospel conversation every two months when considered on a collective basis.

The final question on the Part 1: Questionnaire differed slightly from the three questions proceeding it. This question sought to capture verbal gospel activity during the time participants were writing their booklets. This question was left blank when participants were initially asked to fill out their questionnaire and was not asked by the researcher until after individuals had completed their booklets. Since only nine of the eleven participants reached this stage, only nine responses to this question were recorded. Overall, participants collectively reported that they engaged in 38 gospel conversations during the time period it took for them to write their booklets. That total time period was calculated to be 44 total months of writing. In dividing these two numbers, participants averaged .864 gospel conversations during the time period they were working on their booklets. This figure represents a higher average than what was calculated before participants began to write their PTB’s. In fact, it is almost double. This higher average appears to indicate that after a renewed church-wide call to prioritize evangelism and a personal commitment from each of the participants to begin the project, members experienced a revival in their evangelism fervor that translated into increased activity.
Part 2: Questionnaire

The second questionnaire administered during the course of this thesis project was given out to participants following the completion of their PTB’s and a three-month period of implementation. A few questions of a general nature were first asked of participants for reference purposes. These included:

1. What was the title of your Personal Testimony Booklet?
2. Approximately how many initial booklets did you publish?
3. How many words make up your Personal Testimony Booklet?
4. Approximately how long did it take to write, edit, and finally publish your PTB?
5. On what date did you first receive physical copies of your PTB?

Answers to these questions can be found in Appendix I and will not be reproduced in their entirety here. However, it would be appropriate to comment on the third and fourth questions above regarding the time period required for a project of this nature. In the absence of a large editing team, the eleven individuals who began their PTB’s and the nine who eventually completed them did so over a span of two years. The first booklet was begun in May 2018, and the final booklet was completed in May 2020. Collectively, 44 months of effort was invested in producing the nine booklets. Using the dates recorded by participants on their questionnaire, it was possible to calculate the average time it took to complete one booklet. From start to finish, the average time to write, edit, and print a PTB in the context of this thesis project came out to be approximately five months (44 / 9 = 4.89 months). The average length of a booklet among the nine participants was 5,468 words, with the median being 4,950. With a knowledge of each booklet’s total word count and the total months invested, it was possible to figure out approximately how many words per month the editing team averaged. Booklets written, edited and published during the course of this project were composed at a pace of approximately 1118 words per month (5,468 / 4.89 = 1118 wpm).
In light of these statistics, it is clear that each Personal Testimony Booklet represents a significant investment of time and energy both for the participant and those recruited to help with the editing process. Each PTB required dozens of hours of writing, editing, and administrative work to complete over the course of several months. Compared with many other evangelism methods currently available to churches and individual Christians, this effort represents a mark on the far extreme of the bell curve. On a positive note, while a PTB requires a lot of work upfront, it can serve its purpose for years to come with little to no editing once the booklet is complete. If a large number of church members in another ministry context desired to replicate this evangelism method, it is highly recommended church leaders secure the full-time help of a professional editing team who could work with multiple individuals simultaneously to finalize booklets in a timely manner.

Of greater importance to the thesis problem were questions six, seven, and eight, each directly related to measuring the frequency of evangelism. After three months of experimenting with their booklets as an evangelism tool, participants were asked in question #6, “In the past 3 months, how many booklets would you say you have averaged passing out each week? Month?” This general question was further subdivided into five specific categories.

Encouragingly, responses by eight of the nine participants revealed that gospel sharing had increased when compared with the three-month time period before participants had begun their booklets. The lone participant whose gospel sharing decreased slightly was participant #6 who had the previous habit of using generic gospel tracts to share their faith. However, since a majority of the gospel tracts this individual distributed were left behind anonymously in random places (i.e., a shelf at Walmart, atop the gas station pump, near the napkins on a restaurant table, etc.) one might argue that the quality and effectiveness of gospel sharing actually increased in
this participant’s case since many of the PTB’s were given out after a personal connection. It should also be noted that this particular individual decided to abstain from using generic gospel tracts after finalizing their booklet and instead focused solely on utilizing their PTB as their only evangelism tool. Had this individual continued their previous habit of leaving behind gospel tracts in various locations, in addition to using their PTB, estimates of gospel literature distribution would have likely exceeded what had been previously recorded in part one. In light of this, it is safe to say that all participants experienced an increase in evangelism activity and frequency by utilizing their special PTB. The following chart provides a comparison of evangelistic activity (related to gospel material) for each participant before developing their PTB tool and after.

TABLE 4.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of Sharing Gospel Material</th>
<th>Before/After PTB [3 Months]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant #1</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant #2</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant #3</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant #4</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant #5</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant #6</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant #7</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant #8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant #9</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Before: __________ After: __________
There is one consideration that must be taken into account when reviewing the numbers in the chart above. For some of the participants, the implementation period for their PTB took place during the Covid-19 outbreak of 2020. To a degree, the Covid-19 outbreak hindered the potential distribution of booklets by limiting interpersonal communication and negatively affecting normal social routines. This was especially true for participants #7 and #9, who were both restricted to a degree compared to their social patterns before the virus. As a result, the numbers reported for participants (#6–#9) are probably different from what would have been reported following the three-month implementation period had the Covid-19 pandemic not been a factor.

Also, there was no way to determine if those who received a booklet, first of all, read it, and secondly, passed the booklet on to others after they had read it. In fact, some participants made the decision not to hand out a booklet to someone who, when asked, honestly confessed that they were not big into reading and would probably not get around to looking at it. Asking potential recipients this question was helpful in discerning whether it was worth giving out a booklet or not. It was especially encouraging when people took the initiative to ask for a booklet after hearing a participant share a brief version of their verbal testimony. Also, when distributing booklets, participants were instructed to ask recipients to pass the booklet on to someone who they thought might also benefit from reading it. The practice of passing a booklet on was confirmed by several participants who had recipients tell them later on what they had done. Considering such a practice, it is quite possible that more people than reported were exposed to the gospel through a participant's PTB.

Another important point to mention is that an unknown portion of total booklets distributed involved recipients who already claimed to be Christians. This percentage varied
based on the participant, with actual statistics regarding the identity of recipients impossible to clarify for sure. It is this author’s opinion that offering booklets to family, friends, and strangers who profess to be followers of Christ already is not necessarily a bad thing, especially if one has reason to believe the individual in question is not a mature believer or may not be genuinely saved. A booklet has the potential in such cases, to offer a clarification of the gospel message, a subject that is often misunderstood by many professing Christians. In all reality, it is quite possible for someone who thinks they are saved, to read the booklet, realize genuine repentance and faith were lacking in their life, and feel compelled to make a more informed commitment to Christ. In the case a booklet finds its way into the hands of another genuine Christian, at the very least, it has the power to encourage the practice of evangelism in their life. This was reported on several occasions already. It may also help a Christian recipient recognize the power their own personal testimony could have on others when shared and motivate them to do so. Considering the lack of evidence for genuine salvation in the lives of many professing Christians, it appears a PTB has the potential to impact those on the outside of the church as well as those on the inside.

While results for gospel literature distribution were positive, results measuring any verbal increase in evangelistic activity were varied. Question seven specifically sought to address how many occasions each participant had to verbally share the full gospel message during the first month after they wrote their gospel booklet. Six out of the nine participants recorded no change in their individual evangelistic behavior compared with the responses they provided before starting their PTB. Participant #2 recorded a slight increase of +1 gospel conversations during this first month while participant #6 recorded an increase of +2 gospel conversations. Participant #4 recorded the largest increase of all, reporting a rise of +5 gospel conversations during the first month after completing their booklet. The following chart provides a comparison of evangelistic
activity (related to verbal gospel sharing) for each participant before their PTB tool was developed and during the initial one-month timeframe after.

**TABLE 4.2**

![Chart showing frequency of verbal communication of the gospel before and after PTB over 1 month for participants #1 to #9.]

After lengthening the reporting period to the full three months, four of nine participants recorded no overall change in verbal gospel witness. One participant recorded a difference of -1 in opportunities to share the gospel compared to their evangelistic activity during an identical time period before their booklet. Two participants recorded a change of +1, another participant recorded a change of +2, and a final participant, #4, recorded a change of +7 in opportunities to share the gospel in person. The following chart provides a comparison of evangelistic activity (related to verbal gospel sharing) for each participant during the three-month timeframe before their PTB tool was developed and after.
While the chart above compares evangelistic activity among participants during the three months before beginning their booklet and after developing their PTB tool, it does not take into consideration results from question eight in the Part I: Questionnaire. Question #8 measured the number of occasions participants had to share the gospel verbally during the PTB writing process. When averages are taken of gospel conversations per month while writing the PTB, compared with averages taken after participants completed their PTB, six of nine participants revealed an increase in evangelism activity. The following chart provides a visual comparison of average evangelistic activity (related to verbal gospel sharing only) for each participant. Blue columns represent evangelism averages while writing a PTB. Orange columns represent evangelism averages after completing the PTB.
In consideration of analysis questions seven and eight above, the Personal Testimony Booklet seemed to make no significant difference in approximately half of all participants’ motivation/ability to engage in gospel conversations verbally. For the other half, a slight increase in motivation/ability was evident with one individual in particular (#4) recording a significant increase in opportunities to share the gospel verbally due to this project. When average gospel activity during the writing process was compared to average gospel activity during the three-month implementation period, two-thirds of participants seemed to experience an increase in evangelism activity.

Following the three questions on gospel frequency, there were four final questions on the Part 2: Questionnaire directly linked to question one on the pre-intervention Part 1: Questionnaire. Question nine asked participants if they experienced a greater willingness in their spiritual lives to hand out religious material (i.e. their PTB) than generic gospel material before
working on this project? Participants were asked to select a number on a scale from 0-6 (“0” representing: Not at all, and “6” representing: Very much so). The three individuals (#3, #5, and #6) who were in the habit of handing out gospel tracts previous in this project all found that their willingness to hand out religious material (i.e., their PTB) stayed consistent with what they had reported beforehand. However, all other participants expressed a significant increase in their willingness to hand out gospel literature (i.e., their booklet). Individuals seemed to take pride in their booklets and believed that God could use their personal testimony and the gospel message it conveyed to win people to Christ. The following chart provides a comparison of evangelistic willingness (focused on written gospel sharing) for each participant based on self-reporting before and after developing the PTB evangelism tool.

**TABLE 4.5**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>#1</th>
<th>#2</th>
<th>#3</th>
<th>#4</th>
<th>#5</th>
<th>#6</th>
<th>#7</th>
<th>#8</th>
<th>#9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to Hand Out Gospel Literature</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Before/After PTB</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Bar chart showing willingness to hand out gospel literature before and after PTB development for each participant](image)
Using the same 0-6 scale, participants were also asked in question ten, “How inclined are you to continue this method of evangelism (Personal Testimony Booklet) in the future?” Encouragingly, every single participant strongly affirmed their intention to continue using their PTB to share the gospel going forward by responding with a “6.” When asked if they had greater confidence in sharing their testimony and in God’s willingness to use their story to bring others to Christ (question eleven), seven of nine participants responded with a strong affirmation. The two individuals who answered with a “3” or lower were both mature believers who were already comfortable using their testimony during evangelism encounters. Those who had not been in the practice of utilizing their testimony as a method of evangelism were challenged to consider this method and grew significantly in their confidence in God’s ability to use their story to bring others to Christ. Overall, at the time of this questionnaire, each participant expressed a high confidence, rooted in faith, that God was willing to use their testimony to bring others to Christ.

The final question on the Part 2: Questionnaire asked participants, “Have you gained a greater understanding of the gospel message?” Generally speaking, those who were more mature in their faith and more experienced in sharing the gospel responded to this question with a lower number. Of course, the depth of the gospel and the multifaceted ways in which it can be illustrated contextually always provides an opportunity for every Christian, regardless of maturity, to learn something new each time they read, study, or seek to share the good news. Those who were younger in their faith and who were stretched to think about communicating the gospel for the first time scored this question higher. Based on the numbers, it was clear that this project challenged participants in their knowledge of, appreciation for, and ability to communicate the gospel message.
Part 3: Personal Interview

In part three of this study, the questions were specifically designed to be open-ended and objective in nature. One of the interview's desired outcomes was to discover contributing factors that may have played a role in determining the results of the study. Given the nature of the responses, this author has chosen to summarize the most common answers. The goal was to gather information that would help assess the success of this implementation design, glean valuable lessons for improvement and application, and develop a few recommendations to share with others who might be interested in experimenting with a similar evangelistic effort.

For the first question in the personal interview, participants were asked, “What factors led to your decision to write your Personal Testimony Booklet?” While a variety of responses were given, interestingly, every participant acknowledged that two factors, in particular, played a significant role in their willingness to write a PTB. The first was an inner conviction that their personal story could help others. Each participant exhibited a firm belief that lost people could relate to what they had experienced along life’s journey and find hope in reading their story. There was also a sense of thankfulness for what Christ had done and an eager expectation that what He had done for them – He would be willing to do for others. Similarly, every individual also expressed a sincere desire to play a role in seeing others come to Christ. Rather than surrender to a spirit of passivity and apathy, participants voiced their eagerness to make a greater evangelistic impact. They wanted to play an important role in advancing God’s kingdom and saw the writing and distribution of their booklet as one opportunity to do so. Beyond these two responses, a few participants expressed the realization that not everyone has time to talk in the moment but that leaving a booklet with someone they meet offers an opportunity to share the gospel, which would have otherwise not been possible.
The second question asked participants, “Do you feel the writing of your “Personal Testimony Booklet” has benefited you? If so, in what way?” Every participant unequivocally answered the initial question with an emphatic “Yes.” Here were some of the most common responses:

1. I was personally encouraged while reflecting upon Christ’s work in my life (x9)
2. My enthusiasm for evangelism has increased (x8)
3. This project has offered an opportunity for me to grow as a communicator of biblical truth (x6)
4. I grew in my understanding of the gospel message and in my ability to articulate it (x6)
5. I was encouraged that Christ can use me to advance his Kingdom (x6)
6. This project increased my confidence in my personal salvation (x5)
7. I was strengthened in my commitment to walk out the Christian life (x2)

Third, participants were asked, “What lessons have you learned when it comes to distributing your personal testimony booklet?” This question was further subdivided to specifically inquire about what participants found to be the most effective way of sharing their booklet with strangers and friends/family. They were also asked what circumstances they found their booklet to be most helpful as an evangelism tool and to share any wisdom they had learned during the implementation process that would prove helpful to others.

Since sharing with family members can be difficult, especially in light of past history and baggage, a testimony booklet was reported by participants to be a much less confrontational way of communicating gospel truth compared with a personal conversation. Because the booklet was personal in nature, it was also better received than a generic gospel tract or some other type of religious material. Participants found it was best to ask family or friends to look over what they have recently written, sharing a statement like, “Hey ________, I recently finished a little booklet about my personal story and how God changed my life. Can I give you a copy to read? I would really love to know what you think.”
When strangers were involved, a slightly different approach was suggested. Common lessons learned by participants included carrying a booklet on them at all times. This was in case they get into a conversation, and an opportunity to share a booklet arose. Learning to be friendly and allowing the Holy Spirit to lead were also mentioned as important. Another key to success participants found to be effective was being genuinely interested in others, asking people questions, and listening to them. With this approach, participants came to realize God often opens up the door to have a more in-depth spiritual conversation. As PTB users were able to switch to spiritual things, the best approach was to ask about the person’s religious beliefs and spiritual journey. Such a question was perceived as non-offensive. Building rapport and discovering commonalities between a person’s story and a participant’s own was also important. When the time was right, LCC members found that sharing a brief version of their verbal testimony often provided a launchpad for an invitation to read their longer written version. Many found it helpful to emphasize areas where they could relate to the person they were reaching out to – doing this built trust. If a long conversation about the gospel was not feasible at the moment, offering a PTB for the person to read when they have time seemed natural. In fact, participants reported that the booklet came in most handy when they did not have the opportunity to share the gospel directly (or fully) during a conversation and were able to offer one before parting ways. Equally important was the discovery that handing someone a booklet even when an in-depth gospel conversation had taken place, was a great way to reinforce gospel truths just shared.

The fourth question asked participants if they felt they were making a greater contribution to advancing the Kingdom of God now that they had a PTB tool in their hand than before. Every participant answered “Yes” to this question, responding that they felt this way because they were in fact, more actively engaged in evangelism efforts with a personalized tool
of their choosing. This response indicated that participants felt a sense of ownership and pride in their PTB as a self-developed evangelism tool and led to an increased motivation to put the booklet into use.

One of the main subjects that this thesis has addressed so far has been major hurdles and hindrances to evangelism. The fifth question narrows in on this subject once again. In seeking feedback from participants, it was important to discover what they felt were the greatest hindrances to becoming an effective witness for Christ. It was equally important to find out if they perceived their PTB as helpful in overcoming some of the difficulties they struggled with personally. As should be expected, many participants mentioned fear as a significant evangelistic hurdle. For example, fear of not knowing what to say, forgetting to say something important, or not mentioning relevant Bible verses in support of the conversation were all mentioned. Some struggled with a fear of not being a good “public speaker” or knowing how to answer questions a lost person might ask. In addition to fear, “self” was listed as a major hindrance. There was a recognition that it was all too easy to remain focused on personal plans each day and miss divine opportunities to interact with the lost. In other words, the natural tendency recognized among participants was the temptation to adopt a self-focused lifestyle and neglect Jesus’ agenda of being fishermen.

In addition, participants believed the lack of a refined and effective evangelism technique was also a problem. Though LCC has offered training on evangelism methods such as “The Way of the Master,” “Share Jesus Without Fear,” and “The 3 Circles,” it appears that many members still don’t have a high degree of confidence regarding a personal evangelism strategy. This is probably due to the fact that LCC members average only six gospel conversations a year, not enough to refine a personal method of evangelism of their own. Closely related to this, is the
issue of how to transition into a gospel presentation from a regular conversation about secular subjects. If participants remain unable to present listeners with a well-timed, well-phrased question to take the conversation in a different direction, the possibility of a gospel conversation is significantly minimized.

The good news is that participants felt that the PTB process helped them in some of these areas in light of these common obstacles. For example, since the PTB can state exactly what needs to be said without fumbling around with words, using a booklet calms the fears of those who struggle with what to say. The booklet also does not argue. This eliminates anxiety for those afraid of personal confrontation and offending people with biblical truth. It is also easier to hand someone a booklet than have a thirty-minute conversation about a sensitive subject that might make them feel uncomfortable. In this respect – the PTB does a lot of work on behalf of the Christian. Believers, however, must still overcome the fear of engaging in conversations with strangers and take responsibility for developing their skills of interpersonal communication. While the PTB might help with some obstacles, it cannot magically take away all challenges. Participants recognized their responsibility in studying to show themselves approved of God – an evangelistic worker who is not ashamed but who can correctly handle the Word (gospel truth). They also recognized that a gospel witness's responsibility requires memorizing a handful of relevant Bible passages to use during evangelism encounters and even practicing hypothetical gospel conversations in preparation for the real thing. Watching videos of one-on-one witnessing encounters would also help to get a feel for a wide range of evangelism possibilities and better prepare for the next conversation. Participants even mentioned the need to grow in their ability to pray evangelistically. They recognized the importance of being equipped to engage in effective spiritual warfare on behalf of others.
Question six asked participants, “Would you recommend that others write their Personal Testimony Booklet to use as an evangelism tool as well?” Eight of nine participants said “Yes,” even though most admitted that it was a lot of work. In regard to this question, it was universally believed that every Christian should understand their personal testimony and how to use that story to bring others to Christ. However, two individuals mentioned that they felt writing a PTB was not for everyone. While agreeing it would be beneficial for all, both felt it was probably not feasible for some. This led one participant to say that they would not recommend all members engage in an effort to write their own PTB.

The response of several participants also contained the idea that a testimony had to be dramatic, or else it would not be as influential an evangelism tool. There appeared to be some participants who did not understand that everyone has a unique testimony according to God’s divine providence and that He could use any story to bring people to Christ. No single individual can fully relate to the majority of the people they meet. Different stories appeal to different people. For example, one testimony might involve, “I grew up in the church…” compared with another that begins, “I did not grow up with any kind of spiritual background as a kid.” Each of these stories has the potential of relating to a large category of people who have grown up with a similar experience. The person who grew up in church and has never left their hometown can have an impact equal to or greater than a dramatic testimony that is filled with all kinds of thrilling stories, near-death experiences, and gut-wrenching sinful mistakes. In fact, sometimes, a testimony can be too self-centered and run the risk of taking the reader’s focus away from Christ and the gospel message and putting it on the author instead. Ultimately, all lost

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164 Newman, Unlikely Converts (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2019), 98.
people struggle with the same basic heart problems, and an honest discussion about these issues (like a fear of death and the desire to know one’s purpose) will have a wide appeal.

The seventh question of the Part 3: Personal Interview was structured to request participant suggestions for improving the writing/editing process. Ultimately, the purpose arose from a desire by this author to improve the various stages of the process, if possible. Participants were asked how the pastor could better assist and train others in the future who decide to create and utilize a PTB. For the most part participants affirmed current practices like using a personalized approach to writing the booklets based upon the spiritual maturity of the individual participant and not a one size fits all technique. They also found it helpful when PTB examples were provided that offered participants who were currently writing their booklets a basis of comparison and exposure to various options that were available to them. Two individuals suggested a standard gospel presentation of some kind be used if a participant didn’t want to write their own. Despite the initial appeal of this idea, especially in consideration of the two participants who terminated the project at this stage, there is a stronger argument for having participants develop their own unique gospel presentation. In addition, a few concerned participants recognized just how much time and energy was invested in the overall process and humbly suggested that it might be helpful to think about selecting a Christian publisher to spearhead the editing process for future booklets. Of course, if this path were chosen, the cost would increase, but it would almost certainly save LCC, or any other church for that matter, time. The downside would be less leadership involvement in the lives of church members.

Finally, participants were asked in question eight if they had received any personal feedback regarding their booklet that was an encouragement to them. While every participant reported receiving general feedback that was positive in nature, no one reported feedback (during
their three-month period of intervention) that offered a direct testimony of salvation as a result of someone receiving and reading their booklet. Ultimately, there is no way to tell the full impact of the booklets that have already been distributed, but it would certainly be nice to know LCC members made a life-changing impact on someone else by receiving encouraging feedback directly. Knowing that only God can produce spiritual fruit, this final issue continues to be an ongoing matter of prayer among the LCC community.

**Were the Results Surprising?**

This thesis project's underlying objective was to look for an evangelism method that would enable LCC members to overcome some of the hurdles associated with sharing their faith. It was especially important to discover a way to increase the frequency in which the gospel message was communicated. Overall, it appears this goal has been achieved - to an extent. While this project yielded the results expected by this researcher going in, both the Covid 19 outbreak of 2020 and the limited number of participants involved (including the length of the study) were a concern. These factors prevented the establishment of a clearer picture of the effectiveness of the PTB concept as a viable evangelism method. The Covid 19 outbreak limited the degree of interpersonal connections for several participants. This reality, in all likelihood, slightly skewed the data. Secondly, the limited number of participants did not offer a robust data set to conclusively analyze the intervention design's effectiveness. One hundred participants with an implementation period of twelve months would have provided this researcher a much clearer perspective of the potential usefulness of such an evangelism tool.
Project Evaluation Summary

In his discussion on the identification of a church’s core values, Aubrey Malphurs states that “just because a church decides that the Great Commission will be its mission does not mean that this will be the case.”

“Many churches list evangelism as a core value because they know they are supposed to be evangelistic when, in reality, no one may have been won to Christ in years. In the case of such churches, evangelism is an aspirational value because active participation in evangelism is lacking.”

Malphurs admits that a majority of church congregations fall into this category. What makes the situation even more discouraging is that when a church wrongly believes that its aspirational values are its actual values, it exerts no effort to change. The church does not think it needs to. Under such circumstances, a cloud of deception inhibits members from seeing the reality of their own limited evangelistic efforts and prevents them from growing in evangelistic maturity.

From Malphurs's research, it is clear that most churches are not as committed to evangelism as they think they are. Unfortunately, this is also the case at LCC. What is needed is a clear dose of reality. General statistics on the practice of evangelism coupled with participant results from the Part 1: Questionnaire offer precisely this. In addition, after many years of church consultation, Malphurs discovered that for a church to maintain evangelism as a core value, two to three times the effort is needed compared to any other core value a church chooses to embrace.

In LCC's case, a tremendous investment of time and energy over two years has gone into infusing the congregation with a renewed sense of evangelistic mission. It has been the

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165 Malphurs, Advanced Strategic Planning, 100.
166 Ibid., 106, 138.
167 Ibid., 106.
168 Ibid., 113.
goal of this author to pastor a church that not only believes evangelism should be a “core value” but demonstrates that it is. The results of the first survey for this project clearly reveal that church members were not engaging in gospel conversations on a regular and frequent basis. This appears to be typical of Christians in general throughout the United States, as statistics in this paper have shown. In an effort to encourage LCC members to transition from evangelism being an “aspirational value” to a “core value,” a PTB design has been proposed and implemented as a major component of LCC’s evangelism strategy. This concept has comprised the core focus for this thesis project. But after all the hours of time and investment, has this effort encouraged evangelistic growth within the congregation among participants?

The thesis for this project argued that a PTB would help church members overcome common obstacles and encourage proactive gospel witness. It suggested that a PTB would help members grow in their scriptural understanding of the gospel and strengthen their confidence in God using their testimony to draw others to Christ. The ultimate goal was to determine if adopting a PTB as a new evangelism method would increase the frequency in which participating church members shared the gospel.

Readers saw in Part 3: Q2 that 6/9 participants grew in their understanding of the gospel message and in their ability to articulate it. The same result was found in Part 2: Q12 where only one participant admitted they had not grown in their understanding of the gospel while 8/9 said that they had. Regarding confidence in sharing one’s testimony, Part 2: Q11 revealed that 7/9 participants had experienced a significant increase in this area, with two others experiencing a slight increase. Part 3: Q2 also showed that 6/9 participants grew in their evangelistic enthusiasm as communicators of Biblical truth. Finally, results from four questions revealed that an increase did in fact take place in the frequency of gospel witness. Part 1: Q8 revealed that participants
engaged in a slightly higher number of verbal conversations with the lost in which they shared the gospel after beginning their booklets than before. Part 2: Q8 showed that 4/9 participants reported an increase in opportunities to share the full gospel message verbally after implementing their booklets. While verbal opportunities increased slightly, the willingness to communicate the gospel via literature (i.e., PTB) increased dramatically. Part 2: Q9 revealed that 6/9 participants experienced an increased willingness to use gospel literature to engage in evangelism while the other three maintained their previously high level of commitment. Perhaps the strongest evidence came from results posted under Part 2: Q6 which showed that 8/9 participants exponentially increased their gospel witness by passing out their PTB’s. Considering the previous habit of gospel tract distribution for the remaining participant, it could even be said that ALL participants grew in their practice of evangelism through the distribution of their PTB’s.

The Strengths of a PTB

Using a PTB as an evangelism method was found to help in:

1. Equipping Christians with a greater understanding of the gospel message.
2. Offering believers a deeper understanding of what Christ had done in their own lives.
3. Enabling believers to clearly and succinctly choose the right words to describe their experience in an effort to share their spiritual journey with others.
4. Equipping Christians with an evangelism method that makes it easier for them to share their faith by overcoming several obstacles such as fear.
5. Offering participants an opportunity to receive feedback on the impact of their story and gospel presentation by providing contact information.
6. Enabling communication of the gospel message in a way that allows individuals to consider biblical truth without confrontation or pressure.
7. Offering a way to reinforce/re-emphasize the gospel truths discussed during a conversation. The booklet offers a recipient a second gospel presentation in a different form that works in conjunction with a verbal presentation communicated in person.
8. Offering a future opportunity to present the gospel in the event that a conversation with the individual is not feasible at that moment.

9. Allowing for a greater percentage of Christians to actively participate in Evangelism who would not otherwise think to use gospel material to share truths about Christ.

The Weaknesses of a PTB

1. Many People may not Read a Booklet

As reported earlier in this thesis, society is moving away from reading old-fashioned books and more and more toward social media consumption. This is especially true of the younger generations who spend hours connected to the internet, surfing Facebook, or watching YouTube videos. A booklet may not be the most effective method of reaching such individuals.

2. The Sacrifice Required

Based upon the findings above, the minimum time requirement for the completion of a PTB was three months with the average length of time being five months. This number represents a huge sacrifice on behalf of church members who are already extremely busy. For many Christians, this kind of commitment will immediately be deemed impossible. For those who do begin, one must consider that inevitably some will end up quitting before completing the project. In the case of LCC, two of eleven participants (18%) began but did not complete the booklet process. Of those who did, three quarters reported encountering at least one moment where they were tempted to give up and abandon the effort altogether. Had it not been for loving yet firm accountability applied to encourage participants to finish strong, more than two may have thrown in the towel.
In addition to the time demand on participants, there is also a considerable demand on the editing team selected to help participants through the writing process. Dozens of hours were required to see each participant successfully navigate the journey from beginning to end. Even though a finished PTB represents an amazing achievement and an influential weapon for advancing the Kingdom of God, the long and tedious path to get to this point may prove too high a hurdle for many to jump over. Though no LCC participant required financial assistance, the cost of producing a hundred booklets may also act as a deterrent for some. In the case of LCC, money was available to help those in need. That may simply not be the case in other ministry settings.

3. **The Effects of the Booklets are not Measurable**

One of the downsides of a booklet is that it eliminates the possibility of immediate feedback. When a personal conversation takes place in real-time, questions can be asked, and feedback given immediately. Even if a lengthy conversation leads to the distribution of a PTB, participants may never know the full extent of their efforts until eternity. For the hundreds of booklets passed out, not one participant has reported that a recipient contacted them with news that they had personally placed their faith in Jesus as a direct result. Booklets may therefore require Christians to sow in faith without expecting to see the full extent of their impact until eternity.

**Final Thoughts**

Considering the results of this thesis project, it appears a PTB evangelism method has a place at the table as a viable evangelistic tool. However, considering the work required and the strengths and weaknesses of the booklet, it is most likely reserved for a select few. Those who do not like writing, or may not write well, might be more inclined to select a different evangelism
method. But for some individuals, a PTB offers an amazing opportunity to increase gospel witness. As reports funnel in, LCC has heard stories of some participants giving out booklets to strangers they meet at work. Others have been including a booklet in their housewarming gift basket to new homeowners in their neighborhood. As previously encouraged, restaurants have proved to be a great place to hand out a booklet with a sizeable tip sticking out. One participant has even brought a stack of booklets with them to the gym and consistently finds opportunities to hand them out to friends and new people they meet. So, while a PTB does have its strengths as an evangelism tool, it should not be relied upon exclusively. It is but one of many tools. It has been shown to be super helpful for some believers, but not all. It is this author's perception that if individual believers don’t already have a high internal passion for evangelism, no tool, no matter how easy to use, is going to help them share more often. The practice of evangelism originates from a passion for evangelism, and that can only come from a divine work of grace in the heart. Without this deep work by Christ, offering another evangelism tool to Christians will not make much difference.
Chapter 5

Conclusion

In this chapter, a final summary of the issues addressed by this thesis will be offered. Personal lessons learned during the course of this thesis project will be presented, including suggestions for improvement regarding the research design used. Recommendations for how the evangelism design could be implemented among other ministry contexts will also be considered. Finally, ideas for future research related to this ministry problem will be proposed in the hope that readers will be encouraged to pursue additional options for an even greater evangelistic impact.

Summary of Issues Addressed

The core problem this study sought to address was a lack of numerical growth at LivingStone Community Church. One of the reasons identified as a major contributing factor was the practice of evangelism among church members. While members were often willing to extend invitations to attend church service, engage in spiritual conversations, or even offer to pray for the lost, none of these activities centered on the primary ingredient necessary for biblical church growth: sharing gospel truth. In addition, it was discovered that multiple hindrances among church members existed, preventing frequent gospel witness. With all factors considered, LivingStone Community Church members were simply not sharing the gospel frequently enough and were thus falling short of the Great Commission. To help overcome this problem, a unique method of evangelism was proposed. This researcher hoped that participating members would be empowered to share their faith more frequently, utilizing a Personal Testimony Booklet approach.
Working in conjunction with LivingStone’s overall evangelism strategy, this thesis’s objective was to investigate the effectiveness of developing and using a Personal Testimony Booklet as a means of helping church members overcome common obstacles to personal evangelism, grow in spiritual maturity, and share the gospel message more frequently. While using written material to share one’s testimony or communicate gospel truth is a strategy that has been around for hundreds of years, combining these two components into a pocket-sized evangelistic booklet was a unique idea.

As initially discussed in chapter two of this thesis, most evangelistic resources surveyed by this author tended to focus on either “gospel content” or “personal experience” but not a balance of both. Materials of various lengths existed in each category. For example, in addition to books like *Peace with God*, *More Than a Carpenter*, and *One Heartbeat Away* already mentioned in relation to the category of gospel content, *The Case for Christ* written by Lee Strobel would also fall within the same grouping. Except for the book’s initial introduction, where Strobel shares the personal circumstances that led him to investigate the biblical claims of Christ, every chapter focuses on building a case for accepting the gospel truth. At 275 pages, the book is a fairly lengthy evangelistic resource. Another gospel-centered resource just a little shorter is the 215-page book *The Way to God and How to Find It* by D.L. Moody. This is also an example of an evangelistic resource representative of the “gospel content” category but containing no inclusion of personal testimony. Even shorter is R.C. Sproul’s 58-page booklet *How Can I be Right with God*. This piece of literature is more representative of a booklet rather than a book and is based upon Paul’s presentation of the gospel to the Philippian jailer in Acts 16. As explained in chapter two, the shortest level of written gospel literature is best represented by the thousands of gospel tracts that have been published over the years. These pocket-sized
tracts offer the simplest and most cost-effective way to evangelize through written literature.

Two tracts this author personally uses are, *The Evidence of God* by Lee Strobel (8 pages in a 3.5” x 5” format) and *Why Christianity?* by Ray Comfort (20 pages in a 3” x 5” format). While the spectrum of gospel resources surveyed by this author was commonly found to be within the range of a two-page tract up to a three-hundred-page book, neither extreme seemed best for this author’s goal of equipping church members with an evangelism resource that would help them increase the frequency of their gospel witness. Books proved to be too expensive, gospel tracts too short. It was proposed by this author that a literature resource falling within the middle range of length and incorporating a personal story of faith could increase the effectiveness of any gospel presentation and offer a reasonable and sustainable evangelism method for church members.

To investigate this theory further, evangelism resources focused on sharing the gospel through one’s personal testimony were also studied. Similar to the “gospel content” category above, these “personal experience” resources came in a variety of lengths as well. Many took the form of an autobiography. In addition to the examples mentioned in chapter two, *Dancing for the Devil: One Woman’s Dramatic and Divine Rescue from the Sex Industry* by Anny Donewald is a 350+ page account of finding freedom, peace, and salvation in Christ. Another example surveyed by this author was the 225 paged book *Save Me From Myself*, written by Brian Welch, lead guitarist for the band Korn, whose life of drugs, sex, and rock n roll was radically transformed after encountering Jesus. While these two resources are examples of personal testimonies classified as autobiographies, they are simply too lengthy and deficient in gospel content to be considered effective evangelism tools for an average church member to utilize in everyday life. However, after considering dozens of shorter testimonies recorded in books like *The Unexpected*
Journey by Thom Rainer and The Rescue by Jim Cymbala mentioned previously, but also Unlikely Converts by Randy Newman and Our God Save: A Compilation of Personal Salvation Testimonies by Valerie Howard, a gap in evangelism material was clearly identified. If gospel content and personal testimony could be combined into a booklet, such a combination could bring together the best aspects of both categories. Such a resource would be practically useful for 1:1 evangelism encounters. This theory was responsible for the creation of a Personal Testimony Booklet idea, the personal salvation story of a church member combined with a thorough presentation of the gospel, in written, pocket-sized form.

Experimenting with this evangelism concept as a church body has brought about some interesting discoveries and an initial degree of success. The participant survey conducted both before and after the implementation design strongly indicates that church members experienced various degrees of growth in spiritual maturity and increased the frequency by which they shared the gospel. At the moment, however, it is not possible to measure conclusively the long-term and permanent effects of this project on participants and to determine if their heightened practice of evangelism will be sustained.

**Evangelism Success: Lessons Learned**

Based on both formal and informal feedback from participants and personal journal notes, here are eight lessons learned as a result of this thesis project. These lessons will be added to the initial “Suggestions for Effective Distribution” sheet found in Appendix E as supplemental material for future LCC evangelism training. These principles will offer LCC members further practical teaching and challenge them to cultivate the right attitude, characteristics, and practices associated with living as a true witnesses for Christ.
1. **Evangelism success requires church members overcome apathy with Intentionality**

   No evangelism tool will ever substitute for the lack of personal consecration to soul winning. Sharing the gospel is not the pastor’s job alone, nor is it strictly for the professional evangelist. Evangelism is the responsibility of every Christian, and unless a church member makes evangelism a priority, gospel opportunities should not be expected regularly. During questions three and five of the Part 3: Personal Interview, multiple participants confessed their struggle to live with intentionality, even during the three-month implementation period while they were being monitored. Several seemed to hold to the unrealistic belief that God would do all the work by bringing spiritually hungry people to them who would initiate gospel conversations of their own accord. On the contrary, very few times was it observed that God initiated an open door for gospel communication through someone who was hungry, seeking answers. There is no doubt that sometimes the Lord sets up divine appointments, but the reality is, gospel encounters rarely happen by accident. Christians must take ownership in doing their part to fulfill the Great Commission.

   Evangelism is an offensive spiritual engagement that requires a fixation on the mission, a proactive expenditure of energy, and intentionality of purpose throughout the day. Thom Rainer mentions the importance of this quality in several of his books, including *Transformational Church*, where he writes, "Intentionality is a key element to being effective on our mission for God. Being a missionary does not happen naturally."\(^{169}\) He further states in his book, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church*, “Members of

dying churches aren’t willing [to evangelize]…they just want it [church growth] to happen. Without prayer. Without sacrifice. Without hard work.”

Intentionality is necessary for cultivating Christlike love, developing relationships with the lost, spending time in effective prayer, and growing in biblical knowledge. Members must commit to seeking opportunities to “love thy neighbor.” They must labor to maintain a courageous attitude and a prayerful spirit. They should take steps to grow in gospel knowledge by studying scripture, reading books, and watching videos regularly to sharpen their skills. Without such intentionality, it is too easy to become preoccupied with worldly engagements and personal plans. Without intentionality, it is too easy to pass by dozens of people and miss God-given opportunities. Commenting on this subject, Earley writes, “Normally people do not come to Christ by accident. Instead, God works through faithful churches that plan, strategize, and train their people for evangelism. Left on their own, churches will turn inward, focusing on the people already in attendance instead of reaching out to win new people to Christ.”

One meaningful discovery by participants during the implementation stage of this project was the realization that they have to be intentional about keeping a booklet with them at all times. Without pre-staging PTB’s in one’s purse, vehicle glove compartment, gym bag, or pants pocket when going out, participants were limiting themselves and their potential impact. As Reid writes in his Evangelism Handbook, “Evangelism is not easy work; it requires discipline. It is true that evangelism is a natural result of a passionate life transformed by the gospel. But we must not witness only when opportunities jump

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170 Rainer, Autopsy of a Deceased Church, 44.
171 Dave Earley and David Wheeler, Evangelism Is, 158.
into our laps. We must look for times and places to share the gospel…It takes discipline to do evangelism.”¹⁷² Two things cannot occupy the same space at the same time. Either disciples of Christ maintain Jesus’ mission as their primary objective and discipline their lives accordingly, or apathy and their own personal agenda will inevitably take precedence.

2. **Evangelism success requires church members overcome selfishness with Selflessness**

The core issue of evangelism comes down to the heart. In assessing a disciple’s maturity in the area of evangelism, an important question arises, “Has this person cultivated the heart of Christ?” Evangelism is not natural to human nature. Instead, all Christians are naturally inclined toward self-centeredness. This struggle was clearly manifested through responses during the post-implementation interview. When challenged to identify what primary hurdles had to be overcome in order to be an effective evangelist, there was a prevailing recognition that “self” was the chief agent responsible for missed opportunities and failure to purposefully live on mission. This is why the Apostle Paul exhorts his hearers in Galatians 5:16-25 to “crucify the flesh with its passions and desires” and to “live by the Spirit and keep in step with the Spirit.” He specifically writes in Galatians 5:17, “For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh.” Followers of Christ have a decision to make. Walk according to the flesh in pursuit of their own desires or walk in submission to the Holy Spirit. Coleman argues the same case when he writes, “being a disciple of Christ…meant the surrender of one’s whole life to the Master in absolute submission to his sovereignty. All the disciples were asked to do was to let the Spirit have complete charge of their lives.”¹⁷³

Only through surrender to Christ can His character and personality be reproduced within. Without such self-denial, LCC church members will not be willing to face the inevitable costs (like rejection, persecution, and sacrificing personal comfort) associated with sharing their faith and selflessly serving others in love. In fact, it appears God has ordained love as the means by which the heart of unbelievers is oftentimes softened enough to receive biblical truth. Church members must embrace the Christlike calling of radical love and service to a lost and dying world. “Skills, methods, and experience in evangelism are good; doctrine is essential. But the gospel presented by a believer whose life exemplifies the character of Christ is best…In a post-Christian world, people need a demonstration of the gospel that accompanies an explanation of its truth,” writes Reid.\\(^{174}\)

Effective evangelism demands tremendous physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental investment and a joyful offering of one’s precious time. Participants were forced to grapple with this reality and the question, “Am I willing to give up certain personal desires in order to realign my life with practices that will lead me closer to living according to my full potential for Christ?” For this reason, future participants must also be confronted with the same challenge.

3. **Evangelism success requires church members overcome fear with **_Courage_

There is simply no magic formula or secret method that can eliminate all fear when it comes to evangelism. Evangelism constitutes spiritual warfare and will always be opposed by the enemy. While fear is a tool used by Satan to inhibit gospel witness, prayer, the Word, and the love of Christ can collectively work together to produce

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174 Reid, 106.
boldness in the heart of the faithful Christian. Evangelism always requires courage. It demands one die to self and commit to doing what is right regardless of the cost, the hurdles, or the fear involved. Though fear has been reported to be the most prevalent evangelistic hurdle church members face, it should not be an obstacle large enough to inhibit gospel witness. Given that much of his ministry background has been uniquely shaped by evangelism in the hostility of the Middle East, Stiles strongly agrees that the biggest obstacle to personal evangelism in America is fear.175 The more church members pray, meditate on the Word, and allow the Holy Spirit to fill their hearts with God’s love for the lost, the easier evangelism will be. This is all the more reason why encouraging the church to walk in boldness is an essential element for successful evangelism. The church needs to be challenged and inspired to walk in biblical courage in order to overcome the enemy's lies and fulfill the Great Commission.

4. Evangelism success requires church members engage in Spiritual Warfare

Satan actively works to try and stop genuine believers from laboring in God’s harvest field. He tempts them to sit back and live life for themselves, without actively engaging in efforts to make an impact for eternity. He is ok with Christians talking about evangelism as long as they don’t take action. He has an arsenal of temptations, excuses, justifications, and interruptions that can be used against Christians who are intent on living as gospel witnesses for Christ. In fact, participants confessed that they frequently experienced unexpected issues, family problems, and tempting distractions when planning for a gospel conversation or an upcoming time of strategic evangelism. There was a clear recognition of an invisible opposing force. This is why it is important for

175 Stiles, 106.
members to remember that they live on a battlefield. Two kingdoms are wrestling for control of the hearts and minds of billions of human beings. Evangelistic success will never come without a fight. Ephesians 6:12 states that church members “wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” Church members must learn to engage in Word-based, evangelistically-focused prayer. Cultivating the attitude of a soldier who expects fierce opposition is a wise approach. Members must view their evangelistic efforts as spiritual warfare and press through inevitable resistance when it comes. Stetzer offers a perspective on this aspect of personal evangelism in his book Subversive Kingdom that would be very helpful for LCC church members. “In a sense, we are a worldwide network of underground operatives, poking more holes in Satan’s enterprise than he can possibly plug. We live out a daring mission…God has called each of us— to be an agent of subversion in his gospel insurgency.” He continues further by stating, “Through the gospel, those individuals who are “bound” in spiritual darkness can be "loosed" from what has held them captive - redeemed from their slavery. God's plan for overthrowing the devil’s dominion, freeing its hostages, and advancing Christ’s Kingdom is for the church to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ in both word and deed.” In the months to come, it will be

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176 An excellent resource surveyed by this author that approaches evangelism from a perspective of spiritual warfare is the book How to Win Souls and Influence People by Ray Comfort. Each one of the twenty-four chapters covers a different facet of engaging the enemy and rescuing souls from his grasp. Preaching and teaching through this book would offer LCC members a steady stream of encouragement to stay in the fight.


178 Stetzer, 101.
important for LCC members to be reminded of spiritual warfare and challenged to maintain a firm resolution to continue in the fight.

5. **Evangelism success requires church members overcome ignorance with Knowledge**

A thorough knowledge of the scriptures and the gospel message is mandatory for successful evangelism. Ideally, LCC church members should cultivate an advanced understanding of the gospel message and an ability to articulate those truths in a simple, understandable, and personal way. Many church members and even participants, however, still do not have a clear idea of the gospel or the continuous and essential role the gospel should play in everyday life. To illustrate, one participant in the study revealed during the personal interview that a contractor had come over to the house recently to do some work and had spent quite a while inside their home. The nature of the work being performed allowed for conversation. Though spiritual topics were brought up at several points, when the participant was asked if they attempted to share the gospel or offer one of their booklets to the man, their response was, “No, I didn’t feel like the Holy Spirit was leading me to give one of my booklets away.” Based on what this participant described to the researcher, the contractor had a religious background but was not born-again. He needed the gospel, but unfortunately, the participant’s lack of conviction regarding the gospel’s relevance led to a decision not to share a booklet at all. As pastor of LCC, this feedback reinforced the need for continued church-wide instruction so that every member sees Jesus Christ and the gospel as the solution to all of man’s problems. Biblical knowledge empowers evangelistic action. Developing a gospel resource that shares the gospel is not enough. The goal must be for participants and all members to feel comfortable verbally articulating the gospel message, in a logical order, without omitting
key components. If church members don’t have a comfortable understanding of the gospel themselves and extensive practice succinctly communicating those truths, they can never hope for maximum evangelistic impact. For this reason, this author is considering a comprehensive evangelism resource like Tell the Truth by Will Metzger in an effort to help willing church members continue to grow in this area. Furthermore, because LCC members are already familiar with “The Three Circles” evangelism method by Jimmy Scroggins mentioned earlier in chapter one, the goal for the upcoming year is to work through his book, Turning Everyday Conversations into Gospel Conversations.¹⁷⁹

6. **Evangelism success requires Lifelong Persistence rather than a one-time effort.**

Evangelism is difficult because it is contrary to human nature, opposed by dark spiritual forces, and requires both biblical knowledge and mature interpersonal skills. Because each human being is unique, there are infinite interpersonal combinations possible when Christians engage the lost in conversation. No two conversations will be the same. Thus, the effectiveness of an evangelism tool like a PTB depends, in part, on the maturity of the craftsmen using it. All members would be wise to develop their evangelism skills over time. Practicing friendliness, learning to ask engaging questions, and finding ways to switch to spiritual subjects are all incredibly important. Maxwell touches on the principle of personal growth in his book, Today Matters when he states, “If we [church members] don’t take responsibility for our growth, it won’t happen. Growth is not automatic.”¹⁸⁰ He urges Christians to make personal growth a continuous goal and commit to maximizing their potential.

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Not only should church members persevere in developing their skill but also make a lifelong commitment to the Great Commission itself. Even if a hundred PTB’s are passed out and twenty gospel conversations take place without the appearance of a single noticeable response, Christians are called to labor faithfully without giving up hope – trusting God that one day the full results of their efforts will be revealed. When participants were asked on question ten of the *Part 2: Questionnaire* if they would continue using their PTB as a method of evangelism, every single person responded with the highest affirmation of a “6”. This commitment will be tested. Participants were reminded throughout this project that writing and utilizing a PTB was not about this researcher’s short-term study alone but rather about individual believers having a long-term impact for Christ.

7. **Evangelism success requires church members overcome self-dependence with Supernatural Power.**

The only way to access supernatural power is through the medium of prayer. Though it is hard work and time-consuming, prayer is a necessity for evangelistic success. Miles writes, “Evangelism is spiritual work which requires spiritual power in order to be effective. That spiritual power is often in direct proportion to our prayers.”\(^{181}\) Knowing prayer is the key to supernatural power, individuals should pray for opportunities to share the gospel, for specific individuals by name, for boldness, for favor and influence with those they speak with, and for guidance by the Holy Spirit as to whom to approach and what to say. Since spiritual rebirth is a divine act of grace, not a product of human power or effort, the supernatural activity of God is needed to transform human hearts. As gospel

\(^{181}\) Miles, 216.
messengers, church members must learn to rely upon prayer as the only channel by which God’s presence and power may be expected. During the course of this study, those who had cultivated the practice of evangelistic reported a greater number of gospel encounters and experienced more success compared with those who did not. This finding has also been true in the researcher’s own life as well. In the past, when thirty minutes or more was devoted to “pre-evangelism prayer,” – successful encounters were routinely experienced. Without proceeding intercessory prayer, results were minimal. Prayer makes a difference.

8. Evangelism Success Requires Cultivating Relationships with the Lost

When asked on question three of the Part 3: Personal Interview, what lessons participants had learned when it came to distributing their PTB’s, many came to recognize with increased clarity the incredible importance of building relationships with the lost. The truth is, evangelistic impact is directly related to the number of lost people a participant encounters every week. There are many Christians who, for the most part, live and work within a Christian bubble. They have few, if any, non-Christians friends, and many, especially those who are retired or work from home, may not be actively involved with any community group (i.e., YMCA, softball league, Art Guild, etc.). Hybels shares a relevant observation in his book Just Walk Across the Room. He states, “The longer a person attends church, the fewer evangelistic discussions they engage in with family members and friends. Fewer presentations of the life-changing plan of salvation are given…mostly because Christ-followers have fewer friends outside the faith.”

182 Hybels, 61.
statistically, the fewer interactions that person has with people far from God. He concludes by saying, “This trend spirals downward year after year until Christ-followers face their dying day and realize they have been completely insulated in an evangelism-void vacuum...they are at their all-time evangelism low. I believe this is the path of nearly every average Christian.”\textsuperscript{183}

For this reason, maximum evangelistic impact depends upon LCC church members increasing their social connections and seeking to purposely develop relationships with the lost. Gospel opportunities will increase in proportion to the number of lost individuals church members rub shoulders with throughout the week. Success depends on friendships cultivated and the degree to which Christians sharpen their interpersonal skills.

**Recommendations for Improvement**

While the results of this study confirmed that the practice of sharing the gospel increased in the lives of participants and did help them grow in their evangelism maturity, this researcher can’t help but wonder about the enduring impact? Did this project lead to a short-term flurry of evangelistic activity only? Will current zeal for evangelism among LCC members be sustained? Did permanent long-term growth occur in participants' lives, and what were the results from an eternal perspective for those who received booklets?

Necessary for any improvement effort is the prerequisite of examination. Examination depends heavily upon asking difficult questions. In reflecting upon this thesis project, several additional questions have come to mind, which may stimulate further research or lead to ideas for future improvement. Specifically, is sharing a written copy of the gospel as effective, less

\textsuperscript{183} Ibid., 62.
effective, or more effective than verbally communicating the good news face to face? How many of those who received a PTB took the time to read it entirely? Are those members who use a PTB tempted to prioritize this method of evangelism as their primary means of sharing the gospel, and if so, what danger, if any, does this present? Does it limit God who may desire to minister through the believer in a more personal way through an extended conversation? Will participants be tempted to use their PTB as a “safer” way to share gospel truths instead of embracing the challenge of engaging people in person? In an age when evangelism resources are plentiful, does a PTB constitute the best expenditure of one’s time and effort, or are there other options that would have an equal if not greater evangelistic impact?

Even though it may not be feasible to secure answers to all these questions at the present time, there are a few improvements to this project that could be possible. First, even though this idea was mentioned before, it is worth repeating that enlarging the pool of participants and increasing the implementation time from three months to six or twelve months would allow for increased confidence of measured results. A longer period of study and increased participation by individuals in a variety of church settings would help in addressing some of the initial questions above.

Second, it would have been helpful for participants to discern and record the spiritual condition of recipients who received a PTB. Three categories would have been sufficient: (1) Did they claim to be active Christians? (2) Did they admit to having a Christian background but were currently not practicing their faith? (3) Did those who accepted a booklet clearly identify as non-Christians? Asking participants to pursue and record this information immediately following a conversation would have been helpful. In addition, asking recipients if they believed in God (or not) and if they identified with a particular denomination or religion would have also proved
helpful in revising PTB training efforts to address common issues and prepare participants for who/what they were most likely to encounter.

Third, instead of asking participants to “estimate” gospel conversations and distribution totals for their booklets, it would have been better to request that individuals keep a data log to the best of their ability. Even though some participants in this study did record every booklet given away, asking all participants to keep a record would have permitted more accurate data results. Equally important would have been a request that participants keep a journal record of verbal opportunities to share the gospel during the writing process and the three-month implementation period to follow. Such numbers would have allowed for increased accuracy when comparing participant practices before and after the thesis project.

Suggestions for Implementation in Other Ministry Contexts

Sharing one’s personal testimony is perhaps the most natural and relational way to point others to Christ and introduce them to the gospel message. Every born-again Christian has a personal testimony, and stories have universal appeal. For these reasons, a PTB would offer a good evangelism method for any American Christians to use regardless of their ministry context. Thankfully, many options for printing/publishing are readily available. There are, however, a few things to consider.

It is important to take into consideration the time commitment required for a project of this nature. This must first be done by those who would volunteer to function as editors. Inevitably, pastoral staff would need to be involved to some degree, assuming a PTB project was attempted within a local church setting. It is highly recommended that interested individuals/churches realistically evaluate whether they have the time and perseverance necessary to complete a PTB project from start to finish. Leaders need to be transparent with
church members upfront and ensure that potential participants have personally considered the sacrifice that would be required of them.

With that said, churches and ministries should consider the value of using a Christian company to help in the editing process. While expenses would undoubtedly increase, precious time will inevitably be saved. If this option is unrealistic, perhaps consider recruiting the help of several biblically mature individuals within the congregation who have a reputation as excellent communicators. Look for individuals who are retired or in a season of life where they have more time to offer. Any reader who desires to initiate a PTB on their own, apart from an official church effort, should seek to secure at least one editor within their church with the above qualities who can help them. They should also take their manuscript to a member of the pastor team for final suggestions. This is a project where the body of Christ can play an indispensable role in helping to produce the best evangelistic tool possible.

Finally, pastoral leadership who initiates a PTB project within their ministry setting should view the effort as a discipleship opportunity. In all likelihood, only those who are available, teachable, and self-motivated will volunteer for a project of this nature. While arriving at the end goal of a completed PTB is exciting, invaluable is the opportunities afforded along the way to assess and further train church members in biblical theology while taking advantage of increased time together to develop a deeper relationship.

**Future Research Considerations**

No fisherman uses the same lure every time he goes out on the water. Fishermen each have a tackle box filled with lures of various shapes, sizes, and colors depending on what fish they are trying to catch. The same principle applies to evangelism. One size does not fit all. Believers who desire to be successful recognize that the people they are likely to encounter will
all be different. Different types of people require different approaches and evangelism methods. While the Personal Testimony Booklet has some advantages, it also has some weaknesses. Though one could argue that every Christian should write and utilize a PTB, the booklet alone should never be a Christian’s sole method of evangelism. Three considerations emerging from this study have led to an idea that merits future research.

First, not everyone has both the willingness and time to put together a PTB for personal use. While it would be great to see every Christian do so, such an expectation would be unrealistic. A PTB represents too great a sacrifice. Second, as a society, we are becoming more and more centered upon social media rather than old-fashioned books/booklets. Younger generations are more inclined to watch and listen than they are to read. Third, the Covid-19 virus of 2020 has led to increased levels of isolation as social distancing requirements remain in effect. Many churches have responded to this trial by creating a media presence, taping services, and posting them online. In America’s present culture, a great way of reaching people is through video. LCC is currently experimenting with expanding the PTB concept to include a video version. A ten-to-twenty minute video sharing one’s personal testimony and presenting the gospel message would be much quicker to create, cheaper to produce, and easier for more people to participate in than a written PTB. In addition, it is highly probable that a recorded testimony video posted online could reach more people in a shorter amount of time than the traditional method of passing out a written booklet on a one-to-one basis. This is certainly true considering the marketing efforts of Facebook and the popularity of Youtube. In fact, Facebook offers business users the option of paying to promote their videos. Depending on a church’s budget, Facebook has the capacity to market a video in a specific locality, to a specific audience or age range, and for a specific period of time. For the right price, Facebook can ensure a personal
testimony video shows up in the news feed of thousands of Facebook users each day who for example, live within a five-mile radius of the church. At present, the four individuals who completed a personal video testimony spent approximately two hours (compared to five months) preparing for and then taping their video. Each participant experienced more views on the first day of the video being posted than people reached during their entire three-month period of PTB implementation. What is further unique about this future research opportunity is that a Christian’s video testimony link could be texted to a stranger they meet. The link could even be included on a personal business card. It appears wise to capitalize on the strength of social media in consideration of the current American culture. The main obstacle encountered thus far seems to be anxiety among some over what to say and a fear of “messing up” while videoing. This fear can be easily overcome, however, when consideration is given to the fact that no video recording occurs live and multiple videos can be made with the best eventually selected for distribution.

A Hybrid Effort: PTB in Verbal, Written, and Video Form

In consideration of the lingering COVID situation currently facing America and the dynamic of an ever-changing culture, it seems wise for LCC to adopt a hybrid evangelistic approach in order to maximize gospel impact. Three specific efforts have been discussed within the context of this paper and should collectively be used to reach LCC’s local community. First, many of the evangelism terms used in the book of Acts to describe gospel witness are verbal in nature. The gospel was *proclaimed* to the crowds, *taught* to small groups of interested seekers, and *shared* on an individual level in the most intimate of settings. While physical isolation and heightened caution has certainly affected the dynamic of social interactions, at least to a degree, LCC members will still be encouraged to initiate personal conversations with those who are lost in order to share the gospel message with them directly. Secondly, the main thrust of this thesis
centered around equipping church members to share their personal testimony and a unique gospel presentation using a written format. The effort to recruit new PTB participants and sustain current efforts by those who have completed booklets will be continued. Finally, encouraging members to partner with the church to record and then post their video testimony / gospel presentation will offer a third and final approach to personal evangelism. Together these three methods will offer a well-balanced effort to achieve maximum evangelistic impact. To summarize, this pastor’s goal is to see every church member (1) able to confidently share their testimony/gospel in person, (2) strategically utilize their PTB when most effective, and (3) overlap these two efforts with the broad approach of creating a testimony/gospel video that can reach people well beyond what might ever be possible in person. May the Lord empower LivingStone members to live on mission for Him and take advantage of these three avenues for maximum evangelistic impact.

**Conclusion**

This thesis project has been a long but enlightening journey into a deeper understanding of evangelism and a greater commitment to the practice of sharing the good news. This study was born out of a desire to faithfully live on mission for Jesus Christ and encourage others to do the same. Beginning with an examination of the current state of evangelistic practice within LivingStone Community Church, this thesis offered an initial overview of the problem LCC was facing. There existed a lack of personal evangelism in the lives of many church members. After assessing LCC’s overall evangelism strategy and the individual barriers preventing members from frequently sharing the gospel, a specific intervention design was proposed. The ultimate purpose of this project was to discover if LCC members could increase gospel witness through the use of a new evangelism tool, a written Personal Testimony Booklet. After surveying the
theological and theoretical foundation behind the power of a personal testimony and written gospel literature, research was conducted to determine if a booklet, combining the two concepts, could enable church members to grow in spiritual maturity, overcome common evangelism obstacles, and engage in a sustained practice of sharing their faith more frequently. After working with participants for an extended season and watching them grow during this time, this researcher is encouraged by what has taken place. By comparing survey results both before and after the study, it is clear that writing and utilizing a PTB positively impacted participants and equipped them with a self-created evangelism tool that made it easier for them to share their faith with more regularity. It is this author’s prayer that God would grant additional church members a renewed zeal for evangelism and the willingness to create their own PTB in an effort to increase their evangelistic footprint.
Appendix A
Guidelines for Writing One’s Personal Testimony Booklet

As you begin to think back over your spiritual journey, use the simple outline below:

1. **Describe what your life was like before knowing Christ?**
   a. What were your fears? Struggles? What did you value most?
   b. Were there any major experiences that really had an impact on you spiritually?
   c. Did you grow up with any kind of religious or spiritual background? Did you attend church? If so, what was your impression?
   d. What will people who read your booklet be able to relate to in your story?

2. **Describe the process of how you came to know Christ as your personal Lord and Savior.**
   a. What opened your eyes to your own sin, the fear of God’s righteous judgment, your spiritual need, and a conviction that the only place where hope could be found was in Christ?
   b. After hearing dozens of testimonies over the years, it seems as if God uses a few major experiences, memorable events, significant people to reveal His life-saving truth. What about in your life? What aspects of the gospel touched you most?

3. **Describe what your life has been like since coming to know Christ.**
   a. What changes took place after you surrendered to Christ?
   b. In what areas did you experience transformation?
   c. How is your life different now compared with how you used to live before salvation?
   d. Are there any important spiritual lessons that you learned along the way that you would also like to include?

Expounding upon your personal testimony above, we need to offer readers an accurate presentation of the gospel message so that God can work in their hearts to bring them to salvation through Christ. The objective now is to combine your spiritual journey with essential gospel truths and supporting scriptures in an appeal for readers to trust Christ as you have. What verses do you think ought to be included in your booklet, categorized by the four steps below:

1. Who is God and what does he demand?
2. Explain humanity’s sin problem and the consequences of such sin.
3. Talk about God’s solution for sin and what Christ legally accomplished on the cross.
4. Finally, clearly explain what do sinners need to do to be saved?

Once you have typed up your testimony and have done your best to explain the gospel message:

1. Read over your draft as many times as you need to edit it so that it flows smoothly.
2. Give it to two others to read over, edit, and make suggestions for improvement.
3. Pass it on to Pastor/Editor for final review.
4. Decide on a title and picture for the front and back cover, including extra personal material that should be included.
Appendix B

Essential Elements of the Gospel Message

Thirty-seven questions comprising the analytical framework of Bell’s Dissertation “Tracts to Christ: An Evaluation of American Gospel Tracts.”


God
1. Is God presented as Creator? Is there a clear Creator/creature distinction? Is it expressed that creation establishes God’s right to lay his claim on our lives?
2. Is God’s nature and character described or taken for granted? Is God’s holiness displayed? Is God’s love revealed?
3. Is it revealed that we are created in the image of God? As God’s image-bearers, is it expressed that we are valuable in God’s eyes and responsible to reflect his glorious image? Is God’s purpose for our lives revealed?
4. Is our moral responsibility to God made clear? Are we informed of our responsibility to love, worship, and obey God with all our hearts, souls, and minds? Is our moral culpability before God explained?

Ourselves
1. Is the origin of sin and the doctrine of the Fall presented?
2. Is the nature and seriousness of the human problem clearly revealed? Is sin defined?
3. Are we told that we are sinners by nature and by choice? Is it clear that we have all sinned and fallen short of God’s glory? Are sinful humans contrasted with a holy God such that our separation from him is understood?
4. Is God’s judgment and wrath revealed? Are the wages of sin presented? Is there a warning about hell and eternal punishment?
5. Is it clear that we are utterly incapable of saving ourselves through good works, morality, or religious exercises?

Jesus Christ
1. Is it clear that Jesus Christ is God’s gracious provision to resolve our problem of sin and separation from God?
2. Is Christ’s humanity presented? Are we told that Jesus lived a perfect, sinless life?
3. Is Christ’s deity addressed?
4. Is Christ’s crucifixion explained? Is it clear that Jesus’ death was a substitutionary sacrifice for sinners? Are the concepts of sacrifice, propitiation, reconciliation, and redemption included? Is it clear that the price for our sin must be paid either personally in hell or vicariously at the cross?
5. Is it announced that Jesus Christ was victoriously and bodily resurrected from the grave? Are we told that he is now ascended into heaven as the exalted Lord and only Mediator between God and humans?
6. Is imputed righteousness presented and explained?
7. Is the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as the only Savior strongly emphasized? Is salvation outside of personal faith in Christ ruled out?
8. Is it anticipated that Jesus Christ will return to earth in power and glory to judge the living and the dead?

Our Response
1. Is the call to respond clear and unambiguous? Is the response given in terms of repentance and faith? Is repentance explained? Is saving faith described? On the other hand, does the presentation explain what repentance and faith do not mean? Is it clear that conversion is not based on intellectual assent, emotionalism, or mere external responses?
2. Is the necessity of a personal response made clear? Is a response mandated or casually offered? Is it evident that we have a duty to repent and believe? Is the emphasis on choice or on obligation? Is the call to respond better described as an invitation or as a summons? Is a warning given for failure to respond?
3. Is there a sense of urgency? Is there a sense of persuasion? Does 2 Corinthians 5:20 (“Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”) describe the character of the call to respond?
4. Negatively, are unbelievers manipulated to respond? Is information withheld? Are certain aspects of the gospel over or under emphasized to make the gospel more appealing? Are unbelievers allowed to ask questions or are they rushed into a time of decision? Are bait-and-switch tactics employed, or are unbelievers tricked into making a “decision”?
5. Are unbelievers asked to count the cost of Christian discipleship? Is the radical nature of the call to follow Christ presented or is there a sense of easy-believism? On the other hand, are the benefits of discipleship offered? Are believers promised peace with God and eternal life? Are believers promised the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the presence of Jesus Christ to empower us to follow him?
6. Is there a Sinner’s Prayer? If so, is the response expressed in terms of repentance and faith or in the act of praying the Sinner’s Prayer? Are the exact words of the prayer supplied or suggested? Is the hearer encouraged to pray in his own words? Does “God, be merciful to me, the sinner!” (Luke 18:14) reflect the attitude of the prayer or response?
7. Is assurance of salvation offered? If so, on what basis is it offered? Is it based on what we have done or on what God has done? Is it based on a decision we have made for Christ or a decision that Christ has made for us?

Other Considerations
1. Are follow-up instructions given in regard to baptism, church membership, prayer, Bible study, and Christian action?
2. Is salvation divorced from Christ’s lordship or is it clear that Jesus Christ is Savior and Lord?
3. Is Christ’s Lordship over all of life clearly presented? Are new believers expected to conform to the likeness of Christ with the help of the Holy Spirit? Is Christian faith presented as real and transformative, impacting all of life?
4. Are social implications of the gospel indicated? Is there a call to kingdom living in the here and now?
Overall Impressions

1. Is the gospel clearly placed within a biblical worldview or is that worldview simply assumed? What are the implied assumptions about the reader or hearer of the gospel in terms of his worldview, background, and biblical understanding? Are biblical terms defined or taken for granted? After reading the tract or hearing the presentation, could someone with a non-biblical worldview be expected to make an informed, valid decision for Christ?

2. Could the presentation be more accurately described as God-centered or as man-centered? Who establishes the terms of our relationship with God? In terms of our reconciliation, are we helpless sinners in the hands of God or is God in the hands of sinners? Is salvation offered as God’s response to meet our felt needs or as our need to be reconciled with God?

3. Is God’s grace in salvation magnified? Is it expressed that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone and to God alone be the glory for it?

4. Is the Christ event the central, compelling feature of the gospel?

5. Since the Holy Spirit uses the Word of God to bring the power of salvation to unbelievers, is the presentation saturated with Scripture?

6. How successfully is the gospel contextualized? Is there a commitment to both content and context? Does the presentation show signs of unhealthy cultural accommodation?

Practical Features

1. Is the tract aesthetic? Will its appearance gain a reading? Is it illustrated well?

2. Does it have contact information for follow-up and/or does it have a place for churches or individuals to provide their contact information?

3. Is the tract sized for easy carrying and distribution?

4. On what reading level is the tract? Is the language readily understandable by a wide audience? How long will it take to read it or to go through the presentation? Is it best used as a “walk through” tract or as a “give away” tract? In other words, does it seem as though the tract was designed primarily for a witness to walk an unbeliever through the presentation page by page, or for the unbeliever to take home and read on his own?
Appendix C

Suggested Scriptures for Inclusion in One’s Gospel Presentation

GOD

- Genesis 1:31 “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. God saw all that He had made, and it was very good”
- Psalm 33:5 “The LORD loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of his unfailing love.”
- Psalm 89:14 “Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; love and faithfulness go before you.”
- Psalm 29:2 “Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness.”
- Isaiah 6:3 “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.”

OURSELVES/SIN/JUDGEMENT

- Proverbs 14:12 “There is a way that appears to be right but, in the end, it leads to death” (Humans have for centuries attempted in their own strength to fix this broken world, their sin problem, and to overcome the separation that exists between them and God. All attempts have failed.)
- Isaiah 64:6 “All our righteous acts are like filthy rags [in God’s sight]”
- Romans 3:23 “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (All humans have sinned and none are worthy to enter heaven based upon their own goodness. Heaven is a perfect place and God is perfectly holy and sinless. To enter heaven we must be perfect.)
- Romans 3:10 “There is no one righteous, not even one.” (We all know there are no perfect people. No one is righteous in God’s eyes or even comes close to comparing with His perfect holiness.)
- Romans 6:23 “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (When sin entered the world, so did death. We all justly deserve to be punished by God for our sins yet God’s love compels him to extend mercy)
- Hebrews 9:27 “People are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.” (By the law of the universe, the soul who sins shall die. One day we will all stand before God in judgment. Apart from the perfect righteousness of Christ, mankind will be justly condemned)
- James 2:10 “For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.” (God have given the ten commandments to mankind as a means of showing them their own sinfulness. Whether we have broken one or a thousand, anyone less than perfect is equally guilty in God’s eyes and undeserving of heaven. Any sin, no matter how small, is enough to condemn someone to hell for eternity)
- Revelation 21:8 “But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.” (All sinners will one day be punished by God – who is perfectly just)


- **1 Corinthians 5:9-10** “All wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God. Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor slanderers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.”

**JESUS CHRIST**

- **Romans 5:8** “But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (God has made way for all humans to be forgiven. It’s not automatic. We must turn to God in faith and trust in the sacrifice He has made to free us from sin’s consequences)

- **John 14:6** “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (All other religions in the world were created by Satan to lead humans astray – away from the Only Path to Heaven. It is only through trusting in Jesus as our substitute that we can be forgiven of our sins. Jesus will take our sins and nail them to the cross and will place His righteousness upon us)

- **John 3:16** “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” (God loves you and has willing sacrificed himself for you to have the opportunity to be saved. Nothing you could ever do or have ever done will grant you access to God’s forgiveness and entrance to heaven. Only a perfect substitute dying on your behalf and taking the punishment on himself. That is what Christ did for you. Will you trust Him?

- **1 Corinthians 15:3-4** “For Christ died for our sins...he was buried...he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures.”

**OUR RESPONSE**

- **Mark 1:15** “Repent and believe the good news”

- **Romans 10:9** “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead you will be saved.” (God raised Jesus from the dead and He will raise all those who commit to Jesus as both Lord and Savior. Knowing Jesus personally is the key to eternal life)

- **Mark 8:34** ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? For what can a man give in return for his life? (Don’t be apathetic toward your life/death. If you give your life on earth here to Christ, he will take it and grant you everlasting life with Him forever. The window of opportunity for you is closing. But even now you can have hope and peace. This is the most critical moment of your entire life. Everything in your life has led to this one moment. Will you throw yourself upon God’s mercy and claim personally the atoning work of Christ on the Cross?)

- **2 Peter 3:9** God is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (God desires that all would come to him in repentance and faith for salvation and that no one would choose the path to hell)

- **Acts 2:21** “Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved”
• **John 3:3** “No one can see the Kingdom of God unless they are born again” (Jesus told Nikodemus that unless a person is reborn from spiritual death to life they cannot experience heaven)

**AFTER CONVERSION**

• **Galatians 2:20** “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me” (When we come to Christ in faith, we surrender our lives to Him and in doing so ‘die’ to ourselves. We become an empty vessel that Jesus then fills and lives through us. Once he rules from the throne of our lives, he lives by his power in us and transforms us into his image in the process.”

• **Romans 8:10** “If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.” (If you turn to God in faith – He will send his eternal Spirit to come and dwell inside of you and give you assurance of forgiveness and salvation. The one who created this universe is willing to send His Spirit inside of you to confirm that you are forgiven and granted everlasting life.)

• **1 Corinthians 3:16** “Do you not know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you” (Once we are born again, God promises to send his Spirit to come and live inside of us! It is an amazing feeling and from that point on, we have the presence of God with us at all times)

• **John 14:15** “If you love me, keep my commands” (After we come to Christ, we must diligently study His word and seek to apply what we read. One of the evidences that we have been born -again is the presence of a new heart that now desires to obey and please God).

• **John 1:12** “Yet to all who did receive him, to those he believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” (When we are born again into God’s household by faith, we now fall under his provision and protection. He is now our heavenly father.)

**CLARIFYING THE GOSPEL**

• **Galatians 2:16-17** “A person is not justified by works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ” (This scripture explains that no one will be declared holy, justified, ‘good’ by doing their best to live a moral, religious life. The only way we can be pardoned by God is through faith In Christ – as His perfect righteousness is applied to our ‘account.’

• **Galatians 3:11-14** “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.” (What pleases God is a person who lives by placing their entire trust/faith in Jesus Christ. We cannot trust in our own goodness, because we fall short of perfection. We cannot live perfect lives in our own strength. We fall short. The only one who ever lived a perfect life was Jesus who was willing to lift the curse from us by taking it himself.)

• **Ephesians 2:4-10** “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not of yourselves, it is a gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.” (Even when we were sinners living our own lives, God loved us enough to send his own son to provide a bridge from earth to heaven. We can only get to heaven through Jesus, and not by our own attempts to live a holy or good life. We fall short and such attempts do not please God. God is only pleased with his Son’s perfect holiness and through faith Jesus will apply that holiness to us so that in the Father’s eyes we are ‘perfect’ in Christ.)
• **Colossians 2:13-14** “When you were dead in your sins…God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross.”

• **Romans 5:1** “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

SATAN: MAN’S ENEMY

• **2 Corinthians 4:4** “The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ” (Satan blinds people to keep them from knowing the Truth and being saved)

• **1 Peter 5:8** “Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” (Satan is out to trick, deceive and capture as many people as possible to take with him to hell. He does not want anyone to know the truth and respond to God’s free gift of mercy)

• **John 10:10** “The thief comes to steal, kill, and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”
Appendix D

Evangelism Hindrances Concept Map

This thesis’ proposed intervention does not seek to address all issues related to a lack of personal gospel witness in the lives of individual believers. Churches are encouraged to formulate a comprehensive evangelism strategy to address as many of these areas as possible.
Appendix E

Suggestions for Effective Distribution

My Prayer For You:
If you have come this far, you have put a lot of time, effort, and money into making your personal testimony booklet the best it can be. My prayer is that God would reward your faithfulness and hard work with abundant spiritual fruit. I am praying that he would give you a spirit of boldness and confidence throughout each week to be a gospel witness and grant you incredible influence with people wherever you go. May every single booklet you pass out, play a strategic role in bringing that specific recipient to Christ and may God cause each booklet you hand out to be passed on and read by many others. May he grant you the grace to speak and act like Christ, to live with passion, kindness, radical generosity and love so that those who receive your booklet will see the good news displayed in you before they read it. May God receive all glory.

As you think about the best way to utilize your personal testimony booklet consider the following suggestions:

1. Sharing the Gospel Verbally Should Remain Your Primary Goal
A personal testimony booklet is a tool to help you share the gospel when time, circumstances, or other factors don’t allow you to. It should never be considered your primary or sole evangelism method. It is a tool to help you live as a faithful gospel witness, but not the only tool you have. (Remember the 3-Circles approach) We must diligently equip ourselves so that we are able to share the gospel verbally with the people we meet. Personal Testimony Booklets work great when handed out after a gospel conversation to reinforce what you just shared. When time or circumstances don’t allow – that is when your booklet can come in very handy. Always carry one with you.

2. Place A Premium on Relationships
It is not recommended that a personal testimony booklet be given to someone “cold turkey.” First of all, each booklet costs approximately $3 and gospel tracts are a lot cheaper to hand out in mass if you want to go that route. As a general rule, the more you are able to develop a friendship/relationship with the person the better. An overwhelming majority of people who come to Christ do so through relationships. In fact, the Great Commission instructs us to make lifelong disciples, not convince people to make a singular decision for Christ. Discipleship involves ongoing relationship. If a person comes to Christ through your booklet and you find out, it is your responsibility to invest in them spiritually and help them grow (as far as God grants you the opportunity).

3. Practice Friendliness and use Simple Questions to Switch to Spiritual Things
Practice being a joyful, kind, friendly person when you are out in public. For some, this comes much more naturally than for others. Everywhere you go, ask Christ to live through you and guide you to who he wants you to talk with. When you meet a stranger, for example - at the gym, be friendly. Ask him/her questions to get to know them better and listen attentively. The best question I have found to swing from normal conversation to the spiritual realm is the simple, non-offensive question: “Did you grow up with any
kind of spiritual background?” After asking this question, listen carefully and respond with one or two clarifying questions if possible. If the person answered in a way that suggested they do not have a personal relationship with Christ, wait until they are done sharing before saying something like, “the reason I asked was because I grew up . . . [share your 60-second verbal testimony] before concluding with a question like “Have you ever thought about what is on the other side after you die?” or “If you could know the Creator of the Universe in a personal way, how might that change your life?” If you don’t have enough time to share the gospel message in person, try creating interest in your booklet by relating to something that person has said with your own experience. Offer a preview of what is contained in your booklet. Share something that catches their attention and inspires them to read it. Also, it might be best to ask the person if they enjoy reading. If they answer in the affirmative, pull out your booklet and share with them that you wrote it, that it is your story, and offer a 30 second summary of its content. Tell them you would be more than happy to connect with them after they have read the booklet to talk about any questions they might have and to hear their story in return. Clearly explain the booklet's purpose and point to where they can find your contact information and more information about the church you attend. If they are willing to pass on a way to contact them, make sure you make it a point to call or email within a week.

4. Ways to Distribute

If you are willing for God to use you – you never know when and where He might call upon you to minister to someone else. Make sure you preposition some of your booklets in your purse or even the glove compartment of your car. Always carry one on you. They fit perfectly in your front or back pocket. Booklets are a great asset to hand out to those you meet at the beach. When eating out, you can place a larger than expected tip for your waitresses inside the front cover and offer it to her when you go to pay the bill. I carry booklets in my gym bag for distribution to new friends I meet working out. And why not keep a lookout for new homeowners in your neighborhood. You could welcome them with a warm visit, a little gift (like ice cream or coffee coupons from a local business), and a Personal Testimony Booklet that shares who you are and how Jesus changed your life. Just recently, I paid for someone’s groceries behind me in the supermarket (they were only buying lunch from the deli). As we walked out to the parking lot together, I was able to briefly introduce myself, ask them a few questions (like what is the most loving thing someone has ever done for you?), and ultimately hand them a booklet as they got into their car. I explained that the booklet shared the underlying reason for my little act of kindness. The opportunities to use your booklet to share the gospel are endless.
Appendix F

Recruitment Email/Letter

Dear __________.

As a student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Ministry degree in the specific area of evangelism. The purpose of my research is to assess the value of a “Personal Testimony Booklet” as a viable evangelism tool for increasing Gospel witness. I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

If you are 18 years of age or older and a member of LivingStone Community Church, you are eligible to participate in this study. Participants, if willing, will be asked to write their personal testimony and a unique presentation of the gospel based upon their spiritual journey and perspective. Participants will then utilize their “Personal Testimony Booklet” as an evangelism tool in an effort to reach the lost with the gospel message. The following steps will be part of this research project:

1. Write and edit your “Personal Testimony Booklet” with the help of the pastor and his editing team [Approximate time: 6-12 Weeks]
2. Publish your “Personal Testimony Booklet” through a recommended online printing company. There will be a printing cost of approximately $325. If financial assistance is needed, participants may petition the church for help. [Approximate time: 2-4 Weeks]
3. Fill out an initial survey to determine your present habit of both passing out written Gospel material and verbally sharing the Gospel [Approximate time: 5 minutes]
4. Use your “Personal Testimony Booklet” to share the gospel with the lost for a trial period of three months [Approximate time: 12 Weeks]
5. Fill out a second survey to determine any changes to your frequency of evangelism and to assess any personal spiritual growth that may have resulted [Approximate time: 10 minutes]
6. Engage in a personal interview to allow the researcher to ask some concluding questions about how this project may have benefited you and what you learned from participating. [Approximate time: 30 minutes]

Your name and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

In order to participate, please contact me at pastorpaulwalker@aol.com or speak to me in person at the earliest opportunity to sign up. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

A consent document is attached to this email/letter. The consent document contains additional information about my research. Please sign the consent document and return it to me in person or via email within seven days if you would like to participate.

Sincerely,
Patrick Walker
Pastor – LivingStone Community Church
pastorpaulwalker@aol.com
Appendix G

Participant Consent Form

**Title of the Project:** The Power of a Personal Testimony Booklet: Increasing Gospel Witness in Everyday Life

**Principal Investigator:** Patrick Walker, Doctrinal Candidate, Liberty School of Divinity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Invitation to be Part of a Research Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be 18 years of age or older and a member of LivingStone Community Church. Taking part in this research project is entirely voluntary.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is the study about and why is it being done?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The purpose of the study is to evaluate the benefits of a written “Personal Testimony Booklet” in increasing the frequency of Gospel witness among LivingStone Community Church members. Participants will be asked to write both their spiritual testimony and a personal presentation of the Gospel. These two components will be combined and edited to form a pocket-sized booklet that will eventually be published. Participants will then be given ample time to experiment with this new evangelism tool and assess its value in helping them share the good news of Christ with people they know or meet. The goal of this project is to shed light on the value of writing and distributing a “Personal Testimony Booklet” as an effective means of personal evangelism.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What will happen if you take part in this study?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Write and revise your “Personal Testimony Booklet” with the help of the pastor and his editing team [Approximate time: 6-12 Weeks]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Publish your “Personal Testimony Booklet” through a recommended online printing company [Approximate time: 2-4 Weeks]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Fill out an initial survey to determine your present habit of passing out written Gospel material and verbally sharing the Gospel message [Approximate time: 5 minutes]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Use your “Personal Testimony Booklet” to share the gospel with the lost for a trial period of three months [Approximate time: 12 Weeks]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Fill out a second survey to determine any changes to your frequency of evangelism and to assess any personal spiritual growth that may have resulted [Approximate time: 10 minutes]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Engage in a personal interview to allow the researcher to ask some concluding questions about how this project may have benefited you and what you learned from participating. This interview will be recorded for accuracy purposes. [Approximate time: 30 minutes]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How could you or others benefit from this study?
Participants may receive direct benefits from participating in this study. The direct benefits participants may expect to receive from taking part in this study are:
1. You may gain a deeper understanding of the Gospel message.
2. You may gain a greater appreciation for the transforming work of Christ in your own life.
3. You will be equipped with a new evangelism method that may make it easier to evangelize and enable you to share the Gospel with more people.
4. You may help to create a culture of evangelism within LivingStone Community Church.
5. You may develop a greater sense of personal ownership in reaching the lost as part of your church’s overall evangelism strategy.
6. You will be provided with a wonderful opportunity for others in the body of Christ to get to know you better (and vice-versa) by sharing your finished booklet with the church.
7. Ultimately, this method may enable you to have a greater impact in reaching the world for Christ, growing your local church, and sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with those you love. Once your booklet is completed, it will be permanently available to you as an evangelism tool for years to come.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?
The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?
The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you as a participant. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to these records. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.
- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and in a locked filing cabinet and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted and hard copy records will be destroyed.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

What are the costs to you to be part of the study?
The nature of this evangelism tool requires significant funds. An online publishing company is needed to print your booklet once editing is finalized. To participate in the research, you will need to pay for printing costs. The printing and delivery of 100 booklets will cost you an average of $325, with shipping included. However, LivingStone Community Church has funds set aside to help those who would like to participate but are in financial need.
Does the researcher have any conflicts of interest?
The researcher serves as the pastor at LivingStone Community Church. This disclosure is made so that you can decide if this relationship will affect your willingness to participate in this study. No action will be taken against an individual based on his or her decision to participate in this study.

Is study participation voluntary?
Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or LivingStone Community Church. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any of the questions or to withdraw at any time prior to submitting the survey without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?
If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?
The researcher conducting this study is Patrick Walker. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact him at 302-668-8545 and/or pastorpatrickwalker@aol.com. You may also contact the researcher’s faculty sponsor, Dr. Daryl Neipp at daneipp@liberty.edu

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?
If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu

Your Consent
By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the researcher using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

____________________________________
Printed Subject Name

___________________________________
Signature & Date
Appendix H

Participant Questionnaires and Interview Questions
(Found of the next three pages)
PART 1: QUESTIONNAIRE [Before]

THE POWER OF A PERSONAL TESTIMONY BOOKLET

Frequency of Sharing Religious Material

1. Were you in the habit of handing out religious material (i.e. gospel tracts, books, CD messages, pamphlets) before you wrote your “Personal Testimony Booklet?”
   (Not at all) 0-1-2-3-4-5-6 (Very much so)

2. How many gospel tracts would you say you handed out on average monthly before you wrote your “Personal Testimony Booklet”? 0 1-3 4-8 9+ Other: ______

3. How many gospel tracts would you say you handed out in the past 3 months before you wrote your “Personal Testimony Booklet”? ___________

4. How often would you say you have used an electronic format to communicate the Gospel Message in the past month before you wrote your “Personal Testimony Booklet”? (e.g. like sending a gospel presentation as an email attachment) ___________ In the past 3 months? ___________

Frequency of Verbal Communication of the Gospel

***Note: For the questions below, do not include occasions where you invited people to church, prayed with people or engaged in spiritual conversation on various religious topics. In the following questions, we are only interested in opportunities you had to share the 4 main points of the gospel message. This most likely took between 10 – 60 minutes to share in depth under most circumstances.

- God is the Creator. He is holy, loving and just
- When God created mankind, all that he made was good. Man, however, exercised free will to rebel against God. The seriousness of our rebellion (sin) requires that God pronounce upon us both the penalty of death and eternal separation in Hell. We are helpless to change our situation by our own efforts and stand condemned before God.
- As an act of God’s mercy He sent his son as an atoning sacrifice for sin. Christ lived a perfect life without sin, died on the cross and was raised on the third day. He offers his death as a substitute for our sin and is willing to pay the eternal sin “debt” that we owe to God. Jesus expressed the love of God, upheld God’s holiness, and satisfied God’s justice through the cross.
- Jesus paid the price of salvation so that we can receive God’s forgiveness through repentance & faith.

5. On how many occasions would you say you had the opportunity to verbally share the full gospel message (i.e. Romans Road, 3 Circles, 4 Spiritual Laws, etc.) during the month before you wrote your gospel booklet? __________

6. On how many occasions would you say you had the opportunity to verbally share the full gospel message (i.e. Romans Road, 3 Circles, 4 Spiritual Laws, etc.) during the 3 month period before you wrote your gospel booklet? __________

7. On how many occasions would you say you had the opportunity to verbally share the full gospel message (i.e. Romans Road, 3 Circles, 4 Spiritual Laws, etc.) during the 6 month period before you wrote your gospel booklet? __________

8. During the timeframe (months) that you were writing your booklet on how many occasions would you say you had the opportunity to verbally share the full gospel message (i.e. Romans Road, 3 Circles, 4 Spiritual Laws, etc.)?
PART 2: QUESTIONNAIRE [After]
THE POWER OF A PERSONAL TESTIMONY BOOKLET

1. What is the title of your Personal Testimony Booklet? ______________________________________________

2. Approximately how many words make up your Personal Testimony Booklet? ______________

3. Approximately how long did it take to write, edit, and finally publish your Personal Testimony Booklet? ______________

4. On what date did you first receive physical copies of your Personal Testimony Booklet? ______________

5. How many initial booklets did you publish? 100, 200, Other: _____

6. In the past 3 months, how many booklets would you say you have averaged passing out each week? ______ month? _____

   a. Q: What is your best estimate regarding how many booklets you have passed out so far on a 1:1 basis? ______________

   b. Q: What is your best estimate regarding how many booklets you have given out in bulk (2 or more) to others who were interested and wanted to help you distribute? ______________

   c. Q: What is your best estimate regarding how many booklets you have offered to family and friends? ______________

   d. Q: What is your best estimate regarding the total number of booklets (Bulk, Family, 1:1, Etc.) you have distributed? ______________

   e. Q: What is your best estimate regarding the total number of times in the past 3 months you sent your booklet electronically to someone else in an effort to share the Gospel? ______________

7. On how many occasions would you say you had the opportunity to verbally share the full gospel message (i.e. Romans Road, 3 Circles, 4 Spiritual Laws, etc.) during the first month after you wrote your gospel booklet? ______________

8. On how many occasions would you say you had the opportunity to verbally share the full gospel message (i.e. Romans Road, 3 Circles, 4 Spiritual Laws, etc.) during the 3 month period after you wrote your gospel booklet? ______________

9. Overall, have you experienced a greater willingness to hand out religious material (i.e. your booklet) than generic gospel tracts or other religious materials before? (Not at all) 0-1-2-3-4-5-6 (Very much so)

10. How inclined are you to continue this method of evangelism (Personal Testimony Booklet) in the future? (Not at all) 0-1-2-3-4-5-6 (Very much so)

11. Do you have greater confidence in sharing your personal testimony and God’s willingness to use your story to bring others to Christ? (Not at all) 0-1-2-3-4-5-6 (Very much so)

12. Have you gained a greater understanding of the gospel message? (Not at all) 0-1-2-3-4-5-6 (Very much So)
PART 3: PERSONAL INTERVIEW [After]
THE POWER OF A PERSONAL TESTIMONY BOOKLET:
INCREASING GOSPEL WITNESS IN EVERYDAY LIFE

1. What factors led to your decision to write your Personal Testimony Booklet?

2. Do you feel the writing of your “Personal Testimony Booklet” has benefited you?
   a. If so, in what way?

3. What lessons have you learned when it comes to distributing your personal testimony booklet?
   a. What wisdom would you pass on to someone who is just finishing their booklet and is eager to begin utilizing it as an evangelism tool to reach the lost?
   b. Under what circumstances did you find your booklet most helpful as an evangelism tool?
   c. From your perspective, what is the most effective way to share your personal testimony booklet with a friend or family member?
   d. From your perspective, what is the most effective way to share your personal testimony booklet with a stranger or someone you recently met?

4. Now that you are equipped with your personal testimony booklet, do you feel you are making a greater contribution to advancing the Kingdom of God than you were before?
   a. If so, why do you think that is?
   b. If not, are there any underlying reasons that led you to this conclusion?

5. From your perspective, what are the greatest hurdles you feel must be overcome or addressed to be an effective witness for Christ? (e.g. fear, not knowing what to say, not able to share a full gospel presentation, not able to keep the discussion on topic, striking up conversation, lack of interactions with lost people, etc.)
   a. Do you feel your personal testimony booklet has helped to overcome any of these hurdles?
   b. If so, which ones in particular?
   c. Are there any hurdles you feel you still need training or assistance to overcome?

6. Would you recommend that others write their personal testimony booklet to use as an evangelism tool as well?
   a. If so, why? If not, why not?

7. What suggestions would you recommend for improving the process of writing and distributing a personal testimony booklet? How can we better assist and train those in the future who decide to create and utilize a personal testimony booklet?

8. Have you received any personal feedback regarding your booklet that was an encouragement to you? If so, do you have a particular example/s worth sharing?
Appendix I

PART I: QUESTIONNAIRE [RESULTS]

1. Were you in the habit of handing out religious material (i.e. gospel tracts, books, CD messages, pamphlets) before you wrote your “Personal Testimony Booklet?”
   (Not at all) 0-1-2-3-4-5-6 (Very much so)
   I. Participant #1: 2
   II. Participant #2: 1
   III. Participant #3: 3
   IV. Participant #4: 0
   V. Participant #5: 3
   VI. Participant #6: 3
   VII. Participant #7: 0
   VIII. Participant #8: 1
   IX. Participant #9: 0
   X. Participant #10: 0
   XI. Participant #11: 1

2. How many gospel tracts would you say you handed out on average monthly before you wrote your “Personal Testimony Booklet”? 0 1-3 4-8 9+ Other: ______
   I. Participant #1: 0
   II. Participant #2: 0
   III. Participant #3: 1-3
   IV. Participant #4: 0
   V. Participant #5: 1-3
   VI. Participant #6: 20
   VII. Participant #7: 0
   VIII. Participant #8: 0
   IX. Participant #9: 0
   X. Participant #10: 0
   XI. Participant #11: 1

3. How many gospel tracts would you say you handed out in the past 3 months before you wrote your “Personal Testimony Booklet?”
   I. Participant #1: 0
   II. Participant #2: 0
   III. Participant #3: 2
   IV. Participant #4: 0
   V. Participant #5: 5-7
   VI. Participant #6: 60 (many of these were left anonymously)
   VII. Participant #7: 0
   VIII. Participant #8: 0
   IX. Participant #9: 0
   X. Participant #10: 0
   XI. Participant #11: 1
4. How often would you say you have used an electronic format to communicate the Gospel Message in the past month before you wrote your “Personal Testimony Booklet”? (e.g. like sending a gospel presentation as an email attachment) In the past 3 months?

I. Participant #1: 0; 0
II. Participant #2: 0; 0
III. Participant #3: 0; 0
IV. Participant #4: 0; 0
V. Participant #5: 0; 0
VI. Participant #6: 0; 0
VII. Participant #7: 0; 0
VIII. Participant #8: 0; 0
IX. Participant #9: 0; 0
X. Participant #10: 0; 0
XI. Participant #11: 0; 0

**Frequency of Verbal Communication of the Gospel**

5. On how many occasions would you say you had the opportunity to verbally share the full gospel message (i.e. Romans Road, 3 Circles, 4 Spiritual Laws, etc.) during the month before you wrote your gospel booklet?

I. Participant #1: 2
II. Participant #2: 2
III. Participant #3: 1
IV. Participant #4: 0
V. Participant #5: 0
VI. Participant #6: 1
VII. Participant #7: 0
VIII. Participant #8: 1
IX. Participant #9: 0
X. Participant #10: 0
XI. Participant #11: 0

6. On how many occasions would you say you had the opportunity to verbally share the full gospel message (i.e. Romans Road, 3 Circles, 4 Spiritual Laws, etc.) during the 3 month period before you wrote your gospel booklet?

I. Participant #1: 6
II. Participant #2: 4
III. Participant #3: 2
IV. Participant #4: 0
V. Participant #5: 1
VI. Participant #6: 2
VII. Participant #7: 1
VIII. Participant #8: 2
IX. Participant #9: 0
X. Participant #10: 1
XI. Participant #11: 0
7. On how many occasions would you say you had the opportunity to verbally share the full gospel message (i.e. Romans Road, 3 Circles, 4 Spiritual Laws, etc.) during the 6 month period before you wrote your gospel booklet?
   I. Participant #1: 12
   II. Participant #2: 6
   III. Participant #3: 3
   IV. Participant #4: 1
   V. Participant #5: 3
   VI. Participant #6: 5
   VII. Participant #7: 1
   VIII. Participant #8: 3
   IX. Participant #9: 1
   X. Participant #10: 2
   XI. Participant #11: 2

8. During the timeframe (months) that you were writing your booklet on how many occasions would you say you had the opportunity to verbally share the full gospel message (i.e. Romans Road, 3 Circles, 4 Spiritual Laws, etc.)?
   Approximate Timeframe to complete your Booklet (refer to #3 above): _________
   Opportunities to verbally share the full gospel message during that time period:
   _________
   I. Participant #1: 10 months; 18 opportunities
   II. Participant #2: 3 months; 4 opportunities
   III. Participant #3: 4 months; 2 opportunities
   IV. Participant #4: 5 months; 5 opportunities
   V. Participant #5: 5 months; 3 opportunities
   VI. Participant #6: 3 months; 2 opportunities
   VII. Participant #7: 4 months; 1 opportunity
   VIII. Participant #8: 3 months; 2 opportunities
   IX. Participant #9: 7 months; 1 opportunity
PART 2: QUESTIONNAIRE [RESULTS]

1. What is the title of your Personal Testimony Booklet?
   I. Participant #1: *From Army Ranger to Ordained Reverend*
   II. Participant #2: *A Personal Confession of Misguided Beliefs*
   III. Participant #3: *Death to Life*
   IV. Participant #4: *A Prisoner of Fear; Set Free by Faith*
   V. Participant #5: *Never Say Never: My Greatest Mistake & What I Learned From It*
   VI. Participant #6: *Salvation: Leaving a Life of Drugs, Sex and Rock n Roll*
   VII. Participant #7: *A Desire for True Love*
   VIII. Participant #8: *My Way Back Home*
   IX. Participant #9: *Willis Who?*

2. Approximately how many words make up your Personal Testimony Booklet?
   I. Participant #1: 8,260
   II. Participant #2: 2,130
   III. Participant #3: 4,140
   IV. Participant #4: 6,280
   V. Participant #5: 5,530
   VI. Participant #6: 4,350
   VII. Participant #7: 4,950
   VIII. Participant #8: 4,450
   IX. Participant #9: 9,120

3. Approximately how long did it take to write, edit, and finally publish your Personal Testimony Booklet?
   I. Participant #1: 10 months (826 words per month)
   II. Participant #2: 3 months (710 words per month)
   III. Participant #3: 4 months (1035 words per month)
   IV. Participant #4: 5 months (1256 words per month)
   V. Participant #5: 5 months (1107 words per month)
   VI. Participant #6: 3 Months (1450 words per month but rushed to complete)
   VII. Participant #7: 4 months (1240 words per month but rushed to complete)
   VIII. Participant #8: 3 months (1480 words per month but rushed to complete)
   IX. Participant #9: 7 months (1300 words per month but rushed to complete)

4. On what date did you first receive physical copies of your Personal Testimony Booklet?
   I. Participant #1: February 2019
   II. Participant #2: May 2019
   III. Participant #3: November 2019
   IV. Participant #4: December 2019
   V. Participant #5: January 2020
   VI. Participant #6: May 2020
   VII. Participant #7: May 2020
   VIII. Participant #8: May 2020
   IX. Participant #9: May 2020
5. How many initial booklets did you publish? 100, 200, Other: _____
   I. Participant #1: 100
   II. Participant #2: 100
   III. Participant #3: 100
   IV. Participant #4: 200
   V. Participant #5: 100
   VI. Participant #6: 100
   VII. Participant #7: 100
   VIII. Participant #8: 100
   IX. Participant #9: 100

6. In the past 3 months, how many booklets would you say you have averaged passing out each week? _____ month? _____

   a. Q: What is your best estimate regarding how many booklets you have passed out so far on a 1:1 basis? __________
   b. Q: What is your best estimate regarding how many booklets you have given out in bulk (2 or more) to others who were interested and wanted to help you distribute? __________
   c. Q: What is your best estimate regarding how many booklets you have offered to family and friends? __________
   d. Q: What is your best estimate regarding the total number of booklets (Bulk, Family, 1:1, Etc.) you have distributed? __________
   e. Q: What is your best estimate regarding the total number of times in the past 3 months you sent your booklet electronically to someone else in an effort to share the Gospel? __________

   I. Participant #1: 3; 12
      a. 34
      b. 10
      c. 20
      d. 74
      e. 0
   II. Participant #2: 1; 4
      a. 20
      b. 0
      c. 30
      d. 50
      e. 0
   III. Participant #3: 0; 1
      a. 8
      b. 0
      c. 6
      d. 14
      e. 0
IV. Participant #4: 1; 4
   a. 19
   b. 0
   c. 20
   d. 40
   e. 1

V. Participant #5:
   a. 14
   b. 0
   c. 11
   d. 14
   e. 0

VI. Participant #6:
   a. 25
   b. 5
   c. 23
   d. 53
   e. 0

VII. Participant #7:
   a. 9
   b. 0
   c. 9
   d. 10
   e. 1

VIII. Participant #8:
   a. 9
   b. 20
   c. 16
   d. 45
   e. 0

IX. Participant #9:
   a. 8
   b. 0
   c. 8
   d. 8
   e. 0
7. On how many occasions would you say you had the opportunity to verbally share the full gospel message (i.e. Romans Road, 3 Circles, 4 Spiritual Laws, etc.) during the first month after you wrote your gospel booklet?
   I. Participant #1: 2
   II. Participant #2: 3
   III. Participant #3: 1
   IV. Participant #4: 5
   V. Participant #5: 0
   VI. Participant #6: 3
   VII. Participant #7: 0
   VIII. Participant #8: 1
   IX. Participant #9: 0

8. On how many occasions would you say you had the opportunity to verbally share the full gospel message (i.e. Romans Road, 3 Circles, 4 Spiritual Laws, etc.) during the 3 month period after you wrote your gospel booklet?
   I. Participant #1: 6
   II. Participant #2: 5
   III. Participant #3: 2
   IV. Participant #4: 7
   V. Participant #5: 1
   VI. Participant #6: 4
   VII. Participant #7: 0
   VIII. Participant #8: 3
   IX. Participant #9: 0

9. Overall, have you experienced a greater willingness to hand out religious material (i.e. your booklet) than generic gospel tracts or other religious materials before?
   (Not at all) 0-1-2-3-4-5-6 (Very much so)
   I. Participant #1: 6 (vs 2)
   II. Participant #2: 6 (vs. 1)
   III. Participant #3: 3 (vs. 3)
   IV. Participant #4: 6 (vs. 0)
   V. Participant #5: 2 (vs. 3) Less gospel tracts, more PTB’s
   VI. Participant #6: 3 (vs. 3) Less gospel tracts, more PTB’s
   VII. Participant #7: 5 (vs. 0)
   VIII. Participant #8: 6 (vs. 1)
   IX. Participant #9: 4 (vs. 0)
10. How inclined are you to continue this method of evangelism (Personal Testimony Booklet) in the future?  (Not at all)  0-1-2-3-4-5-6  (Very much so)
   I. Participant #1: 6
   II. Participant #2: 6
   III. Participant #3: 6
   IV. Participant #4: 6
   V. Participant #5: 6
   VI. Participant #6: 6
   VII. Participant #7: 6
   VIII. Participant #8: 6
   IX. Participant #9: 6

11. Do you have greater confidence in sharing your personal testimony and God’s willingness to use your story to bring others to Christ?  (Not at all)  0-1-2-3-4-5-6 (Very much so)
   I. Participant #1: 4
   II. Participant #2: 5
   III. Participant #3: 2
   IV. Participant #4: 6
   V. Participant #5: 6
   VI. Participant #6: 4
   VII. Participant #7: 4
   VIII. Participant #8: 6
   IX. Participant #9: 3

12. Have you gained a greater understanding of the gospel message?  
   (Not at all)  0-1-2-3-4-5-6  (Very much So)
   I. Participant #1: 4
   II. Participant #2: 5
   III. Participant #3: 0
   IV. Participant #4: 6
   V. Participant #5: 5
   VI. Participant #6: 2
   VII. Participant #7: 5
   VIII. Participant #8: 6
   IX. Participant #9: 1
Appendix J

Kristyn Walker’s Personal Testimony Booklet Example
(Attached Next Page)
INTRODUCTION

First, I want to thank you for taking the time to read this booklet. Each one of us has a story, a story about how we became who we are today. The lessons we have learned along our journey can meaningfully impact those around us. Our family environment, certain events, personal decisions, and even special people have played a role in influencing our path in life. I would love to share with you part of my unique story. My prayer is that it would deeply touch you in a positive way. I would also love to hear from you in response. I look forward to learning from your story if you care to share it.

MY CHILDHOOD

As a child, I grew up in a broken home. I was raised by my mother and grandmother. My father, who had gotten into trouble with alcohol, moved away when I was very young. Even though my mother worked full time, she was intentional about actively being a part of my life.

My mom never missed an event or activity. She was my biggest fan. My grandmother was also very supportive. Raised as a devout Catholic, my grandmother sought to impress upon me good morals and to encourage me to participate in the practices of her faith.

Although there was a measure of spirituality in our household, there was not much under the surface. The Catholic religion that my grandmother practiced, and encouraged me to accept, required following a lot of rules. I was taught that living a “good” life would improve my chances to enter heaven and that it was imperative that my good deeds outweighed my bad.

One of the essential sacraments of the Catholic religion also stressed the ritual of going to see the priest in order to confess my wrongdoings. Supposedly, this was to “magically” make my sins disappear, yet I was always a little fuzzy on exactly how such a practice could offer the forgiveness I needed. Isn’t God alone the only one who has the power
to forgive sins? And what if I died suddenly without an opportunity to confess? Was I doomed forever, or was I just destined to spend more time in purgatory?

In my eyes, the Catholic religion that I was exposed to fell short. I came to learn about God from a distance, but I did not know Him in a personal, experiential way. If asked, I would have told you that I believed in God, but like many others, that belief was just a small part of my busy life. In Catholic School I learned some facts and stories about Jesus, but I did not really understand the meaning of His life, death, and resurrection as it related to me personally. Religion, God, and church were definitely not important parts of my life.

In fact, every teaching I was forced to learn felt as if another weight was placed upon my shoulders. Pressure mounted. I began to feel overwhelmed with the idea of trying to be a “good” Catholic. Questions like, “How could I possibly do all the right things in order to earn a spot in heaven?” plagued me. Honestly, no matter how hard I tried, I never seemed to measure up. I never had complete confidence that God was pleased with me and that I was accepted in his eyes. Worst of all, I had no confidence about making it into heaven.

To compound my “religious” problem, my biological father reentered my life during my pre-teenage years. I longed for and sought to find value and approval from him. I wanted to be noticed and appreciated. I wanted to feel special. But no matter how hard I tried, I only encountered constant disappointment. My greatest emotional and spiritual needs remained unmet. With no sense of approval, acceptance, or security from either God or from my father, I engaged in many unhealthy behaviors seeking to fill the void. I also struggled with fear on multiple levels.

THE FEARS I FACED

FEAR OF DEATH

When I was in the fourth grade, my life was shaken by a sudden tragic event. A few miles from my home, a relative of mine was murdered at the local McDonald’s where he worked. Initially I was intrigued by what happened and wanted to learn more about it. I opened up the newspaper and started reading. Later that night, however, I was gripped with fear. This fear followed me for years. It centered upon the realization that one day, I too was going to die. The scariest part was, I didn’t know when that time was going to come or where I would go for sure once it did happen. This was an immense burden for a young girl to carry! This fear often crippled me with overwhelming anxiety.

Another pivotal incident took place during high school, which compounded my problem. In tenth grade, I ruptured my spleen during a track meet. I was flown by helicopter to the nearest hospital for emergency surgery. I came very close to dying.

Looking back, I don’t know why my life was spared, but one thing I do know is that if I had died at that time, I would have entered eternity totally unprepared.

After such a close call, I distinctly remember having fear pop up in areas where I had always found joy and satisfaction. It would drive me to isolate myself. I often thought, “What am I doing here on this earth? What is the purpose of all of this? If I am going to die anyway, what is the point of pursuing these temporary things or persevering through life’s trials and challenges?” As you can imagine, there were times that this fear would drive me toward the thought of ending my life. I felt like I had no purpose and despite all my religious activity, I lacked assurance of the salvation I had supposedly been granted.
FEAR OF REJECTION

I believe that because of how God made us, most of us have a strong need for close relationships that bring meaning and joy into our lives. I was no different. I did not have many friends in my younger years. I was also an identical twin, a fact that seemed to hinder others from associating with me and my sister. I had always been told it was because the other kids were afraid to mix us up. While that is understandable, it still hurt. I greatly longed for acceptance and popularity in those younger years.

Toward the end of junior high, I picked up an infrequent habit of smoking cigarettes. I smoked on occasion when it could be noticed by others. I wanted to be "cool" and stand out. This habit didn't help me much, so within a year or two, I thankfully stopped. Later in high school, I attended parties where alcohol was readily available. Although I never indulged to the point of drunkenness, I did drink to fit in and be noticed.

My accomplishments only served to mask this fear.

My goal was to be a strong athlete so that I could make a name for myself. I remember dreaming of becoming an Olympic athlete so that I could be known. I never really thought about whom I wanted to be known by or what sacrifices it may require, I just wanted to make an impression on others. Anyone.

By the end of high school, I actually became a decent athlete, and also finished in the top 5 academically in my graduating class. I was nominated for several school awards. I was one of the top scorers on my field hockey team and one of three captains. I was also a popular tumbler on the cheerleading squad. I set several records in track and enjoyed the coveted captain status there too.

Even with all these accomplishments, and the praise of more people than ever, I still lived in fear of those I wanted to impress. On the outside, I appeared to have it together. On the inside, however, I was very insecure. I constantly pondered what others thought about me. I had low self-esteem and a lot of self-doubt.

I also pursued relationships with boys to feel better about myself. In the relationships I made myself most vulnerable in, I always walked away more hurt than before. I was frustrated that no matter where I turned, I could not attain the hope and acceptance I longed for.

In hindsight, I gave myself into the hands of others, instead of giving myself to the One who could make me whole and fulfilled. I was rejecting the One who was pursuing me, to pursue those that I feared would reject me - especially the "me" that lived in secret.

FEAR OF FAILURE

My drive to be accepted not only resulted in negative behaviors, but also in ones that gave me a mission. I strove to be a good athlete, to be involved in numerous activities, and to get good grades. Although I endeavored to be better, I still did not find great purpose in these activities, and I was still plagued with fear - the fear of failure.

FEAR TURNS INTO FASTING

Toward the end of my high school years, my drive to do well, to be accepted, and to create a good appearance led to my decision to severely restrict my food intake. I never stopped eating completely but the restrictions I placed on myself were not healthy. Weight wasn’t the main issue nor was my appearance. The main issue was control. My life often felt out of control, and food was something that I could control. I felt I could not control who accepted and befriended me. I felt I could not always control our school or in sports. But eating was an area I could control. Sadly, this became another attempt to meet those deep psychological needs by my own efforts. It should be no surprise that my attempts fell short.
FEAR OF THE LORD

My transition to college was hard. I had difficulty adjusting. I left all my friends behind and the course load for a college student was academically challenging. To complicate things even more, I broke up with my high school boyfriend my freshman year. This relationship was one of the last ties that connected me to my old life.

During this time, a few older girls in my college dorm entered my life. These upperclassmen pursued a relationship with me even though I kept pushing them away. This was ironic since one of the very things I longed for was relationships with others. Amid a challenging freshman year, these women encouraged me, met with me, offered to pray for me, and continued to speak positively into my life. I had never encountered people like this before. Over time it had an effect.

After months of pursuing a relationship and inviting me to be a part of their lives, I agreed to join them in a few activities. I saw that these women were no different than me. They enjoyed similar activities, and had similar fears, questions, and strivings, yet something about them was different. They pointed me to the One who was able to calm those fears, answer the questions, and provide the loving acceptance I longed for. I discovered that I had been looking for meaning, hope, purpose, and acceptance in the wrong places...places that would never provide what I needed.

One night toward the end of my freshman year, one of these young ladies invited me to an event in which she was preparing to share her life story to a group of students. I agreed to attend. After hearing her share about the struggles she had been through in her search for purpose, I felt I could definitely relate.

She had engaged in many unhealthy behaviors just as I had, but had found purpose in the midst of pain. At the end of her testimony she offered to pray with anyone who wanted to begin a relationship with Jesus. I knew right then and there that this was an invitation I could not refuse. I went forward and surrendered my life to Jesus Christ and I have been different ever since.

Looking back, these ladies helped me encounter a God that had been pursuing me all along. Through my fear of death – He was waiting to offer me hope and eternal life. Through my fear of rejection – He was calling out, “I made you, I love you. You are special in my eyes.” Through my fear of failure – He was watching and waiting to be the pursuit of my life and heart so that my ultimate identity would be found in Him and not in my accomplishments.

For years I searched for meaning, hope, and purpose in worldly pursuits. However, I never found a meaning that felt fulfilling, a hope that could endure the dark moments, and a purpose that was worthy of all of my efforts. I never found what I was looking for; but meaning, hope and purpose found me that memorable night when God met me right where I was at.

1 John 4:18 – “There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.”

Matthew 11:28-30 – “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

WHERE DO YOU STAND?

In my story up to this point, I hope you have recognized that my life (and probably yours) had been full of valuable lessons. In hindsight, I can see how God graciously worked to guide me toward Truth and the path of Eternal Life. If you are anything like me, you have probably thought about life, death, and eternity before. You have probably wondered what this life is all about. Where did I come from? Where am I going? What is the meaning of all this?

In reflection upon my own journey, I have discovered that God has always been at work in
my life. For years I was simply blind to much of His efforts. He has been active through all my life's experiences to bring me into a personal, saving relationship with Him. Knowing His heart, I can confidently say that the same is true for you as well.

Even in the moments when God seems distant, it is a distance we create because of our sin, not a distance He is responsible for. As the Creator of the Universe, God wired us to enjoy a personal relationship with Him. He longs for us to know Him and to walk in intimate friendship with us.

There is one question that I have found that brings life into perspective. If by chance you were involved in an accident today—and died—where would you go? Many of us don't like to think about death unexpectedly overtaking us. In fact, if you recall from my story, this was a great source of anxiety for much of my early life. But wouldn't it be foolish to ignore the issue until it is too late? It would be like someone knowing they will have to jump from an airplane but

done were out of a selfish motive (popularity, personal pride, or a desire to feel good or make a name for myself, etc.).

It has only been in the past few years that I came to understand just how important the answer to this question is. How you answer reflects where your trust lies.

Common responses that I often hear include: “Well, for the most part, my good acts have outweighed my bad.” I have also heard people say, “God should let me in because overall, I am a pretty good person.” This line of thinking was essentially what the Catholic Church taught me to believe, and for many years I would have answered accordingly.

It wasn't until I came to fully understand who God is that such a justification no longer appeared reasonable in my eyes. Allow me to explain.

The Bible speaks of God as perfect, holy, and righteous. Because of His nature, He cannot associate with sin or those who engage in it. He

has declared that all sin must be judged. Unfortunately, many people have a misperception about how God evaluates them in regard to entering heaven. Many believe, as I did, that if their good outweighs their bad, they will automatically earn a spot. This line of reasoning, however, doesn't fit with God's Truth.

The Bible clearly emphasizes that no one less than perfect can enter heaven. As the Creator of the Universe, God can't allow sin to enter His presence. And, if God allowed imperfect people into heaven, then think about it, heaven would no longer be a perfect place. Heaven is not the default place for those who die but rather hell. Only people who reflect God's perfect righteousness and holiness can enter the gates of eternal life.

Let that sink in. What is your initial reaction? I remember mine. I thought to myself, well no one on this earth is perfect, so I guess there is no hope for any of us then. But there is hope, as I will explain.
God is both loving and just. To understand our eternal destiny, we must gain a greater understanding of these two aspects of God’s character. First, consider the Ten Commandments. I am sure you may have heard some of them before. Thou shalt not lie. How many lies have you told in your lifetime? Thou shalt not steal. Have you ever stolen or taken something that wasn’t yours in your whole life? Honor and obey your father and mother. Has every choice in your life sought to show honor and love to your parents? If we answer the above three questions honestly, of course not.

To take things a level deeper, God states that he won’t just call us to account one day for our actions and words, but also our thoughts, and the motives of our heart. Jesus emphasized this when he said, “but I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court.” (Matthew 5:23) also, “anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him.” (1 John 3:15)

God has written the Ten Commandments on every human heart/conscience, so that when we go against His standard of holiness, a tuning fork goes off inside and our conscience lets us know we are guilty.

While each of us is guilty of sin against our Creator, the Bible makes it clear that the penalty for sin (violating God’s standard of holiness) is eternal punishment in hell. Here is just one passage that emphasizes that:

1 Corinthians 5:9-10 - “Don’t you realize that those who do wrong will not inherit the kingdom of God? Don’t fool yourselves. Those who indulge in sexual sin, or who worship idols, or commit adultery, or are male prostitutes, or practice homosexuality, or are thieves, or greedy people, or drunkards, or are abusive, or cheat people—none of these will inherit the kingdom of God.”

So, if sinlessness is the standard, what hope does anyone have? What kind of a God would demand perfection knowing that no one could ever measure up?

At this point, as darkness and hopelessness surround us, God’s love shines forth.

While God’s love compels him to seek justice and to punish all sin, his loving nature also moves Him to extend mercy to those who don’t deserve it. You see, God can’t forgive sin simply on the basis of being asked. Try that in a court of law. No matter how loving a judge is, they will never dismiss a case because the defendant simply asks for forgiveness. If a person is a convicted criminal in the eyes of the court, that person must be punished.

In a similar fashion, sin in our lives creates an eternal debt that we owe God, the Judge of the Universe. When a debt exists, there is a penalty and that penalty has to be paid. The laws of the universe demand justice. Just think about all the people who have hurt you throughout your life. One day, they will be held accountable before God, the Judge of the Universe. Conversely, you too will be held accountable for those whom you have hurt with your actions and words.

This is where Jesus comes in. Growing up I had always heard about Jesus, but for years never understood why his death on the cross was important.

The only way God can offer mercy and forgiveness to sinners is through the sacrifice of a substitute.

If a perfectly sinless substitute was willing to stand in your place and pay the eternal penalty you owe God, then and only then, could He forgive you. Only then would we be considered innocent of all criminal charges. Amazingly, this is exactly what God offers!

God sent his Son into this world. Jesus left heaven and entered creation, taking on human flesh. He was both fully man, and fully God in human form. Jesus lived a perfect life – never sinning even once during his life on earth. Although He did not deserve death, Jesus offered himself to be crucified on the cross to pay the debt for the sins of mankind.
Romans 5:8 – “But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Through Jesus, God has provided a way to pay off our sin “debt” in full and grant us the perfect righteousness we need to enter heaven. But it’s not automatic, and He won’t force it on us. We are left with a choice: stubbornly continue on our own path in life which will eventually lead us to eternal destruction, or receive the gift God offers in Jesus Christ that can remove all guilt and cleanse us of all our sin.

Romans 6:23 – “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

The truth is that none of us could EVER do enough to earn salvation. And though we shudder at the thought of an eternal place of torment, separation, and pain, Hell does in fact exist.

So, what do we need to do to receive this gift that is offered to us by the grace of God?

Romans 1:16 – “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.”

John 3:16 – “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. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.”

Heaven is only for those who trust in the perfect righteousness of Christ. He is the only worthy substitute to take our punishment through the cruel and shameful death he experienced on the cross. For those that turn from their path in repentance and entrust themselves to Christ in faith, Jesus is willing to exchange His perfect righteousness for our sin. Once such an exchange takes place, that person appears spotless in the eyes of Almighty God, innocent of all charges and free from accusation forever.

Although it is a free gift to receive salvation, there is a cost involved. Just like a wedding ceremony, where bride and groom look each other in the eye and exchange vows promising to surrender their lives to serve one another, the same type of exchange forms the basis of our salvation. Jesus offers his life to us on the condition that we offer our life to him in return.

Mark 8:34 – “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? For what can a man give in return for his life?

As I stated in my story, I knew the name Jesus, and “believed” in God for many years but the Catholic church I attended never encouraged me to read the Bible. Later I realized that much of what I personally was taught directly contradicts what God says in the Scriptures. I felt I was lied to and deceived. And that is exactly what religion offers: death, lies, and deception. It promises a lot but offers nothing of true value. It is empty.

But God doesn’t offer religion. He offers relationship. All the other religions of the world require you to strive and struggle to appease the gods lest they remain angry with you. In Christianity, we can be restored in our relationship with God, experience His favor and have all sin totally wiped clean simply by trusting Jesus in faith. Religion is about what humans must “do.” Christianity is about what God has “done” for us already. There is a big difference.

When we ask Jesus to enter our heart, He does a supernatural work of regeneration. He has the power to transform your heart and make you a new person. We are transferred from eternal death to eternal life. He grants peace when nothing else can. All things begin to make
sense when we are restored in our relationship with the Creator who made us.

**Jesus is the Only Way**

You have an enemy who is out to keep you from accepting God's free gift of salvation. Satan (the devil) desires that all humans, created in God's image, accompany him to hell. Once the greatest archangel in heaven, Satan rebelled against God and tried to usurp the throne for himself. He convinced a third of all angels to side with him. Unsurprisingly, Satan lost that battle and was cast to earth for a time. One day, Satan will be judged by being cast into the lake of fire forever.

In light of this biblical truth, I hope it is clearer now how Satan hopes to get even with God. Even though there is only one way to heaven, for thousands of years Satan has been trying to convince humanity that “all paths lead to heaven.” Satan does not want anyone to know about the gift of eternal life that God offers through Jesus. And if you have heard of Jesus, Satan certainly doesn't want you to surrender yourself to Him in faith as your Savior and Lord. Satan's goal is to take as many people as possible with him to hell for eternity.

Thankfully, God loves you and doesn't want Satan to succeed in his plans to destroy your life. He doesn't want you to perish apart from the eternal hope He offers through His Son. He has made a way for you to be forgiven by accepting his Son's death on the cross as a substitutionary act on your behalf. Jesus is the only PERFECT SUBSTITUTE, and He is willing to take your place...but only if you surrender to Him in faith. It is by grace we are saved through faith in Jesus.

Jesus is the only way that anyone tainted by the stains of sin can gain entrance to heaven. He is the only One able to bridge the gap between this earthly life and the glorious heavenly life that awaits. He says:

**John 14:6** “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one can reach the Father except through me.”

**The Bottom Line**

God has brought you to this specific point in your life for a purpose. You may be able to relate to my desire for meaning, purpose, and influence. None of these can be found in your pursuits apart from God. The pursuits, pleasures, and purposes of this life are temporary. Eternity is but a heartbeat away, and you never know when that last heartbeat is going to be. In light of this, seeking after and knowing God in a personal way begins to appear much more important.

We are all seeking something...but everything you need is found in one source: JESUS! Since the Creator God made you, He knows your past hurts, your future, and your greatest needs and desires. As I shared in my story, I was striving to find answers, meaning, value, security, peace and purpose in this fallen world, but found only emptiness and pain. The world, as ruled by our spiritual enemy Satan, suggests there are many paths – but none of these other paths lead to eternal life. They all lead us to strive to achieve something that is not achievable on our own. Unless you seek to find your confidence, worth, value, and purpose in God, truly understanding that He loves you unconditionally, you will always be searching but never satisfied.

**Matthew 7:13-14** – “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction and many enter through it, but small is the gate and narrow is the road that leads to eternal life but only a few find it.”

There are only two paths in this life: The wide path that we all start out on, and the narrow path that is only offered through Jesus Christ.

The Bible says:

**Proverbs 14:12** – “There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end leads to death.”

Years ago, I had to come to an understanding of the severity of my sin and recognized it as deserving of God’s just and holy wrath. His free and unconditional gift of love appeared incredibly attractive, considering my desperate
and hopeless condition. Now that sin no longer separates me from God, I have come to know Him in a personal way. And you can too!

Romans 10:9 – “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.”

Are you ready to respond to His pursuit of you?

Jesus defeated death when he rose from the grave on the third day. That same resurrection power is available through the Holy Spirit to bring divine life and transformation. God has created you to thrive. He knows your desires and created purpose and is calling you to walk with Him so that He can help you become whom He created you to be.

We come to God as we are, but we must leave who we are at the altar: our sin, our desires, our goals, our lives. When we come to Him, we are no longer our own. Jesus redeems us from sin and its eternal consequences at the price of His own blood.

IN CLOSING

Can you relate to my story? Do you feel that God has spoken to you? Are you longing to find meaning and purpose in this lost and broken world? Are you in need of total forgiveness for everything in your past, present and future?

If you are ready today to make a commitment to Christ as your Lord and Savior, I have included a prayer to guide your personal conversation with God. The exact words are not important because it is not the prayer that saves you but the supernatural work of Christ. What is important is that you humbly confess your sin, give up the right to sit behind the steering wheel of your life and trust Jesus to take the driver’s seat.

Years ago, God brought key individuals into my life who were instrumental in helping me come to a knowledge of the Truth. Could it be that God is seeking you and using this booklet in the same way to open your eyes and invite you into an adventure that will change your life?

PRAYER

Dear God, as I reflect on my life, I recognize that I have fallen short of who I have been created to be. I now humbly come to you in the name of Jesus and acknowledge that I am a sinner. I am sorry that I have hurt you and others through my actions and words.

I believe that your only Son shed His precious blood on the cross and died for my sins. I am now willing to turn from my sinful ways and surrender to you and your will for my life.

You said in Your Word, (Romans 10:9) that if we confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in our hearts that You raised Him from the dead, we will be saved. Right now, I confess Jesus as my Savor and the Lord of my life. With my heart, I believe that you raised Jesus from the dead. Transform my heart and take control of my life.

Thank you, Jesus, for dying for me and by your grace offering me forgiveness and eternal life. Send your Holy Spirit to enter me and transform me to live a godly life in relationship with you. Amen.

If you have chosen to surrender your life to Christ, I rejoice for you! God’s Word says you have passed from death to life and you have been “born again.”

Death, fear, worry and hopelessness no longer have authority to reign in your life. Your security and self-worth are no longer dependent upon your performance or accomplishments but on God’s love for you. And the good news is, you are now adopted into His family. You are unconditionally loved by God, and as you rely upon Him, peace, hope, joy, and meaning will accompany His presence. Although trials and hard times will come, His presence in your life will help you to endure and persevere.

I would love to hear your story, pray with you, and answer any questions you may have. Making a decision to commit your life to Christ is just the beginning of your eternal relationship with Him and I want to help you grow in your faith.
I encourage you to:

- Share your decision with a Christian friend, or perhaps someone you know who has been praying for you.
- Start reading the Bible daily, asking God to speak to you and help you understand. I suggest starting with the book of Mark or John. Obey what you read.
- Become part of a biblically sound church that believes the Bible and is passionate about helping people know and apply God’s truth to their everyday lives. A local fellowship of Christians is important for your spiritual growth, encouragement, accountability and overall care and support. If you’re not sure where to start, I would love to have you visit LivingStone Community Church in Colonial Beach, VA.

Kristyn Walker lives in Colonial Beach, VA with her husband and six children. She graduated from Liberty University with a Master of Nursing Education and served for nine years in the Air National Guard as a flight nurse. Recently, she paused her career in nursing to become a homeschool mom. She delights in her role as a wife and mother and seeks opportunities to share her faith in Jesus Christ with others she meets.

Does FEAR seem to have a grip on you?
Have you been seeking value and worth but unable to find it in your pursuit?
Do you ever wonder about your PURPOSE in life?
Have you been hurt by religion in the past but still have a longing to truly know where you came from and why you are here?
Read how one woman’s life radically changed and how yours can too.
Appendix K

May 7, 2020

Patrick Walker
Daryl Neipp


Dear Patrick Walker, Daryl Neipp:

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) 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 following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:

101(b):

Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:
The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

Your stamped consent form can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. This form should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications 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
Research Ethics Office

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Bibliography


