

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

COMMISSIONED: A MIXED-METHODS STUDY OF EVANGELISM BELIEFS,
PRACTICES, AND RESULTS

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

by

Shane Redding

Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

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ABSTRACT

Although Jesus clearly commanded His Church to spread His gospel to the world and make disciples of all nations, the modern American Church has struggled to evangelize effectively, resulting in declining church attendance. While many churches claim to value evangelism, the results indicate a need for churches to reevaluate their current evangelism approaches. The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to determine if a relationship exists between the levels of importance that churches place on evangelism, the churches' tangible evangelism practices, and their new believer baptisms. The target population for the study was lead pastors from non-denomination, baptistic, evangelistic, Christian churches in suburban areas of the United States.

Keywords: evangelism, baptism, conversion, outreach

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Dedication

To those who never got to see me complete this part of my journey. Dad and Grandma, your love, support, and faith laid the foundation for me to become the man that I am today. I hope I have made you proud.

To those who are too young to understand. Jenna, by completing this part of my journey, I want to show you what you can achieve with determination, hard work, and calling. I hope that you will be part of the generation that turns things around for the Church and leads the broken and hopeless to Christ.

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To my family, your belief in me has meant the world to me. Thank you for always pushing me to be the best man, pastor, and student I could be.

Legacy Christian Church, your prayers and words of affirmation have helped fuel me through this process. I thank you for your support and vow to use my education to edify and lead you.

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List of Abbreviations

External Focus Questionnaire (EFQ)

External Focus Follow-up Questionnaire (EFFQ)

New International Version Bible (NIV)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

International Business Machines Corporation (IBM)

Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS)

CHAPTER ONE: RESEARCH CONCERN

Introduction

In one of Jesus's final addresses to His followers, as told in Matthew 28, He explicitly laid out His expectation that believers continue His ministry of reconciliation, taking the message of the gospel to the rest of the world. Jesus's command serves as the foundation for the Church's purpose for existence, setting a clear barometer for success for the modern Church. Essentially, the Church must effectively reach out to the rest of the world in order to live up to Christ's expectations for His Church.

Since Jesus first issued the Great Commission (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Matt. 28:18-20), the Church has struggled continually to combat complacency and achieve this important responsibility. Multiple times throughout his epistles to early churches, the Apostle Paul was forced to address this attitude. For example, in Paul's instruction to Timothy, he mentioned that he urged Timothy to stay in Ephesus so that he could command others not to focus on myths and genealogies rather than advancing God's work (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, 1 Tim. 1:3-7). He noted that focusing on those things promoted controversy and speculation rather than love and a sincere faith. In his letters to the Corinthians, Paul addressed the divisions within the church. One of the most significant divisions was over communion as the wealthy congregants gathered and ate together before the poorer congregants could arrive (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, 1 Cor. 11:17-34). According to Paul, this practice caused the church to experience God's judgment and discipline. In his instruction to the Thessalonians, Paul gave instruction regarding members who stopped working because they believed Jesus's return was imminent. Some of the Thessalonians forsook their work and took advantage of the generosity of others because they believed the end was near (*New International Version*,

1978/2005, 2 Thess. 3:6-15). These passages reveal the necessity for Paul to repeatedly address the Church's loss of focus and motivation. Despite the clear instruction from scripture to evangelize and the modeled example from Jesus Himself and subsequently the Apostles, the Church has continued to fall into a pattern of complacency.

The Church has adopted a consumer mindset which has caused it to become more inwardly focused than outwardly focused (Ringma, 2004; Cole, 2015). After an extended period of complacency and inward focus, the congregants have been taught to expect the church to prioritize the preferences and desires of the established congregation rather than to prioritize fulfilling the evangelistic commands of Jesus. This entrenched self-focus is an important obstacle that prevents the church from achieving its evangelism goals.

As a result of changing behaviors and values in churches, such as complacency and consumer mindset, the American Church is in decline and at risk of losing future generations. Church leaders must examine the churches' approaches to evangelism and implement tangible actions to improve evangelism outcomes. It is not enough simply to claim to value evangelism. The Church must obey Christ's command in Matthew 28 by effectively spreading the gospel to the world. The study explored the effectiveness of evangelism by churches.

Background to the Problem

The Church's current state of ineffective evangelism is the result of numerous internal and external factors which can be outlined theologically, historically, sociologically, and theoretically. Theologically, despite the clear commands of Jesus, scripture reveals the Church's tendency to focus on secondary issues and lose its motivation to evangelize effectively. Historically, there is a decline in church attendance in the American Christian church. Sociologically, the decline in evangelism has led to decreasing biblical literacy and social

influence. Theoretically, churches are experiencing the development of a consumer mindset among existing congregants. The following sections explore these concepts further.

Theological

During the early days of the Church, emerging complacency was a concern. In his letters to the Thessalonians, Paul addressed an attitude that was becoming prevalent among some of the members of the church. Some members of the church allowed the belief that Jesus's return was imminent to distract them from their purpose (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, 1 Thess. 5:1-11). Rather than using Christ's return as the motivation to pursue the mission of evangelism more urgently, some shirked their responsibilities and lived comfortably as they waited for the Rapture (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, 2 Thess. 3:6-15). Paul strongly condemned this attitude and encouraged the church to stay focused. These texts illustrate complacency as a problem the Church has faced since its early history.

Additionally, Paul's letters reveal that internal fighting and divisions often caused the churches to be less effective. In his letters to the Corinthians, Paul pleaded with the church to be united under the purpose of advancing the gospel rather than fighting over teachers, ethnic and religious background, socioeconomic status, and spiritual gifts (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, 1 Cor. 1:10-17, 1:22-25, 11:20-34, 12). Most relevant to this study was Paul's instruction regarding the church's division over spiritual gifts (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, 1 Cor. 12) because it illustrates the competing focuses that can exist within the church. When the church body is not functioning properly, it can fall into a state of infighting and internal jealousy which prevents it from operating the way it was intended to function. Paul urged the church instead to be a unified force for the advancement of the gospel and provision for the tangible needs of the less fortunate (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, 1 Cor. 16:1-

4). 1 Corinthians reveals the ineffectiveness and conflict that the church experiences when it focuses inward rather than outward.

Historical

Church attendance and membership have declined in the American Christian Church over the last several decades, with each new generation less likely to attend church than the last. A Gallup poll from 1999 reported that a majority (70%) of Americans regularly attended a house of worship (Jones, 2021). This was followed by a Gallup poll from 2020 that revealed that the number had dropped to just 47% overall and only 36% among millennials (Jones, 2021). The polls tracked a consistent decline in church attendance, even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. For the first time, church attendance in the United States fell below the majority level. Given the historical downward trend over multiple decades and the steep decline in church attendance among millennials, declining church membership and attendance are not likely to self-correct.

Sociological

To some extent, the Church had always been able to rely on Christianity being in the zeitgeist to account for some degree of evangelism because, as previously stated, church membership always had encompassed the majority of Americans. Whether people attended a church or not, a significant enough portion of the population in the United States did; the gospel was circulated throughout society because of this. The majority of Americans who attended church were interacting with the minority who did not attend church – potentially giving people an opportunity to respond to the message. Society as a whole was more influenced by Christianity, making the gospel message more accessible outside of formal church settings.

Biblical literacy is declining due to rising secularism and religious unaffiliating in a post-modern society, one that rejects the concepts of metanarratives (Holtz, 2020) such as the one that

is central to Christianity. Nationally decreasing church attendance contributes to the decline as well. The synergy from these factors means that the church cannot rely on people coming to Christ through their existing knowledge of the gospel (Griswold, 2006).

Although American church attendance is declining, the country's overall spirituality is not. Modern Americans have turned to more general spirituality than organized religion, and people are attempting to find God outside of the Church. "The biting truth is that this country is not rejecting spirituality but Christianity...Masses gave the church a try and left wanting" (McManus, 2013, p. 44). The combination of consistent spirituality and declining church attendance is an indictment of the Church's ineffectiveness. Pew Research Center reports 90% of Americans believe in a higher power and 56% believe in the God of the Bible (Fahmy, 2021). American society does not need to be convinced that God exists but rather that the local church is still the place to encounter Him.

Theoretical

There have been considerable attempts to understand the factors that have led to the negative impression of Christianity which may have influenced the historically low rates of youth and young adults who identify as Christians. These factors underscore the importance of evangelism. Impressions of the Church may be drawn from other influences because the modern Christian Church has not engaged in meaningful community outreach. For example, significant sources of the negative impression of Christianity for the unchurched and de-churched have come from exposure to the Catholic Church, Evangelical mega-churches, and preachers on television (Vermurlen, 2015). The world is left with representations that negatively impact outsiders' views of the Christian Church when churches do not go beyond their own walls to meet outsiders where they are. This could be especially impactful to unchurched people. With

only negative representations outside of the Church and limited exposure to Christianity through evangelism, unchurched people may become more resistant to attending church.

Some experts have theorized that the root cause of complacency and inactivity in the American Church is a consumer mentality within the church (Ringma, 2004). As a result of the church becoming more inward-focused than outward, current members expect to be the focus of church efforts – rather than having a focus on reaching unbelievers. Given this expectation, church members are unlikely to suddenly place emphasis on evangelism and reverse these trends without drastic change. This consumer mindset must be considered during any assessment of the research problem.

Statement of the Problem

The Church is tasked with expanding the Kingdom of God by spreading the gospel to those who do not have a relationship with Jesus (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Matt. 28:18-20). Despite this charge to churches, there is a decrease in church attendance in the United States today. While many churches will identify this responsibility as a primary function of the church and profess that they place an emphasis on evangelism and external focus, the churches often do not measure their progress or evaluate the effectiveness of their evangelism. These values must translate into tangible actions and ministry decisions that positively contribute to evangelism goals.

There has been research regarding church outreach efforts, however, more research is needed to study the relationship between the churches' self-perceived importance placed on outreach and the measurable impact that that emphasis has on church growth through conversion. Current research identifies the overall state of evangelism and declining attendance of churches in the United States. Current research does not reveal measures of evangelism effectiveness.

Such research could inform churches toward re-evaluation or implementation of tangible evangelism actions.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to examine the effectiveness of evangelism at non-denominational, baptistic, evangelistic, Christian churches in suburban areas of the United States by collecting both quantitative and qualitative data. This study first collected data in quantitative form to identify evangelism's importance to the churches, their congregant attendance, evangelism practices, and new believer baptisms. The study then collected data in qualitative form with regard to the churches' evangelistic views and their lived experiences. These data then were analyzed to understand the relationship, if any, between the importance of evangelism in the churches, the churches' tangible evangelism practices, and new member baptisms.

Research Questions

RQ1. What relationship, if any, exists between the level of importance the source churches place on evangelism and the number of their new believer baptisms?

RQ2. What relationship, if any, exists between the level of importance the source churches place on evangelism and the ranges of their tangible evangelism practices implemented?

RQ3. What relationship, if any, exists between the source churches' ranges of tangible evangelism practices and the number of their new believer baptisms?

RQ4. In what ways, if any, do lead pastors describe the level of importance their churches place on evangelism?

RQ5. In what ways, if any, do lead pastors describe their churches' outreach-oriented ministries and initiatives?

RQ6. In what ways, positively or negatively, do lead pastors perceive that their churches' emphasis on evangelism impacts their churches' new believer baptisms?

Null Hypotheses

H₀1: No relationship exists between the level of importance the source churches place on evangelism and the number of their new believer baptisms.

H₀2: No relationship exists between the level of importance the source churches place on evangelism and the range of their tangible evangelism practices implemented.

H₀3: No relationship exists between the source churches' range of tangible evangelism practices and the number of their new believer baptisms.

Assumptions and Delimitations

As with any study, this study operated on a number of assumptions that allowed the study to yield results and conclusions that can be generalized and applied to churches beyond the churches represented in the study. The assumptions about commonalities and differences between churches and their specific contexts and the delimitations of the study informed the scope and generalization of the study.

Research Assumptions

Central to the study is the assumption that the church's primary focus and concern should be to fulfill its original biblical purpose to advance the gospel and make disciples of all nations (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Matt. 28:18-20). While there are political, social, communal, moral, and developmental reasons why the church is an important institution, this study assumed that any focus other than those directly mandated by the Bible is secondary or tertiary and should be viewed as subservient to the primary focus. The overall condition of the American Church must be analyzed in light of the highest priority as defined in the Bible.

The study assumed that the context of small churches or megachurches is different from those of medium and large churches. The church database that the researcher used to find source churches (USA Churches, n.d.) categorized churches as small (attendance of 50 or fewer people), medium (attendance between 51 and 300 people), large (attendance between 301 and 2,000

people), and mega (attendance more than 2,000 people). The 2020 Faith Communities Today study determined that the median church size was 65 people. This fits within the medium church size as described by USA Churches. Faith Communities Today (2022) also found that 70% of churchgoers attended a church of more than 250 people. This beginning threshold of 250 people is within the medium church range set by USA Churches and potentially stretches into the large church range. Both statistics support this researcher's decision to include medium and large churches in the study. While the large church category includes up to 2000 people, this study invited churches with an average weekly attendance of no more than 1000 people. Only approximately 2.5% of churches have an attendance of more than 1,000 people (Hartford Institute for Religion Research, n.d.). The researcher set a parameter that churches must have 50 to 1,000 people at their weekly worship services for inclusion in the study. The goal was to include churches where the preponderance of churchgoers likely attend (70%) while maintaining a mid-range focus for the study.

The study assumed that the condition of the American Church is specific to the society and context in which it exists. While it is possible that conditions may be similar to other countries around the world, the study focused exclusively on the American Church given its unique and specific history and context.

The study assumed that evangelism in nondenominational, suburban churches differs from that of denominational churches or churches in urban and rural contexts. The study only included churches that fit this criterion and thus did not seek to make any claims about evangelism at churches outside of this context.

Most pertinent to the study is the assumption that the importance of evangelism is different from, but potentially related to, tangible evangelism actions (practices) and results

(conversions). The study explored these three variables both relationally and separately. While these factors may have equal values for individual churches, the study assumed that this was not the only potential outcome for all churches.

The study relied on self-reporting from lead pastors regarding the level of importance churches place on evangelism. The study assumed that the data collected from research participants accurately represent their churches because of the lead pastors' general oversight and knowledge of the churches they lead.

Churches across the United States have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has led to government-mandated closures, decreased in-person attendance, decreased tithing, and other major disruptions to churches (Carrington et al., 2022). The full impact that the pandemic has had on the American Church and evangelism is not known at this time. However, the study assumed that the issue of the pandemic is one that many, if not all, of the surveyed churches have had to address because the effects of the pandemic have affected so many churches across the country. The study's survey responses were likely impacted by the pandemic. One study into the pandemic's impact on the Church has found that 54% of churches have started a new ministry or expanded an existing one in response to the pandemic (Hartford Institute for Religion Research, 2021). The same study also found that 45% of the surveyed churches had made permanent changes to their community outreach. The pandemic has affected the Church's approach to evangelism in potentially long-lasting ways. The study did not focus on the church's response to the pandemic, but the researcher assumed that the pandemic did impact the data.

Delimitations of the Research Design

The study was limited to measuring the relationship between the level of importance churches place on evangelism and the churches' growth. The study focused on the tangible, numerical aspects of church growth rather than the intangible, spiritual, or metaphysical aspects of growth. Specifically, the study counted baptisms as a measure of a church's evangelism effectiveness.

It is possible that there are other, intangible actions that result from placing importance on evangelism. There could be many practices the congregation activates as a result of the church valuing evangelism. However, the study focused primarily on the actions that the church officially initiates or leads in regard to evangelism.

A narrow scope is necessary to understand the aspect of church growth evaluated in this study because the topic of church growth is such a large and diverse field. For the purposes of this study, church growth is synonymous with conversion or baptism levels. As such, the study was not concerned with church growth as a broad topic; rather, the study focused on how many individuals participated in believer baptisms at source churches.

The study only included data from nondenominational suburban churches. This study limited its focus to the adult attendance of nondenominational churches in suburban contexts because the topics of evangelism and church growth will vary across denominations, locations, and demographics.

Definition of Terms

1. *Church*: An individual congregation of members that holds frequent worship gatherings. In addition to gathering for worship, scripture depicts the church as a place where formal discipline can occur, implying accountability for members is made possible only through

repeated gatherings (Howard, 2017). One example of this comes from Paul's letters to the Corinthians. He provided the Corinthians with instruction about how to discipline and even disassociate from members who continued to practice sexual immorality and other sins (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, 1 Cor. 5:1-13). While there are fully functioning churches outside these criteria, this traditional definition of church was used for the study. Additionally, for the study, "Church" is used to refer to the overall Christian fellowship of believers whereas "church" is used to indicate a specific Christian congregation.

2. *Conversion*: The act of becoming part of the Christian faith. The word conversion indicates a shift from one direction to another. "In its most basic sense, the term conversion (Latin *conversio*) signifies a reversal, a change of direction" (Aers & Beckwith, 2018, p. 433). For the purposes of this study, conversion refers to an individual's decision to respond to the gospel message by turning away from a life of sin and turning toward a life of salvation through following Christ (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Acts 2:38, 3:19). In the New Testament, the decision to convert to Christianity is frequently immediately followed by baptism (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Acts 2:38). The study used new believer baptisms as an external metric for measuring conversions because the decision to convert to Christianity is an internal one.

3. *De-churched*: People who were previously affiliated with a Christian church but are no longer. De-churched people have experience with the Christian church but have walked away from the Church. De-churched people can now be part of another religion or have no religious affiliation at all. The population of de-churched people in the United States is rapidly growing as people walk away from church involvement (Barna et al., 2014).

4. *Evangelism*: The act of communicating the gospel, the message that Jesus Christ is Lord, to those outside the Church (Bouma, 2018). Jesus instructed His followers to evangelize to the lost and make them disciples so that they might respond to the gospel message and be saved (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Matt. 28:18-20). Typically, there are two levels to evangelism, relational and programmatic. Relational evangelism occurs on an individual level as people share their faith with those around them, often using the strength of their relationships to communicate the gospel (Onyinah, 2014). Programmatic evangelism takes place on a larger scale when the church makes a group effort to engage in evangelism through events, ministries, and campaigns. This often is done most effectively when the church engages the local community through events or service projects that occur outside of the church campus (Lilly, 2013).

5. *Evangelism practices/actions*: The tangible steps taken in response to the level of importance of evangelism. What the exact actions will look like can vary from church to church and may include establishing new ministries, establishing outreach-specific positions, initiating outreach campaigns, putting on community events, or any other tangible action intentionally designed to put the church in direct contact with the community for the purpose of evangelism.

6. *Lead pastor*: Anyone actively working in the highest pastoral office within a church. This could include positions such as senior pastor, head pastor, lead pastor, and teaching pastor, depending on the specific titles used by the individual churches. For purposes of the study, the lead pastor must be in a position of influence regarding decisions related to evangelism outreach.

7. *New believer baptism*: The act of publicly declaring one's faith in Jesus as Lord through participation in a symbolic washing involving water. As defined in scripture, new believer baptism is a ceremony that symbolizes the death of the new believer's old self and incorporation into Jesus's resurrection (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Col. 2:12).

Physically, the ceremony uses water to wash the individual which symbolizes the Holy Spirit washing away the individual's sin (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Acts 11:16, Luke 3:16). New believer baptism is the tangible response to an individual's decision to submit to Christ's Lordship and become a Christian (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Acts 2:38). This study accepted all methods of baptism including baptism through sprinkling or immersion in water. New believer baptisms were used as the tangible metric for measuring church growth conversion in the study.

8. *Nondenominational*: Christian churches that are not members of a denomination, "a nondenominational church is an independent, Protestant church that has no affiliation or identification with a functional denomination or confessional tradition" (Herbst, 2018, p. 38). Nondenominational churches do not possess a strict shared doctrine or practices but tend to be more progressive and diverse with more contemporary worship and more effective member engagement when compared to denominational churches ("A Study Finds Nondenominational Churches," 2021).

9. *Source churches*: Churches whose lead pastor participated in the study. The source churches all fit the criteria for the study, as described in Chapter Three. The source churches are non-denominational, baptistic, evangelistic, Christian churches in suburban areas of the United States.

10. *Suburban*: Nonrural areas located outside of metropolises. These areas may contain inhabitants of any race, socioeconomic status, or demographic. Historically, these areas have been regions zoned for single-use, filled with White, middle-class families looking for comfort and safety, but in recent years, they have become increasingly diverse (Airgood-Obrycki & Rieger, 2019).

11. *Unchurched*: People who have never been affiliated with a Christian church.

Unchurched people may come from any religious background or no religious affiliation at all.

On average, unchurched people tend to be younger and less educated than church people and are more likely to be male than female (Barna et al., 2014).

Significance of the Study

The Church is entrusted with the responsibility of spreading the message of the gospel not merely to increase church attendance but rather to glorify God through bringing others into the eternal salvation that He offers (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, 2 Cor. 5:11-21).

Simply put, the Church is tasked with an eternally significant task: evangelism. While churches may value evangelism, related tangible actions may be ineffective, minimal, or non-existent.

Existing studies have determined the declining attendance and membership in American Christian churches, but more research is needed to determine how churches can address this problem. This study explored the relationship between the level of importance churches place on evangelism, their evangelism actions, and new believer conversions. These relationships may inform strategies that would address declining attendance and membership in American Christian churches. The more the relationship between importance and action is understood and effective practices are put in place, the better the Church fulfills its responsibility of spreading the message of the gospel.

The study is significant because the gospel affects the eternal destination of people's souls. If the Church does not do its job to reach unbelievers, they cannot hear the message of salvation and receive eternal life. In his letter to the church in Rome, the Apostle Paul makes it clear that the world cannot receive salvation unless the Church acts when he states, "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom

they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?” (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Rom. 10:14). The Church has been entrusted with a significant responsibility and there are consequences if the Church cannot fulfill this charge.

The world will remain unchanged if the church does not fulfill its responsibility to evangelize. The gospel is the only biblical path to salvation (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, John 14:6) and unless the Church takes that message to the rest of the world, those outside of the Church will remain separated from God. Additionally, if the Church fails to evangelize, it will never realize its full potential. It is God’s plan to incorporate people from all nations into one unified body (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Eph. 3:2-6). This is only possible when the Church engages in evangelism and reaches out to the rest of the world.

The Bible also makes it clear that some within the Church will genuinely believe that they are doing God’s work but actually are not doing His will (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Matt. 7:21-23). Jesus said that despite prophesying and doing miracles, these people are not doing the will of God and thus will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven. These verses are terrifying for any Christian, especially those in leadership who will be held to a higher level of accountability (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, James 3:1). It is important for believers to understand when their tangible actions, such as evangelism, are toward God’s will.

In contrast to those who Jesus turns away, He also says that there will be those who did the will of God without even realizing it by providing tangible care for the “least of these” (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Matt. 25:31-46). Church leaders, and churches as a whole, cannot effectively follow Christ without taking tangible actions to make the gospel accessible to outsiders. This study provides leaders with information and research that will equip them to better uphold their God-given responsibility of evangelism.

The study has wide-reaching implications for American society. Declining church membership and Bible literacy among the next generation will impact the future of American society because Christianity has been so ingrained in American culture for most of the country's history. Religious values shape public life (Welker et al., 2020). If the Church's influence continues to decline, that may allow for other influences in American society that are contrary to Christian living. Conversely, if the Church reverses the current trend by engaging in active evangelism, its influence could be a predominant force to shape American society.

Summary of the Design

The study used a mixed-methods research design to understand the relationship between churches' self-perceived emphasis on evangelism and their measurable church growth through conversion. The research design was implemented through the composition, distribution, and analysis of a two-part research survey of selected participants.

The first part of the study was a quantitative research survey that focused on determining the strength of the relationships, if any, between the variables. The main variables are: (a) importance churches place on evangelism, (b) tangible acts of evangelism, and (c) new believer conversions or baptisms. The second part of the study was qualitative and used the External Focus Follow-up Questionnaire (EFFQ) to better understand the factors contributing to the findings determined in the quantitative portion of the research process.

Research participants were lead pastors at churches in contexts that met the parameters of the study. These participants were chosen because of their knowledge of and access to the data needed to respond to the study's questionnaires, such as the number of evangelism actions taken, the number of new believer baptisms performed, and insight into the source churches' decision-making process. Potential participants received invitations by email to participate in the study

(Appendix A; Appendix B). For the quantitative portion of the study, respondents were screened against the study's participation criteria. Selection for the qualitative portion of the study was based on participation in the quantitative portion of the study. All of the participants in the quantitative portion of the study received an invitation to participate in the qualitative portion of the study.

The lead pastors represented nondenominational, baptistic, evangelistic, Christian churches of average attendance size located in suburban areas in the United States. For the purposes of the study, "average" attendance size was defined as churches whose average weekly attendance falls between 50 and 1,000 adults (Faith Communities Today, 2022). Focusing on nondenominational churches allows for varied experiences between denominations.

The study yielded results that may apply to nondenominational, baptistic, evangelistic, Christian churches in suburban contexts. For the purpose of this study, a suburban context is defined as churches located in primarily residential or mixed-use communities outside of urban or metropolitan areas.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Evangelizing is one of the most important responsibilities of the Church, as illustrated through the Great Commission (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Matt. 28:18-20). However, declining church attendance in the United States suggests that churches are failing to fulfill this command. Chapter Two provides an overview of the existing literature relevant to the study. Biblical passages regarding the need for salvation, the theology of evangelism, and the relationship between salvation and incorporation into the Church provide the theological framework for the study. The theoretical framework for the study examines the internal and external causes for the decline in church attendance, the effect of the decline in attendance, and the lack of behavioral integrity that leaders experience during the decision-making process.

Theological Framework for the Study

The Church's gospel message and biblically mandated participation in evangelism are foundationally essential because the study's research purpose is to examine the Church's external focus or evangelism. Through humanity's disobedience to God, the world has fallen into sin and needs a Savior who is not tainted by sin (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Rom. 5:12-21). Sin alienated mankind from God (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Gen. 3), but Jesus came to provide salvation through His life, death, and resurrection (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, John 3:16-21). Following Jesus's ministry, the Church is entrusted with the responsibility to continue the ministry of reconciliation (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, 2 Cor. 5:11-21). The Church must use its words and deeds to convey the message of the gospel and to invite the world into a restored relationship with God and into the fellowship of believers known as the Church (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Matt. 28:18-20).

Theology of Sin and the Need for Salvation

Foundational to the research purpose is the issue of sin and humanity's need for a savior. As the Creator of the Universe, God rules over creation as its sovereign Lord with the authority to dictate His standard of righteousness. When humanity disobeyed God and acted against His instruction, committing the first sin, humankind became separated from God (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Gen. 3:1-24). As the result of sin, mankind earned God's condemnation and punishment, and began to die physically and spiritually (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Rom. 5:12-14). Sin always results in death because God is the sustainer and source of life for His creation, and sin separates creation from God. "Sin is rebellion against God's very being, against his explicit word, against his wise and ordered reign. It results in the disorder of the creation and in the spiritual and physical death of God's image bearers" (Morgan, 2013, p. 20). Without an atonement for its sin, humanity is condemned to experience separation from God, leading to physical and spiritual death.

While the Old Testament Law prescribes animal sacrifices, the shedding of innocent blood, as a means of temporary appeasement for God's wrath, no amount of sacrifices or righteous deeds could ever fully take away the stain of sin (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Isa. 64:6, Heb. 10:1-10). Without the ability to save itself from death and condemnation, humanity was in need of a Savior who was unmarred by sin to bring repentance, conversion, and purification so that it could once again have access to restored relationship with God (O'Collins, 2007). God promised to send a Savior who would offer up His own life as a guilt offering to blot out sin and bring mankind into a restored relationship with God (Harmon, 2020; *New International Version*, 1978/2005, Rom. 3:21-26). In Isaiah 53, God promised to send a suffering servant who would offer up his life as a sin offering (*New International Version*,

1978/2005, Isa. 53:10) and intercede for transgressors (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Isa. 53:12). Salvation through the sacrifice of this promised Messiah became humanity's only route for acquittal from God's wrath and adoption into eternal life (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, John 14:6, Acts 2:36-38).

Theology of Salvation and Conversion

The research purpose of the study was to examine the Church's external focus in communicating the gospel of salvation, which was brought to fruition in response to sin. This long-awaited Messiah came to earth in the form of Jesus (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, John 1:1-14, 4:25-26). The Apostle Paul attested that Jesus's resurrection obtained salvation from sin and death for those who submit to His Lordship and follow Him (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Phil. 3:9-11). This message of salvation from sin and reconciliation with God is the gospel that is at the core of Christianity.

According to the Apostle Paul, the gospel of salvation was not an isolated event but rather God's work throughout history which culminated in Jesus's redemptive work on the cross (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Eph. 1:1-10). "Paul's theology is best understood in terms of a narrative that provides a turning point in the revelation of salvation history coupled with a gospel that in turn reveals a participatory and indwelling soteriology in God's plan to bring creation to its goal" (Brown, 2012, p. 266). The message of the gospel is about more than just individual salvation and is part of the metanarrative of God's relationship with humanity.

Salvation is most broadly defined as the phenomenon of God reconciling humanity back into relationship with Himself by the removal of the sin that would separate humanity from Him through Jesus's redemptive work on the cross (Holcomb, 2017). Reconciliation with God requires the individual to respond to the salvation invitation through the acknowledgment of

Jesus as Lord and the repentance from sin. On the day of Pentecost, Peter preached a sermon that proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah to a crowd of thousands (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Acts 2:14-36). When the crowd asked what they should do, Peter instructed them to respond by repenting and being baptized (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Acts 2:38).

In the book of Romans, the Apostle Paul provided the church with instructions about conversion and evangelism. He revealed the process by which people can convert and be saved:

If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved...for,
 “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Rom. 10:9-10, 13)

Salvation comes only through the declaration of Jesus as Lord and belief in His resurrection.

Paul then explained that because accepting salvation requires a response to the gospel, evangelism is necessary so that individuals may hear the gospel message and respond to it (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Rom. 10:14-15). The rest of the book of Romans and other passages contain instructions about how the church is supposed to live as a result of conversion. But salvation comes from proclaiming Jesus’s lordship and belief in His resurrection.

Theology of Evangelism

As a result of God’s sovereignty and humanity’s sin, God has made salvation possible through His gospel and uses evangelism, the communication of the gospel message, as one of the primary methods for extending this invitation to humanity. For that reason, the study focused on the effectiveness of churches’ evangelism. The theology of evangelism involves the concepts of God’s sovereignty, humanity’s sinfulness, the incarnation of a Savior in Jesus Christ, the

indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and the resulting fellowship of unified believers, as revealed through scripture (Coleman, 1980). Evangelism uses the Word of God to communicate the history of salvation (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Acts 2:14-41) and extend the invitation to those who have not yet acknowledged Jesus as Lord and repented from their sins (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Acts 8:26-40). As seen in the Bible, evangelism often revolves around the proclamation that Jesus is the Messiah who has come to save the world from sin (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Acts 4:8-12).

Eternal life is the result of believing the gospel message (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, John 3:16). Some have taken it upon themselves to alter the evangelism message to make it more appealing because of the weighty stakes associated with salvation and evangelism. However, it is not the responsibility of the evangelist to convince the hearer through cunning or human wisdom. Rather, it is the evangelist's responsibility to allow the Holy Spirit to preach the message through them. "The evangelist must plant the gospel seed, without which no one can be saved (Rom. 10:14-17). Then he must trust God with the results, since only the Spirit can give life (John 3:5-8)" (MacArthur, 2011, p. 8). Through His parables, Jesus made it clear that many would reject the invitation to salvation. In the Parable of the Sower, Jesus illustrated that there would be some who accept the gospel and yield fruit while others would reject the message (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Luke 8:4-15). When Jesus sent out the disciples to evangelize, He prepared them to handle those who rejected the gospel (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Matt. 10:1-20). The disciples were responsible for evangelizing, but they could not control whether or not their message was accepted.

By acknowledging Jesus as Lord and entering into the Kingdom of God, the individual is also, by nature, entering into a community of fellow believers on earth who comprise God's

Kingdom (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, 1 Cor. 12:12-27). The New Testament depicts participation in the Church as the expected response to their decision to follow Christ.

Passages such as Peter's sermon on Pentecost illustrate the role that the church plays in the life of a believer. Forming a community of believers was the natural response for those who responded to Peter's sermon (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Acts 2:41-47). This community helped the believers mature in their discipleship while also attracting outsiders to join the community. The author of Hebrews commanded believers to meet regularly in order to encourage each other toward good deeds (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Heb. 10:24-25). These passages show that discipleship was meant to occur within the context of community. Other than limited exceptions, the Bible typically depicts those who accept the gospel as becoming part of local churches.

Biblical Methods of Evangelism

Some of the clearest and most direct models for biblical evangelism come from Jesus's ministry. Preaching the salvation message that the Kingdom of God had come was a central aspect of His ministry (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Mark 1:15). Jesus modeled biblical evangelism in both His personal, and individual conversations as well as His public ministry.

Jesus's Approach to Individual Evangelism

In His private conversations with individuals, Jesus often adapted His evangelism message based upon the hearer. For example, when talking to Nicodemus the Pharisee, Jesus made allusions to the Old Testament (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, John 3:14-15) and challenged the pride and self-importance of the Pharisee (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, John 3:10-12). However, when Jesus spoke with a Samaritan woman at a well, Jesus used

prophetic knowledge of the woman's history (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, John 4:17-18) and direct revelation to reveal that He was the Messiah (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, John 4:25-26). The essential tenets of the gospel are present in both conversations, but the presentation of the content is different based on the context.

After Jesus's ascension, His followers continued to practice this form of individual evangelism. For example, Philip engaged an Ethiopian eunuch in a one-on-one conversation about scripture. The man did not have a deep understanding of scripture and needed someone to explain it to him (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Acts 8:30-31). Philip was able to adapt his evangelistic message to accommodate the eunuch's level of understanding and lead him to salvation (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Acts 8:34-35).

During His ministry, Jesus provided His followers with an example of relational evangelism to follow (Onyiah, 2014). Rather than developing one singular method or message, He showed His followers how to tailor their evangelism approach to meet the individual needs and background of the hearer while still presenting the essential elements of the gospel.

Jesus's Approach to Programmatic Evangelism

Jesus's ministry also included examples of a more structured, programmatic approach to evangelism. Programmatic evangelism is group ministry efforts that engage the community in outreach events and evangelism activities that will meet their specific needs (Hale, 2015). These efforts often are based in campaigns or themes. Many of Jesus's sermons were to groups and contained an evangelistic message with the theme of calling people to repent of their sins and follow God (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Matt. 9:35-38, Luke 8:1-18, 13:1-5, 15:1-31). Jesus categorized His public ministry as one that centered around seeking and saving the lost (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Mark 2:17, Luke 10:19).

The disciples made this an essential part of their approach to evangelism, as demonstrated by Peter in his first sermon following Jesus's ascension. Peter's message revolved around evangelism as he called his hearers to repent and be baptized (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Acts 2:14-41). Similarly, the Apostle Paul acknowledged that he could have taught the churches many different things that would have made him appear wise and eloquent, but he instead chose only to preach the evangelistic message of Christ and Christ crucified (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, 1 Cor. 2:1-5).

Jesus also sent His followers out with the explicit goal of evangelizing. He taught His disciples to practice programmatic evangelism by venturing out in groups of two with the sole intention of spreading the gospel message (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Luke 9:1-6, 10:1-17). Jesus showed His followers how to enter into cities and engage the community in evangelism.

The early Church followed this model after they were driven out of Jerusalem by persecution. The Church engaged in programmatic evangelism, spreading the gospel in each community that they entered (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Acts 8:4-5).

Relationship Between Salvation and the Church

Although some portray the invitation to salvation as a private and personal decision (Bennett-Carpenter, 2017), it is also inherently communal. The gospel is not just the removal of sin but also reconciliation with God. In the same way that salvation came tangibly and visibly, so too does reconciliation. Jørgensen (2014) says, "But for reconciliation to be genuine, it must be tangible, visible and concrete" (para. 9). The church is where the reconciliation between man and God, as well as between man and man, becomes tangible and visible. While sin has fractured and impacted people's relationships with God and with each other, the gospel message has reconciled

those relationships. The church is the venue where reconciliation is demonstrated in a community defined by the love its members have for each other (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, 1 John 3:11-24, John 13:34-35). The local church provides reconciled individuals with the opportunity to demonstrate and practice their restored relationships with God through corporate worship as well as their new identity as citizens of the Kingdom of God through fellowship as they become members of the Body of Christ.

In his letters to the churches, the Apostle Paul repeatedly emphasized that the unified church was the revelation of the mystery of the gospel, inextricably connecting the gospel and the Church (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Eph. 2:14-20, 3:7-13). The mystery of the gospel is not just about one's reconciliation with God but also one's grafting into the unified Church regardless of background (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Rom. 11:17-21). The Church is an essential component of evangelism because the natural result of accepting the gospel is incorporation into the Church, despite the tendency to view the Church and evangelism in isolation from one another (Johnson, 2013). Church participation is portrayed as the natural response to salvation and the prescribed path to spiritual maturity.

The Church is born out of the mass evangelism and conversion of thousands of Jewish believers on the day of Pentecost (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Acts 2). Pentecost, or the Festival of Weeks, was observed seven weeks after Passover and celebrated God's provision of the harvest (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Ex. 34:22-26). On the first Pentecost after Jesus's resurrection, ten days after His ascension back into heaven, the Apostles received the Holy Spirit (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Acts 2:1-4). The Holy Spirit used Peter and the Apostles to preach an evangelistic sermon to a crowd of Jewish people who were in Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Acts 2:14-40). As a

result of this sermon, three thousand people accepted the gospel and became the first Christian community (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Acts 2:41). The logical behavior for those who had experienced the transformational power of the gospel was to come together to form a community centered around the study of scripture, worship, and fellowship. From that point forward, the acceptance of salvation was usually followed by participation in the Church. While the Church is not the source of justification, with salvation coming through faith in Jesus alone, the Church is a crucial part of the sanctification process and is the setting where the believer can live out their new identity (Langham, 2018). Similarly, some historical scholars, such as Thomas Wilson, have asserted that while the church does not replace justification, the church is a necessary complement to justification (Cornwall, 1993). Simply put, the Church is an inherent aspect of the gospel and the invitation to salvation is also an invitation to participate in the Church.

The Church's Responsibility to Evangelize

During His earthly ministry, Jesus traveled from town to town proclaiming the message that the Kingdom of God had arrived and salvation was near, calling people to follow Him and become His disciples. As the purpose of discipleship is for the disciple to become like his teacher (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Luke 6:40), this mission would become the responsibility of the disciples. Jesus's final command to His disciples, the Great Commission, was to go forth and make disciples of all nations, teaching them and baptizing them in Jesus's name (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Matt. 28:18-20). The Great Commission represents a continual cycle in which disciples make more disciples who in turn make more disciples. The Church has received the mandate to take the gospel to all nations and the best context for engaging the community in evangelism and discipleship is the church (Alawode,

2020; McGraw, 2018). McGraw asserts that the church is the ideal context for evangelism because it is where preaching occurs and preaching is a path to knowing Christ, making it possible to draw near to Him. Through His ministry and final teachings, Jesus made it clear that it is the responsibility of the Church to continue His ministry by taking the gospel message out to the world.

Despite Jesus's direct instruction, the early Church, made up mostly of Jewish converts, did not immediately begin evangelizing. In the Old Testament, God's people, the nation of Israel, were charged with living as an example of Godliness to the Gentile nations around them (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Isa. 42:6). The Israelites were often more concerned with resisting assimilation (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Dan. 3) than they were with evangelizing because being carried away into exile was one of the defining moments of their history. As a result, Israel focused more on maintaining their beliefs and practices than trying to spread the message of salvation through outreach.

Coming from a background that prioritized fighting assimilation over evangelizing, the early converts to Christianity struggled to embrace the practice of evangelism. They were launched into evangelism by divine intervention and the teachings of Peter and Paul (Abraham, 1994). The early Church initially evangelized to other Jewish people exclusively, beginning on the day of Pentecost (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Acts 2). The early Church initially excluded Gentiles and Samaritans from participating in the Church because it was against Jewish law to associate with them. It was not until Peter received a vision from God that they began evangelizing to the rest of the world, including Gentiles and Samaritans (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Acts 10:9-16). The Church was then divided on the logistics of evangelism, primarily whether or not Gentile converts would need to adhere to the Jewish law. At the

Council of Jerusalem, Peter argued for the Gentile's inclusion in the Church because of his vision and the work of the Holy Spirit and Paul informed the council of the work that God had done among the Gentiles (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Acts 15:1-12). The council concluded that the Gentile converts did not need to follow the Jewish law and that the church needed to avoid making it unnecessarily difficult for Gentiles to come to God (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Acts 15:13-35). This council defined the parameters for early evangelism by identifying who could become part of the Church and the process by which Gentiles and Samaritans could convert to Christianity.

For the Apostle Paul, reconciliation was the gift of status as a New Creation by God, an unmerited gift that the Church is then meant to invite the rest of the world to accept (Katongole, 2013). Believers have the responsibility of carrying forward the ministry of reconciliation so that God can implore others to be reconciled through the gospel message presented by the evangelist (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, 2 Cor. 5:11-21). For those who have experienced the life transformation of salvation and reconciliation through the gospel, the command to take the gospel and present it to others is clear.

Paul considered his ministry of evangelism important, deeming it his only ambition in life (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Acts 20:24). The Church has many responsibilities to uphold as it models the Kingdom of God, as detailed in scripture. Evangelizing and guiding others toward the message of salvation is among the most important of these responsibilities due to its potential ramifications. Jesus reserves some of His harshest criticism for those who are commissioned by God but fail to act and build up His Kingdom (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Matt. 25:14-30). The Church's responsibility to continue the ministry of reconciliation is significant because the eternal destination of souls is impacted by the gospel.

Relationship Between Belief and Action

The specific commands within the Great Commission reveal that evangelism is more than a value or a belief. The Great Commission requires action and relationship. Jesus commanded the disciples to:

Go therefore 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 observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age. (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Matt. 28:19-20)

Jesus's commands involved the disciples taking action, forming relationships, and investing in others. This scripture implies that evangelism is more than just words and beliefs and is also the holistic communication of the gospel message.

The example of evangelism provided in scripture, by Jesus and the Apostles, is one that requires action, sacrifice, and investment, "This does not rule out preaching and conveying information, but it puts it in the context of speaking truth in our relationships with others in order to open people's hearts to a relationship with God" (Murray, 2013, p. 39). To follow Christ's example of evangelism, the evangelist must form relationships and model Christlikeness in those relationships by loving, serving, and teaching.

James makes it clear that faith and action cannot be separated and must be held in tandem (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, James 2:14-26). Faith without actions is dead and action without faith is empty. He asserts that it is worthless to encourage and instruct without taking action or meeting physical needs. Christians are called to balance both the proclamation and embodiment of the gospel message through word and through deed. James's instruction indicates that believers can tend to favor one aspect over the other, such as offering a word of peace to

someone without meeting their physical need. However, the gospel message is meant to incorporate both faith and action, “Practice and proclamation are the two hands of the gospel. Christians sometimes try to live a one-handed lifestyle, but a complete Christian lifestyle requires both hands” (Borthwick, 2015, p. 26). Evangelism, like faith, must be both practice and proclamation.

Christian evangelism cannot be just good deeds without the life-giving message of hope. While preaching the gospel with words can be intimidating or uncomfortable, Christians cannot shy away from sharing the story of salvation with those who are far from God. In his instruction to Timothy, Paul commanded him to proclaim the message and always be prepared to explain his faith and actions (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, 2 Tim. 4:1-2). It is not enough for believers to simply do good deeds and hope that the recipients will be able to figure out the gospel message on their own. The Church is entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation and must preach the gospel message.

The scripture provided implies that it is not enough just to value evangelism without taking tangible actions to embody the gospel message. For disciples to fully imitate the example of Christ, they must be willing to invest the time and effort to take tangible actions and form genuine relationships, building up respect and earning the ability to speak into people’s lives. James makes it clear that faith or knowledge alone are useless but are made complete when paired with action (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, James 2:14-26). The Church cannot fulfill its evangelistic responsibilities by simply preaching the gospel with words or never leaving the church campus to go out into the community with the message. The Church is expected to make its faith and message known through the combination of word and deed. For

these reasons, this research studied the level of importance churches place on evangelism (i.e., beliefs or values), their evangelism actions, and ultimately, the results of those actions.

Summary of Theological Framework

This section provided the theological framework and context for a study of evangelism. As the study examined the Church's external focus (evangelism), understanding the theological implications of evangelism and the ecclesiastical mandates are foundational aspects of this phenomenon. Humanity has become separated from God as a result of mankind's disobedience and sin (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Gen. 3:1-24). This separation leads to disorder and death (Morgan, 2013) because God is the sustainer of life for His creation (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Job 33:4, Isa. 46:4, John 5:26). Without atonement for its sin, humanity is condemned to experience physical and spiritual death. The Old Testament Law and system of animal sacrifices were able to temporarily appease God's wrath but could not remove humanity's sin (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Isa. 64:6, Heb. 10:1-10). This necessitated a Savior who could remove humanity's sin and lead mankind into restored relationship with God (Harmon, 2020). Through Jesus's life, death, and resurrection, He obtained salvation from sin and death for His followers (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Phil. 3:9-11). Individuals are able to accept this salvation by receiving the gospel message and responding to it through acknowledgment of Jesus's Lordship and repentance from sin (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Acts 2:38, Rom. 10:9). This history of salvation provides the context for the importance of evangelism.

Jesus commanded His disciples to evangelize by taking this gospel message of salvation to the rest of the world (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Matt. 28:18-20). The Church acts as the Body of Christ (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, 1 Cor. 12:12-27) that is entrusted

with the ministry of reconciliation (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, 2 Cor. 5:11-21). Jesus's ministry provided the Church with models for how to engage in effective evangelism. The writings of Paul and the other New Testament authors encouraged the churches to remain dedicated to fulfilling the responsibility to evangelize. Understanding Jesus's examples of evangelism and the New Testament's instruction regarding evangelism are essential for a study of modern evangelism. This context should inform the modern Church's approach to evangelism.

Theoretical Framework for the Study

Social realities do not reflect the theological intentions and mission of the Church, necessitating a variety of theories that attempt to describe and explain evangelism. There are several theoretical concerns that surfaced in the review of literature related to a study of evangelism by the Church. These concerns include: (a) declining church attendance in the United States, (b) internal and external causes of the declining attendance, (c) the effect of the decline in attendance, and (d) the lack of behavioral integrity that leaders experience during the decision-making process. These theoretical aspects must be analyzed and evaluated. These concerns must be considered when examining the external focus of the Church and their impact on evangelism.

Decline in Evangelistic Church Attendance in the United States

Considering that the research purpose of this project was to examine the external focus of the Church, the recent effectiveness of the Church to reach those outside of the Church with its evangelistic message is one of the most important aspects of evangelism. As church attendance continues to decline in the United States, Christian researchers have focused primarily on the church's retention rate, noting the increasing number of church members who are leaving the church (Saad, 2017). This focus includes those who have or have had some church affiliation. In addition to de-churched people (those who were formerly part of a church but left the church),

churches must also reach the unchurched (those who have never been a part of a church).

Conversion, as it relates to this study, refers to an individual's decision to respond to evangelism by turning away from a life of sin and turning toward a life of salvation through following Christ. Primarily, this study focuses on unchurched individuals.

Unchurched people are prime targets for evangelism. In a recent study, the Pew Research Center conducted a survey that revealed the rate at which those who were raised without a religious affiliation remained religiously unaffiliated (2015). The study revealed that 53% of those raised as religiously unaffiliated as children, still identify as religiously unaffiliated in adulthood. These data indicate that most of those who are raised outside of the Church will remain outside of the Church. The Church has emphasized retention rate while neglecting outreach to the unchurched. Both retention and outreach are necessary for the Church to grow.

The Pew Research Center survey also indicates that the number of religiously unaffiliated people will continue to grow because millennials are holding onto their status as unchurched at unprecedented rates. Additionally, the number of religiously unaffiliated millennials is increasing at a faster rate than older generations. This means that in addition to those who were raised unchurched and remain so into adulthood, millennials who were raised religious are becoming de-churched. In order for the Church to address this issue and effectively evangelize to this demographic, it must understand the factors that contribute to millennials choosing to remain or become unchurched and de-churched.

One factor contributing to the growing number of religiously unaffiliated millennials is the tendency for millennials to be more socially disengaged than previous generations. Sumpter describes millennials as less likely to naturally seek out community on their own; the source acknowledges that millennials who do become part of the church identify community as the

primary reason for their continued church membership (2019). Intentional outreach and discipleship inside and outside the church may be the only effective way to reach millennials because community is the primary reason that millennials will regularly attend church, yet they are less likely than previous generations to naturally seek out community (Parrish, 2021). The data indicate that traditional outreach methods, such as mass-distributed invitations, will not be as effective with millennials as they will be with other, older demographics because of their desire for community (Hale, 2015). While older generations may have been willing to visit a church or attend a church-sponsored event because they were seeking a community, millennials must instead be invited into community by means of something that they are looking for, such as meaningful relationships (Sumpter, 2019).

Beyond the broad factors that influence church attendance, there are several important external and internal reasons why churches are ineffective at reaching and retaining unchurched and de-churched people. Understanding these reasons will increase understanding about the Church's engagement with evangelism.

External Causes

Evangelism compels the Church to interact with society, inherently encountering variables outside of its control. This section reviews two societal influences that impact evangelism efforts.

Secularization Theory. As society and technology continue to increase, Secularization Theory became one of the prevalent theories about how religion would relate to society. For much of the early to mid-19th century, Secularization Theory asserted the notion that industrialization would lead to religion's decline in societal influence until it disappeared from the public sphere entirely (Turner, 2019). Although history does not support Secularization

Theory (Furseth, 2021), there are still aspects of the theory that influence a modern understanding of the relationship between the Church and society in the United States.

Even though Secularization Theory has been largely disproved, recent research reveals that it does not affect religious belief and does have a negative impact on religious service attendance (Dhima & Golder, 2020). As religion becomes less connected with and accepted in society, individuals are less likely to practice it in a formal, corporate way, even if they are just as likely as ever to hold personal religious beliefs. While this has implications for society at large, in the context of the church, this information indicates that the issue is one of practice rather than belief. Society is not becoming less moral or spiritual as some Christian alarmists may fear. Rather, the problem is the diminishing connection to the organized church. For the purposes of evangelism, this means that the Church must show outsiders the importance of spirituality or religion while demonstrating the value of the church affiliation.

Social Norms. As Christianity and participation in the organized church become less of a social norm, the Church's need to evangelize increases. Evangelism is one of the few tasks that the Church does as a compassionate countercultural force in a postmodern environment (Burdick, 2018). As society becomes increasingly fragmented, socially disengaged, and drawn to a subjective view of truth, evangelism is the Church's opportunity to use its gospel of hope to offer a lifestyle and worldview that is contrary to the rest of the world. This countercultural identity may galvanize a movement, causing the movement to grow rather than shrink. When the Church does not align with culture or even experiences persecution, the commitment as a result of the personal cost required of the leader can lead to greater commitment from the rest of the church (Kipfer, 2017).

Internal Causes

While there are reasons and forces outside of the Church that contribute to the decline of church attendance in the United States, there also are internal factors that contribute to the decline. This section discusses three factors within the Church that impact evangelism.

Misunderstanding of Evangelism. The Church tends to divorce discipleship from evangelism. The division between the Church's identity as disciples and its mission of evangelism has led to inefficiency in retention and outreach (Moser & Nel, 2019). In far too many churches, the process and source of discipleship are rooted in instruction and obedience while the message of evangelism is reduced purely to matters of heaven and hell (Dodson, 2012). Evangelism is mistakenly seen as the invitation to make the one-time decision to accept salvation, rather than the invitation to participate in the Church as discussed in the theological framework of this study. This false dichotomy within some churches leads to the belief that one must be valued over the other, rather than valuing both discipleship and evangelism as mutually beneficial practices that result from the gospel. By separating evangelism from discipleship, the Church is left with a watered-down, incomplete message related only to salvation and devoid of connection to a faith community. As such, the message is not as effective as it could be if it were properly paired with the full gospel, which includes connection to the Church.

Seeker-friendly Worship Services. Contributing to the decline in church attendance is the rise in popularity of seeker-friendly churches. These churches often attempt to deliver exciting and culturally appealing services by using contemporary music, and multimedia presentations while downplaying moral judgments, doctrine, and formal ceremonies in favor of subjective rewards of faith, privilege experience, and casual experiences (Marty, 2001). These churches recognize that outsiders may not be familiar or comfortable with many aspects of

Christianity and choose to downplay the high-context elements of church while highlighting the aspects that are more accessible, such as the music. In an effort to present the world with a more palatable version of the gospel, some churches have inadvertently abandoned their responsibilities to the uncompromised truth, thereby presenting their hearers with a weaker and ineffective message and incomplete impression of the church (MacArthur, 2010). The incomplete message that seeker-friendly churches preach is not as effective as the biblical gospel message because manmade messages cannot replace God's original design.

Ineffective Leadership. Ultimately, the responsibility to overcome and correct the internal and external obstacles that the church faces falls upon the leader. An under-researched yet critical factor in the decline of the American Church is ineffective leadership, characterized by resistance to change, autocratic leadership style, hypocrisy, lack of stability, and ethical neutrality (Fowler et al., 2020). Like many organizations, the church is greatly affected by the character and behavior of the leader. When leadership is ineffective, the church itself becomes less effective (Global Leadership Network, 2017). Additionally, when the world sees church leaders demonstrating hypocrisy, moral failure, or apathy towards relevant ethical issues, it negatively impacts the confidence in organized religion and the Church as a whole (McCarthy, 2019). Less confidence in the leader contributes to the decline in church attendance. If the Church is going to effectively address the internal obstacles to evangelism that it is facing, it must begin with strong and authentic church leadership.

Effect of Decline in Church Attendance

The research purpose of examining the Church's external focus is not merely a conceptual or academic exercise, it also has real-world implications. This trend of steady decline in church attendance in the United States impacts both those inside and outside the Church. The

American Church is not evangelizing effectively. As a result, only 2.2% of churches are growing by conversion, leading to a decline in church attendance which causes a decrease in the perceived value of faith in everyday life, a decline in the Church's influence in society, and spiritual burnout for church leaders (Dandridge, 2020). While there has been attention and research devoted to the secularization of society's impact on the Church, the Church's decrease in attendance likewise contributes to the secularization of society, forming a vicious cycle. When churches stop effectively evangelizing, they begin to lose their ability to impact the community and eventually burn out their leadership. Considering the important role that the church is called to play in the community and in the lives of its members, the church must effectively evangelize.

Beyond issues of salvation, church attendance has been shown to improve mental health and cognitive function (Reyes-Ortiz et al., 2008), positive physical health (Arredondo et al., 2005), and increased civic activity (Beyerlein et al., 2011). The Church provides numerous tangible services to the community through non-profit organizations, volunteering, and education, among other avenues. As the Church fails to effectively evangelize and declines in attendance, influence, and resources, the services it provides to the community will also inevitably decline, affecting those who receive the services. For example, a recent study at Baylor University found that nearly 60% of all emergency shelter beds for the homeless are provided by faith-based organizations (Johnson et al., 2017). If the church continues to decline, the community will lose its valuable charitable services.

Lack of Behavioral Integrity in Leadership Decision Making

The study examined the disconnection between value and action in the Church as it relates to evangelism. While a church may value evangelism, for instance, it may not have an active evangelism outreach ministry. The study included the hypothesis that no strong

relationship exists between the level of importance churches place on evangelism and their tangible evangelism actions. This lack of a relationship between the level of importance churches place on evangelism and their tangible evangelism actions indicates a disconnection between value and action. As long as disconnection exists, the Church's evangelism efforts are likely to be ineffective.

For various reasons, having an intellectual understanding and a conviction or belief does not always translate into tangible action. This results in a lack of behavioral integrity, that can address the growing problem of the church's inefficiency in evangelism. The leader must align belief and actions in order to gain behavioral integrity.

A lack of behavioral integrity can be exaggerated by a lack of awareness that the dichotomy. The theory of Intention and Behavior Gap describes this issue by identifying contributing factors such as diminished awareness of one's own emotions and behavior, lack of awareness of one's intention or desired outcomes, and the inability to change behavior (Raimundo, 2020). Bridging the gap between belief and action can be difficult when the individual is not aware of the disconnection and is not actively attempting to address it. When the individual is unaware of the gap, it is far more unlikely that the behavior will correct itself.

A lack of behavioral integrity may also be a response to the pressure of expectations, either real or imagined, that one experiences. The Abilene Paradox describes the phenomenon in which internalized peer pressure, such as negative fantasies or the fear of isolation, causes individuals and teams to act in a manner that is contrary to the way they genuinely believe (Harvey, 1988). The Paradox is often characterized by members who approve of group decisions out of a desire to avoid conflict or disagreement by preserving the status quo. This desire to avoid upsetting the established norm could cause pastors to work against their own beliefs, even

if they are passionate about evangelism, in order to avoid eliciting a negative reaction from the staff or congregation of the church. Essentially, pastors may prevent themselves from implementing evangelism-related changes out of a desire to avoid conflict.

For the Christian leader, the lack of behavioral integrity can result in cognitive dissonance, as there is a mismatch between morals, internal values or beliefs, ethics, and the behavior of the leader, (Jones-Carmack, 2020). Addressing cognitive dissonance and gaining behavioral integrity is not a uniform process. The leader's ability to change the behavior to match the belief is dependent on factors such as the cost associated with change. Harmon-Jones says, "Resistance to change of a behavioral cognitive element depends on the extent of pain or loss that must be endured and the satisfaction obtained from the behavior" (2019, p. 4).

Evangelism can be a difficult and time-consuming process that can require evangelists to put themselves in uncomfortable situations. When this cost is greater than the satisfaction that the evangelist will receive from evangelizing, then the gap of cognitive dissonance can be difficult to overcome.

Summary of Theoretical Framework

This study provided a theoretical framework and context for a study of evangelism. The theoretical framework of the study helped explain the discrepancy between the biblical mandate to evangelize and the social realities of the Church. There are factors inside and outside of the Church that are contributing to the decline in attendance. These factors include secularization, changing societal norms, the false dichotomy between evangelism and discipleship, an increase in seeker-friendly worship services, and ineffective church leadership. The decline in church attendance has real-world implications for American society because churches provide tangible services to the community through non-profit organizations, volunteering, and education. Also

contributing to the ineffectiveness of the Church's evangelism is the lack of behavioral integrity in leadership decision-making. For various reasons, the beliefs and values of leaders do not necessarily translate into tangible action. Establishing the theoretical issues facing the Church is important for understanding the current state of evangelism because it establishes the real-world implications of the Church's failures and successes.

Related Literature

The study's focus is evangelism by the church. The study was primarily concerned with the relationships between: (a) the level of importance churches place on evangelism, (b) evangelism actions taken as a result of that value, and (c) the subsequent impact that those actions have on the churches' growth through conversion. There are multiple subtopics relating to the main research purpose that deserve consideration. These subtopics directly influence the overall perspective on evangelism by the church, and a discussion of them is included in this section.

The Church's Resistance to Change

In addition to issues related to the leader and their own cognitive and attitudinal barriers to change, some scholars have illustrated the specific resistance to change that exists within churches. Church culture, in many settings, has become defined by resistance to change. Some congregants cling to deeply held assumptions, beliefs, and values that do not align with the vision of the leader (Richardson, 2020). This creates a divide between what the church claims to believe and what it actually puts into practice. Leaders are more dependent on the will of their followers to implement change because the church is comprised of volunteers and unpaid congregants in a way that most organizations are not. If the congregation does not choose to align with the leader, the leader's ability to implement change will be limited.

Part of the reason for this disconnect is the rising trend of a consumer mindset in the church, which influences congregants to form a self-centered view of the church and an entitled expectation (Braley, 2021). In essence, the existing literature attributes some of the church's resistance to change to a disconnect between the congregation and leadership as well as a self-centered consumer mindset.

Existing research reveals additional insight into factors that may address the church's resistance to change. Research has shown that in non-profit organizations, the leader's humility and positive relationship with volunteers can help mitigate attitudinal barriers to change (Williams, 2009). Change requires giving up the familiar for the unfamiliar and having a trustworthy and humble leader at the helm can help congregants feel more comfortable making changes. The research indicates that church leaders must use the strength of their relationship with the congregation to inspire them to embrace the proposed changes.

Similarly, the related literature illustrates the delicate balance the leader must maintain while addressing resistance to change. Research indicates that the churches that are more likely to thrive -regardless of changes in their environmental context- are the ones that are led by pastors who are willing to affirm the vision while embracing the inevitability and necessity of change by continually adapting their ministry approach (Williams, 2017). Leaders must use constantly adapting methods to serve an unchanging, uncompromising vision. If the vision is constantly changing, the congregation will be hesitant to invest in subsequent visions. However, this indicates that if the leader sticks too closely to any one method, their approach will at some point become outdated and ineffective.

In summary, the literature reveals important factors that could influence the outward evangelism efforts of the church. The consumer mindset presents as a cause for the

disconnection between the mission of the church and the behavior of the congregation. The consumer mindset provides a potential explanation for why a congregation may prioritize the needs of existing members over evangelism efforts.

Relational Evangelism

Both programmatic and relational evangelism play a crucial role in evangelism. Although the church can use events and programs for outreach, it can also equip its congregation to go out into the community and share their faith individually.

Some experts have advocated for emphasizing relational evangelism over organizational evangelism because they perceive that it more closely follows Jesus's ministry model and offers a more intimate and relational approach (Brooks, 2012). Relational evangelism places the individual congregants as the focus of evangelistic efforts, empowering them to reach out to others they have formed relationships with organically.

There is no one singular dominant model for relational evangelism because it is rooted in individual relationships. Instead, there are multiple different methods that utilize different approaches such as D. James Kennedy's Explosion Model, Southern Seminary's Experiencing God's Grace Model, Bobby Welch's FAITH Model, William Fay and Ralph Hodge's Jesus Without Fear Model, and Charles Spurgeon's Wordless Book Model to name a few (Wingate, 2013). In addition to these models, there exists a number of programs designed to bolster relational evangelism. Programs such as FAITH, The Net, and Evangelism Explosion provide training to individuals through mentorship and formalized training sessions (Harris, 2014).

The practice of relational evangelism does not coincide with beliefs about it. Barna Group indicates that across all the surveyed denominations, the number of individuals who believe they have a personal responsibility to share their faith was significantly higher, 10 to 31

percentage points depending on the denomination, than the number of individuals who had actually shared their faith in the previous 12 months (2013). This is a significant aspect of the overall status of evangelism in the United States today because it reveals a disconnect between belief and action.

Additionally, Barna Group highlights a barrier to relational evangelism that is especially prevalent in younger generations. Nearly half of all Christian millennials believe that evangelism is wrong as it could be considered personally or culturally offensive to the hearer (2019). Despite indicating that they felt equipped and skilled at sharing their faith while also acknowledging the self-perceived value of following Christ, millennials also objected to the practice of evangelism. In essence, millennials claimed to be equipped for evangelism but refused to practice evangelism. Considering the history of violence conducted in the name of Christian evangelism (Rhodes, 2019) and the rising rates of the religiously unaffiliated, questioning the ethicality of evangelism is a significant trend among millennials that the church must be aware of and respond to if it is going to address the effectiveness of evangelism. The existing literature indicates that millennial Christians are failing to evangelize due to ethical concerns rather than a lack of training. This would suggest that to improve relational evangelism in the Church, the ethical concerns of some congregants must be addressed.

Relational evangelism is one of the Church's most important tools in outreach and the existing literature highlights the strengths and effective methods of this approach. The Church's external focus can and should involve more than just corporate events and programs by emphasizing relational evangelism as well. By utilizing mentors and training, the church can equip congregants with the skills necessary to evangelize in their established relationships.

Programmatic Evangelism Strategies

While the study examined the relationship between the level of importance of evangelism in churches and tangible evangelism actions taken, the existing literature indicates that not all externally focused tangible actions are equally effective. The related literature reveals that the motive and method of programmatic evangelism will dictate its effectiveness.

In response to declining church attendance numbers, researchers have reevaluated previous evangelistic strategies and found static or uniform approaches to evangelism to be ineffective in an increasingly post-modern and pluralistic society, which necessitates a reimagined approach that accounts for the hearer's specific starting point (Comer, 2013). While evangelism tracts and scripted messaging may have been effective in generations past, generic evangelism is no longer an effective way to reach people in the United States. Given the competing worldviews and relative definitions of truth, effective evangelism has to account for the hearer's background and unique faith journey, rather than relying on a rehearsed sales pitch. Similarly, research indicates that door-to-door cold calls are not as effective as members of the congregation using their connection and familiarity with the community to provide insight into potential outreach events and evangelism activities that will meet the specific needs of the community (Hale, 2015). Sending congregants out into the community to randomly talk to strangers is no longer effective. The more effective method of evangelism involves empowering the congregation to leverage their existing relationships. In this approach, congregants utilize their connections to communities in order to tangibly express love and spread the gospel. While this method still involves sending the congregation out into the community, this approach uses a relational focus to benefit the hearer.

Additionally, some, such as Charles Van Engen, have criticized church growth efforts that focus primarily on numerical growth, noting the fine balance the church must strike between striving for growth and not being beholden to the specific numbers of growth (Guder, 1994). This represents a delicate balance as leaders must value growth in order to lead the church towards fulfilling its purpose and to avoid stagnation, but the leader cannot become so engrossed with strictly numerical growth that they compromise the message or mission in order to simply have a higher weekly attendance. The goal of the church is to expand the Kingdom of God by spreading the gospel, not just to amass the largest congregation possible, since it is possible for people to regularly attend church without genuinely following God. The quantity of a church means nothing without the quality of discipleship.

In reevaluating the church's approach to programmatic evangelism, the existing literature indicates that the church has reached a point of necessary change as the previously used methods, such as door-to-door evangelism and scripted tracts, are no longer effective in the United States. As such, the church cannot be purely focused on numerical growth and must use a relational approach to evangelism that benefits the community.

Competing Focuses in the Church

The related literature reveals another potential barrier to evangelism in the form of competing church focuses. There are many different areas in which the church could devote its time and resources because the church has many different roles and ministries. As such, outreach and evangelism can often be neglected in favor of other ministries.

In many churches, because of the expenses of personnel, property, and programs, the missions and outreach budget most often make up about 5% of the overall church budget (Lee, 2014). Mission and outreach can often be neglected as other ministries receive higher

prioritization because of all the responsibilities and services for which the church has to account. When allocating such a relatively low amount of the budget towards outreach, the church communicates that outreach is not as much of a priority as other ministries and expenses.

There is a natural competition between the ministries within the church when resources and time are limited. Finite resources exist in budgeting, necessitating that the leaders prioritize the ministries and expenses. Some researchers have criticized the church for prioritizing flashy and superficial expenses that give the church high-level production value but do not contribute to the overall mission. Braley states, “Church budgets are bent on supporting the business and attracting customers, but primarily absent of mission, benevolence, or training funds support the setting” (2021, p. iv). As churches attempt to appeal to a younger generation, there has been a shift towards focusing resources on creating a high-quality and concert-like experience often complete with production design, stage lights, fog machines, and top-of-the-line equipment, influenced by successful megachurches such as Hillsong (Wagner, 2020). Some have advocated for more discipleship-focused corporate worship services rather than evangelism-focused services in order to orient the church vertically rather than horizontally and to help the congregation grow in their faith and knowledge of God (McKinney, 2021). While this attempted sacralization of culture can be appealing on a surface level, experts have criticized prioritizing this approach over genuine, gospel-centric outreach.

Additionally, the jockeying for resources and focus on individual ministries can increase as the church grows. Growth can also cause leadership team dynamics to shift, potentially leading to competing causes and silo ministries as ministry leaders disconnect from the overall vision and each other unless the leader effectively communicates vision and expectations (Osborne, 2010). Osborne notes that ministry leaders can often experience frustration as their

role becomes more specialized because they often had more input and received more information when the leadership team was smaller. As a result, ministry leaders may disconnect from the overall church vision and focus primarily on their individual ministries. This creates direct competition among the ministries as each leader advocates for their ministry over others.

In summary, leaders are forced to make determinations about how to prioritize the church's ministries and causes because the church only possesses a finite amount of time and resources. As a result, evangelism and outreach can end up competing with other ministries and expenses, often receiving a relatively small amount of the church budget at around 5% on average. Some experts have criticized the modern church for prioritizing production value and flashy stylistic changes over funding the evangelistic mission of the church.

Effectiveness of Modern Evangelism in Other Religions

While this research project was focused on external outreach in the Christian Church in the United States, the related literature about how other religions have been affected by the recent rise in the religiously unaffiliated population can provide insight into what aspects of the phenomenon are exclusive to the Christian Church and what aspects are universal to all religions in the United States. For this purpose, the researcher examined recent growth trends and proselytization efforts of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and Islam, two movements that each have a positive reputation for growth.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints places a unique emphasis on evangelism, requiring its members to invest in the recruitment, socialization, and maintenance of its considerable missionary force, with young adults expected to volunteer their time in the form of a mission (Knoll & Riess, 2020). The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints does not face

the same internal attitudinal barriers to evangelism that can be present in the Christian church because of this expectation of evangelism and emphasis on outreach. While members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints consider themselves Christians, the researcher distinguished between the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and evangelical Christianity because of theological differences (Mouw & Millet, 2015) that pertain to doctrines that are central to the study's focus. For the purposes of this discussion, the term "Christian" is not applied to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

With a reputation for door-to-door evangelism and mandated missions for young adults, the religion was once touted as the fastest-growing religion in the world, though this claim was eventually revealed to be misleading as it was based on total members rather than active members (Fletcher Stack, 2005). According to Fletcher Stack, about 35% of the total members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints actively participate in congregations. This means that the reported number of members is almost three times as high as the number of individuals who are actually attending church services. Even in a religion as defined by evangelism as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, the growth rate has been in steady decline since reaching a peak in the 1990s, with rare exceptions.

While the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints continues to devote considerable time and resources towards proselytization, the church's diminished growth numbers are largely due to the societal changes that have made it more socially acceptable for younger generations to be religiously unaffiliated (Penrod, 2020). The data would suggest that, like Christianity, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints' growth rate has been impacted by the rise of the religiously unaffiliated in the United States. The generation gap is also present in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints with younger generations less likely to convert than previous

generations. This may be due to some of the same factors that were previously identified in the theoretical framework of the study as affecting the decline in attendance in the Christian Church.

Despite its emphasis on proselytizing, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints has experienced a record decline in growth with new convert baptisms per missionary halved from 7.6 in 1990 to 3.6 in 2018 (Stewart, 2020). This means that the average missionary in 1990 was responsible for twice as many conversions and baptisms as the average missionary in 2018. By measuring the number of new convert baptisms per missionary, researchers have been able to determine the effectiveness of the outreach, rather than just focusing on the overall number of new converts. By this metric, the research indicates a significant decrease in the effectiveness of evangelism over the last three decades.

The existing literature about the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints indicates that the religion places a uniquely large emphasis on evangelism and requires its members to take an active role in evangelism. The current research indicates that the effectiveness of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints' evangelistic efforts has decreased significantly over the last three decades. Further decline is expected based on societal trends and the generational gap of converts. This is significant for this project's research purpose as it potentially reveals which current barriers to growth are universal to all religions and which are specific to the Christian Church.

Islam

For much of its history, Islam was not an especially evangelistic religion. However, this has changed over the years as leaders of the faith have placed an increased emphasis on proselytization. In contrast with pre-modern Islam, modern Islam places a more personal responsibility on every member of the faith (Kuiper, 2021). This increased emphasis on

evangelism has contributed to Islam becoming the fastest-growing religion in the world, on pace to potentially become the largest religion in the world in the coming decades (Lipka & Hackett, 2017). Islam can serve as another subject for contrast and comparison to the effectiveness of Christian evangelism in the United States because of this widespread effectiveness in evangelism.

While Islam is growing and is expected to become the second-largest religion in the United States by 2040, this is mostly due to immigration and elevated birth rates due to a younger demographic of followers than other religions (Willingham, 2018). As previously noted in the Decline in Evangelistic Church Attendance in the United States section, individuals from younger generations are more likely to be religiously unaffiliated. This has led to a lower number of religiously affiliated people in the child-bearing demographic. This results in fewer people being born into the religion and limits an avenue of potential growth. Islam, however, has more members in this demographic, allowing for a higher birth rate. This is significant because immigration and elevated birth rates may add to the number of Muslims in the United States but are not indications of effective evangelism in the United States.

While Islam has found evangelical success outside of the United States, the rising number of religiously unaffiliated people in the United States has proven difficult for Islam to reach. According to a Pew Research Center survey, Islam gains roughly 100,000 new converts in the United States each year and 19% of them were religiously unaffiliated previously (Mohamed & Sciupac, 2020). Additionally, the same survey reports that Islam loses roughly 100,000 members, with 55% of those who leave Islam leaving religion altogether. This research reveals that Islam has been far more successful in drawing new converts from other religions, primarily Christianity, than it has from the pool of those who are religiously unaffiliated. This survey

indicates that Islam is experiencing a lack of growth through new conversions in the United States. The data show a low number of converts among the religiously unaffiliated and a high number of members that leave the faith to become religiously unaffiliated. Based on these data, Islam may be struggling to evangelize in an increasingly religiously unaffiliated society as much as other religions are struggling.

The methods and messages of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and Islamic evangelism differ greatly from those of Christian evangelism. However, the examination of existing literature and research reveals that the younger generation's tendency to identify as religiously unaffiliated is one of the biggest barriers to evangelism that all religions are facing in the United States today. Although this project is exclusively concerned with the Christian Church's approach to evangelism, this brief examination of other religions' evangelism is important. The additional information provides insight into which aspects of the problem are specific to the Christian Church and which are universal to all organized religions.

Rationale for the Study

The Church is tasked with evangelizing, yet church attendance has declined. The effectiveness of evangelism is waning across all religions in the United States. The preceding literature review revealed factors that are influencing the current state of evangelism in the Christian Church today, such as:

- the Church's responsibility to evangelize,
- internal attitudinal barriers to change, and
- the recent rise in religiously unaffiliated people.

Exploring the effectiveness of evangelism while considering these important factors compels this study.

The study's variables are: (a) importance churches place on evangelism, (b) tangible acts of evangelism, and (c) new believer conversions or baptisms. The researcher aims to provide Christian leaders with the information necessary to determine how to improve the effectiveness of their evangelism.

Gap in the Literature

An examination of the existing related literature reveals that, while evangelistic processes have been studied and theories established, there is a gap in the literature. Researchers have explored the importance of evangelism, evangelism practices, and evangelism results but there is a lack of research about how these aspects affect one another. Thus, these aspects became the variables and focus of this study.

The Importance of Evangelism

Much of the existing research about Christian evangelism acknowledges the biblical mandate for evangelism. Theologians do not agree about the evangelism approach. For instance, some advocate for a relational approach to evangelism (Brooks, 2012; Wingate, 2013) while others prefer a programmatic approach (Murray, 1998; Min, 2014). No matter the approach, however, many agree that scripture clearly commands the church to engage in evangelism outreach. Research in this area often revolves around exploring the theological foundations for evangelism and the modern implications for the church.

While the biblical command to evangelize is established (Alawode, 2020), there is a gap in the literature concerning the church's perception of the command's importance. Existing research makes it clear that the church should care deeply about evangelism, but more research is needed to discover the level of importance the church actually places on evangelism. Additionally, much of the existing research has focused on the relational component of

evangelism rather than the programmatic one (Barna Group, 2013). While the two are interconnected, more research is needed to understand the church's role in the effectiveness of programmatic evangelism.

The study explored programmatic and relational evangelism, their importance, and effectiveness. The study's variables are: (a) the level of importance of evangelism, (b) the evangelism actions taken, and (c) the resulting new believer baptisms.

Evangelism Practices

Existing research on tangible evangelism practices reveals a decrease in the effectiveness of previous methods (Hale, 2015), the necessity of new and more relational methods (Brooks, 2012), and the resistance to participate in evangelism by younger generations of Christians (Barna Group, 2019). However, there is a gap in the literature in regard to how motivation and value impact the decision to take these tangible actions or allocate resources elsewhere. In the process of determining whether the root of the problem of ineffective evangelism comes from the church's value of evangelism or the specific actions that are being taken, the connection between value and action must be established. The following sections explore the existing research as it connects to this study.

Previous Methods

Previous programmatic evangelism approaches and methods, such as door-to-door evangelism, have been criticized because they can be too focused on numerical growth (Guder, 1994) and do not account for people's individual backgrounds (Comer, 2013). Some experts have encouraged churches to move away from programmatic evangelism and move toward more relational approaches. However, more research is needed to understand how churches have

embraced this shift toward relational evangelism and how this shift has affected the state of evangelism at churches.

New and More Relational Methods

It is unclear if churches that use a relational approach to evangelism still take any programmatic evangelism actions; and, if so, how these two approaches could be used in tandem. It is also unclear how obstacles such as the social disruption of the pandemic may have affected churches' efforts to implement a relational approach to evangelism.

The strengths of a relational approach to evangelism have been noted, especially the ability of the evangelist to personalize the message to best connect with the hearer (Comer, 2013). However, there is a gap in the literature regarding the lived experiences of pastors whose churches have implemented a relational approach to evangelism and the potential weaknesses of the approach.

Evangelism Results

Existing research offers detailed results regarding evangelism efforts and notes the overall decline in church membership and attendance (Dandridge, 2020). While this information is important and relevant to understanding the overall problem that the church is facing, it is often not linked with specific measurements of evangelism efforts. The link between evangelism and declining church membership may indicate that the church's overall evangelism efforts are not producing the same results as they had in previous generations. However, it is unclear how much of the decline in church attendance is due to evangelism efforts becoming less effective and how much is the result of evangelism efforts becoming less frequent. Existing literature has provided information about the result, but more research is needed to fully understand the factors that have contributed to this result.

Profile of the Current Study

As a result of multiple internal and external factors, driven largely by an increasingly post-modern and religiously unaffiliated society, church attendance in the United States is declining. Evangelism is a primary method for reversing this trend. The purpose of the study was to examine evangelism as mandated to and practiced by the Church. Knowing more about what makes evangelism effective may improve churches' evangelism practices and results.

A survey of related literature exposes three influences for the study. First, existing research provides a theological framework that illustrates the importance of evangelism and the church's biblically mandated responsibility to evangelize. The decline in church attendance indicates a need for active evangelism. Secondly, related literature provides a theoretical framework that describes the possible causes of any disconnection between belief and action. This disconnection may be a factor for churches that believe in evangelism but may not actively evangelize to others. Finally, related literature reveals a decline in the effectiveness of evangelism that affects all the major religions in the United States today. With these influences in place, the study focused on the effectiveness of evangelism by exploring any connections between the research variables: (a) importance churches place on evangelism, (b) tangible acts of evangelism, and (c) new believer conversions or baptisms.

The study used a mixed-methods design to research these variables. The study collected quantitative and qualitative data separately (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The data were analyzed and interpreted. The quantitative portion of the study examined the research variables and determined if relationships existed between the variables. The qualitative portion of the study allowed participants to provide deeper insight into their lived experiences. The researcher used an open coding approach to allow the findings to emerge from the data. The researcher then

used the qualitative data to explain the quantitative results. This research design is explained in greater detail in Chapter Three.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN

Evangelism is one of the church's primary responsibilities. Existing literature includes research regarding the theological and theoretical aspects of evangelism. Related literature discussed in Chapter Two highlights the Church's biblical mandate to evangelize as well as the internal and external factors that contribute to a decline in Church attendance. The decline in Church attendance may reveal that the Church is not effectively evangelizing and growing. This necessitates more research regarding the effectiveness of the Church's evangelism efforts. The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of evangelism with the aim to influence church growth and possibly attendance. Chapter Three provides an overview of the study's mixed-methods research design.

Research Design Synopsis

The study utilized a mixed-methods research design that examined: (a) importance churches place on evangelism, (b) tangible acts of evangelism, and (c) new believer conversions or baptisms. A part of the examination was focused on the relationship, if any, between these three variables. The design included both an initial quantitative questionnaire and a follow-up qualitative questionnaire. The responses from these questionnaires provided the researcher with the data necessary to determine if there is a relationship between the study's variables and, if so, the strength and direction of those relationships. Using a mixed-methods approach helped the researcher to understand the phenomenon of evangelism in greater depth (Roberts, 2010).

The researcher used Creswell and Creswell's explanatory sequential mixed methods design (2018). In the Creswell and Creswell design, the qualitative instrument and portion of the study are composed after the quantitative results have been determined in order to most effectively use the qualitative data to explain the quantitative findings. However, in this study,

both the quantitative and qualitative instruments were designed at the same time - due to time constraints. While both instruments were designed before study execution, the researcher collected, analyzed, and interpreted the quantitative and qualitative data separately. In accordance with Creswell and Creswell (2018), quantitative data were collected first; then, qualitative data were collected and used to explain the quantitative findings in richer depth and detail.

The Problem

Biblical passages such as the Great Commission (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Matt. 28:18-20) make it clear that the church is tasked with spreading the gospel by evangelizing to the rest of the world. The scriptural mandate is direct and unambiguous which may lead churches to view evangelism as a core value of Christianity and their organization. However, the decreasing rate of church attendance in the United States suggests a disconnection between the level of importance churches place on evangelism and the actual results of evangelism actions. To accomplish their missions, churches must find effective ways to translate the value that they place on evangelism into tangible actions and ministry decisions to accomplish the goal of making disciples.

The review of the existing literature in Chapter Two reveals that there has been a significant amount of research conducted regarding evangelism and many of its subcategories. More research is needed on the relationship between the level of importance churches place on evangelism and how that translates into measurable church growth achieved through conversion. Existing research either focuses on the growth rate of churches in the United States or the rate of individual participation in evangelism. Further study is needed to understand the impact and relationship between the level of importance that churches place on evangelism, their tangible

evangelism actions, and the church's growth through conversion. A study of these connections may inform an evaluation of how well churches fulfill their biblical mandate regarding the Great Commission.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to examine the effectiveness of evangelism at non-denominational, baptistic, evangelistic, Christian churches in suburban areas of the United States by collecting both quantitative and qualitative data. This study first collected data in quantitative form to identify evangelism's importance to the churches, their congregant attendance, evangelism practices, and new believer baptisms. The study then collected data in qualitative form with regard to the churches' evangelistic views and their lived experiences. These data then were analyzed to understand the relationship, if any, between the importance of evangelism in the churches, the churches' tangible evangelism practices, and new member baptisms.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The following research questions and null hypotheses were used to guide the research process. Research questions one through three guided the quantitative portion of the study and research questions four through six guided the qualitative portion of the study.

Research Questions

RQ1. What relationship, if any, exists between the level of importance the source churches place on evangelism and the number of their new believer baptisms?

RQ2. What relationship, if any, exists between the level of importance the source churches place on evangelism and the ranges of their tangible evangelism practices implemented?

RQ3. What relationship, if any, exists between the source churches' ranges of tangible evangelism practices and the number of their new believer baptisms?

RQ4. In what ways, if any, do lead pastors describe the level of importance their churches place on evangelism?

RQ5. In what ways, if any, do lead pastors describe their churches' outreach-oriented ministries and initiatives?

RQ6. In what ways, positively or negatively, do lead pastors perceive that their churches' emphasis on evangelism impacts their churches' new believer baptisms?

Null Hypotheses

H₀1: No relationship exists between the level of importance the source churches place on evangelism and the number of their new believer baptisms.

H₀2: No relationship exists between the level of importance the source churches place on evangelism and the range of their tangible evangelism practices implemented.

H₀3: No relationship exists between the source churches' range of tangible evangelism practices and the number of their new believer baptisms.

The study has three variables: (a) importance churches place on evangelism, (b) tangible acts of evangelism, and (c) new believer conversions or baptisms. The main variables of interest to the researcher are the importance of evangelism and new believer baptisms. Importance is a value that can be acted upon or kept to one's-self. This researcher contends that churches should overtly value evangelism and seeks to measure this phenomenon. Evangelism practices are the vehicles by which Christian beliefs are put into action and produce results such as conversions and baptisms, hence the inclusion of evangelism practices as one of the research variables. This researcher further contends that a church's number of baptisms or conversions reveals the effectiveness of the church's evangelism.

The church's responsibility to evangelize is clear and well-known, and yet church attendance is declining (Jones, 2021). Younger generations of Christians are not sharing their faith (Barna Group, 2019). These factors indicate that it is possible that no relationship exists between the research variables.

Research Design and Methodology

This study used a combination of correlational research methods (quantitative) and qualitative research to understand the relationship between the level of importance churches place on evangelism, their evangelism practices, and their new believer baptisms. Specifically, the researcher used a mixed-methods research design in which the quantitative and qualitative data were gathered, analyzed, and interpreted separately. The qualitative data were used then to explain the quantitative findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In the Creswell and Creswell model, the qualitative research instrument and portion of the study are designed after the quantitative findings have been determined. This is done so that the researcher can most effectively use the qualitative data to explain the quantitative findings. For this study, the researcher designed both the quantitative and qualitative instruments and portions of the study in conjunction with one another due to time constraints.

Survey instrumentation was employed for both the quantitative and qualitative portions of the study. Details about the instruments are provided in the Instrumentation section of this chapter. A mixed-methods research design was selected because the topic of evangelism is complex and multi-faceted. The explanatory sequential mixed methods design allowed the respondents to provide in-depth data that the researcher used to explain the quantitative findings and illustrate why the variables interacted in the manner in which they did.

In the first phase of the study, a quantitative survey was used to collect data about the research variables. The data were analyzed to determine if a relationship existed between the variables. This allowed the researcher to understand the extent to which the value of one variable is associated with another:

A correlation exists if, when one variable increases, another variable either increases or decreases in a somewhat predictable fashion. Knowing the value of one variable, then, enables us to predict the value of the other variable with some degree of accuracy. (Leedy & Ormrod, 2018, p. 148)

Correlational analysis is well-suited to determine relationships between the variables studied (Reimann et al, 2017).

After relationships between variables were determined through quantitative correlational analysis, a qualitative survey was used to collect data about the in-depth, lived experience of lead pastors. Data from the qualitative survey allowed the researcher to better understand the source churches' approaches to evangelism by sharing more about their lived experiences as indicated by the quantitative data. The researcher used these data to explain the quantitative findings and the relationships, or lack thereof, between the variables.

The researcher used an open coding approach to sort and analyze the qualitative data. In open coding, the researcher reads through the raw data and combines the data into broader themes that represent the content of the responses (Thomas, 2006). Open coding suited the goals of this study because it allowed the themes to emerge from the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The study aimed to determine why and how the relationships, or lack thereof, between the variables exist. Open coding allowed the researcher to better illustrate how and why the variables impact each other. By not using predetermined codes, the researcher was able to use the respondents' own words and experiences to describe the state of evangelism at the source churches. The researcher chose this approach because it allows the researcher to code the data with labels that reflect the content of the responses without influence from existing concepts,

constructs, and theories (Chandra et al., 2019). For example, after reading through the responses, several of the codes that emerged included “Sermons” and “Prioritized in Budget.”

Descriptive coding was then used to group the codes together into categories. Descriptive coding sorts similar codes into groups - using labels that indicate how those codes relate to the larger topic (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019; Saldaña, 2015). The codes rolled up into categories that include “Evangelism Strategy” and “Connection Between Variables.”

The researcher then reviewed the groupings to discern any patterns that emerged (Khandkar, 2009). The result of this coding process was the larger patterns or theme of “Positive Perception of Evangelism Lived Experience.”

The qualitative data were then used to explain the quantitative findings. The quantitative findings illustrated the relationships, or lack thereof, between the variables. The qualitative data were used to explain why and how the variables interacted in the manner in which they did. The result of this was a deeper understanding of the state of evangelism at the source churches.

Population

The population of interest for the study was non-denominational, baptistic, evangelistic, Christian churches in suburban areas of the United States. There are approximately 44,319 nondenominational congregations comprised of 21 million people, making nondenominational the largest sect of Protestantism in America (Silliman, 2022).

According to a Pew Research Center study, 68% of nondenominational evangelical Christians are between the ages of 30 and 64 (2022). The same study reported that among nondenominational evangelicals, 53% are women, 74% are white, 71% have at least some college education, 69% identify as Republicans, and 56% have an annual income of \$50,000 or more.

The population is too large to study in its entirety. It was not feasible for the researcher to include all of the churches in the United States that fit the study's criteria. It was necessary for the researcher to draw a sample from the population because of this. The researcher used a convenience sample for the study.

While not a random or representative sample, study participants were lead pastors from source churches with the same characteristics as the population of interest. The study yielded source churches with average weekly worship service attendances between 60 and 942 adults.

The source churches included in the study ascribe to the central tenets of evangelical Christianity. Chief among these tenets is the belief in the authority of scripture. Source churches were required to ascribe to the authority of the Bible and use scripture as the basis for their theology and ministry practices because the Great Commission and other similar biblical mandates for evangelism are central to the study.

Foundationally, the source churches were those that uphold the essential aspects of the gospel. For the purposes of this study, the essential aspects of the gospel are: (a) the divinity of Jesus Christ, (b) the Triune nature of God, (c) the death and resurrection of Jesus, (d) repentance from sin, and (e) eternal salvation through faith in Jesus. Similarly, to be included in the study, source churches had to ascribe to the biblical mandate to evangelize. This is foundational for understanding the associations, if any, between the variables.

Theologically, the source churches must practice new believer baptisms. As noted in Chapter Two's Theological Framework section, new believer baptisms are an individual's response to evangelism. In this context, baptisms are indicators of the effectiveness of evangelism. For the purposes of the study, then, in order to measure and understand the results of

the churches' evangelism actions, source churches included in the study must practice new believer baptisms.

Additionally, the source churches were comprised of nondenominational churches because experiences may vary across denominations. This criterion should produce data that are applicable to a wider range of churches, whereas research collected on a particular denomination could potentially limit the generalization of the study's application.

Finally, the source churches were comprised of churches located in suburban areas of the United States. For this study, a suburban context was defined as churches located in primarily residential or mixed-use communities outside of urban or metropolitan areas. The United States' population has been increasingly concentrated in suburban and small metropolitan areas, with the suburbs outgaining urban and rural areas in terms of population over the last two decades (Fry, 2020). With the suburbs growing in population, it is increasingly important for suburban churches to engage in effective evangelism. There is a need to research the state of evangelism in suburban churches. Potential research participants answered screening questions prior to completing the External Focus Questionnaire (EFQ) to assure that their churches fit the above-described criteria for study participation.

Quantitative Sampling Procedures

It was not possible for the researcher to survey all churches that fit the study's criteria because of the large number of nondenominational, baptistic, evangelistic, Christian churches in the United States. The 2020 US Religious Census estimated that there are 44,319 nondenominational congregations, with the lead researcher of that study acknowledging that there were likely even more nondenominational congregations (Silliman, 2022). Consequently, the study used a non-probable convenience sampling approach to identify potential participants.

There were three sources for gaining study participants. First, the researcher contacted lead pastors from churches that meet the study's criteria and with whom the researcher has connections. Secondly, the researcher reviewed online church databases (USA Churches, n.d.), to find additional lead pastors from churches that fit the study criteria. The researcher scrolled through the churches listed as medium (attendance between 51 and 300 people) or large (attendance between 301 to 2,000 people) in the online database. The researcher did not select churches with names that indicated denominational ties. The researcher then navigated to the public websites of churches that appeared to fit the study's criteria and searched the websites for the lead pastor's email address. If the email address was available to the public, the researcher used the email address to invite the lead pastor to participate in the study. Finally, the researcher used a snowball sampling approach in which study participants were encouraged to help recruit additional participants. The snowball request was part of the written and verbal invitations to participate in the study. After being referred by already-invited study participants, potential participants received a written invitation to participate in the study (Appendix B).

Ideally, the quantitative sample size should be based on the size of the population of interest. However, this is unknown as the data either do not exist or are not known to the researcher. Therefore, the sample size was determined by the study's response rate and its selection criteria. The average response rate for email surveys is approximately 30% (Fincham, 2008). The researcher emailed 425 invitations to potential study participants, expecting to receive approximately 127 responses toward the study's goal of at least 50 participants who met the criteria. Instead, 12 responses were received and two did not meet the criteria for inclusion in the study. This is a 2.8% response rate. A larger sample size would yield more useful and trustworthy data but conducting the research with a larger sample size was not possible due to

resource constraints and the researcher's inability to offer incentives for participation in the study. Ten participants comprised the study's quantitative sample.

Study participants are lead pastors of the source churches that met the study's criteria for participation. These participants were chosen because of their position and their knowledge of their churches' information as it relates to the study's variables and research questions. The researcher contacted the lead pastors directly and sent them an email inviting them to participate in the study (Appendix A). Those who accepted the invitation to participate in the study were sent an electronic survey by email. Part one of the survey verified that the respondents met the criteria of the study through the use of screening questions. The screening questions determined that two of the 12 responses did not qualify for inclusion in the study. One respondent was from a church with denominational ties. Nondenominational is a study criterion. The other church was excluded from participation due to its average weekly worship attendance. The study criterion was an average weekly attendance between 50 and 1,000 people; the excluded church's average weekly attendance was 1,200.

Limitations of Generalization

The results of a study are most generalizable to the research population when the sample is representative of the population (Polit & Beck, 2010). Study results will not generalize to the population of interest, that is non-denominational, baptistic, evangelistic, Christian churches in suburban areas of the United States because random sampling was not used. Study participants do reflect these characteristics, but study results will have limited generalization.

The conclusions of the study do not apply to churches that are not similarly situated to the churches represented in the study. The participants in the study represented churches that were located in suburban areas in the United States, had average weekly worship service attendances

between 60 and 942 people, and performed between 5 and 201 baptisms. The churches were located in eight different states: (a) Arizona, (b) California, (c) Illinois, (d) Indiana, (e) Missouri, (f) Ohio, (g) Oregon, and (h) Texas. All of the participants indicated that their churches practice evangelism and baptism. Specifically, study participants were from nondenominational, baptistic, evangelistic, Christian churches in the United States.

According to the stated beliefs on their websites, the source churches hold essential beliefs regarding the authority of scripture and the biblical mandate for churches to evangelize. Churches whose beliefs and practices fall outside of these parameters may have different theology. Results from the study would not generalize to those churches.

The sampling method used – convenience sampling – limits generalization. Most research uses convenience sampling; however, this limits the generalization of the results to only the subpopulations with the characteristics of the convenience sample (Andrade, 2021). This population possesses qualities or exists in specific contexts that prevent the results from being generalized to all nondenominational Christian churches in the United States, though the results of the study may have implications for churches that fit the study's criteria.

The study was limited to the measurable impact that the level of importance of evangelism has on church growth. As such, the study focused on the tangible, numerical aspects of church growth, as defined by new believer baptisms, rather than the intangible, spiritual, or metaphysical aspects of growth. It is possible that the current methods employed by churches are facilitating growth in intangible ways that the study did not attempt to measure.

Additionally, the study was limited to the measurable actions the church officially takes because the study was concerned with the tangible actions taken in response to the level of

importance of evangelism. It is possible that there are other, intangible actions taken as a result of placing importance on evangelism, such as praying for the lost.

This study concentrated on church growth through conversion as determined by new believer baptism rates. The study was not concerned with church growth as a whole, but only with those who were unsaved when they came to the church and were eventually baptized. It is possible that some churches are growing as a result of Christians switching churches, but this study did not measure general church growth. Other models for church growth may possibly be more effective for increasing the overall attendance of the church, but the study instead focused on understanding growth through conversion exclusively.

The topic of church growth varies across denominations, locations, and demographics. This study was limited to the adult attendance of nondenominational churches in suburban contexts. The relationships discovered in the study may or may not translate to other denominational or demographic settings. It is possible that the relationships established through the study exist in other settings, but the study did not determine whether or not those relationships exist.

Quantitative Instrumentation

To conduct the quantitative portion of the study, the researcher designed the External Focus Questionnaire (EFQ). Participants received the EFQ by email (Appendix C). The EFQ collected quantitative data to answer research question one through research question three.

The External Focus Questionnaire is divided into two parts and is comprised primarily of closed-ended questions. Part One contains screening questions that ensured all of the participants met the criteria for the study. Participants were asked to verify that they were lead pastors from non-denominational, baptistic, evangelistic, Christian churches in suburban areas of the United

States with average weekly attendances between 50 and 1,000 people. Part Two contains questions that prompted for numerical data about: (a) the level of importance of evangelism in the source churches, (b) the numerical range of new evangelism actions implemented by the churches between 2019 and 2022, (c) the number of new believer baptisms the churches performed between 2019 and 2022, and (d) the churches' average weekly attendance.

Likert Scale formats were used to collect data regarding the value a church places on evangelism and its range of evangelism actions. The level of importance of evangelism was quantified as a number between 1 and 5, with 1 representing "very unimportant" and 5 representing "very important." The number of evangelism actions was quantified as a number between 1 and 5, with 1 representing a range of "less than 3" evangelism actions and 5 representing a range of "more than 12" evangelism actions.

The baptism ratio was quantified as a number between 1 and 100. Respondents self-reported actual numbers regarding their average weekly attendance of adults who come to worship and their amounts of baptisms between July 2019 and July 2022. To calculate the baptism ratio for each source church, the researcher divided the total number of baptisms by the average weekly attendance to determine a per capita number between 0 and 100 (Fillinger, 2022).

The purpose of collecting these data in this way was to quantify the variables so that the correlation and relationships, if any, between the variables could be determined. The first three survey questions in part two of the EFQ were designed to quantify the three research variables. The fourth question, about the churches' average weekly attendance, was used to contextualize the number of new believer baptisms in relation to the number of weekly attendees.

Validity

The validity of a study is determined by how accurately it studies the intended phenomenon or by how accurately the instrumentation collects the intended data. The three forms of validity are content validity (items measure the content they were intended to measure), predictive or concurrent validity (scores predict a criterion measure), and construct validity (items measure hypothetical constructs) (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In order to ensure the validity of the External Focus Questionnaire, the researcher utilized a three-person expert panel to assess the content validity of the instrument. In quantitative research, instrument validity is often established through the use of an expert panel (Wynd & Schaefer, 2003).

The expert panel was comprised of three persons with ministry experience and an understanding of church evangelism. The members of the expert panel have varying levels of ministry experience with one of the members serving as a senior pastor at a large church in Nevada for over 15 years. The other two members work at large churches in Southern California and have over five years of ministry experience. All panel members graduated from Christian colleges and earned ministry or biblical studies degrees.

The expert panel members were selected because of their knowledge and involvement in church evangelism. Panelist one has experience as an associate pastor and head of an outreach-oriented parachurch ministry. He was responsible for planning, budgeting, and executing an outreach program aimed at unchurched junior high school students. Panelist two oversees his church's social media and marketing department. He is responsible for promoting and marketing the church's outreach events online. Panelist three is a church planter and lead pastor who has planted churches in multiple states. He has led multiple outreach campaigns that have grown his

churches from house churches to large churches. All three panelists have experience in the decision-making process, planning, and execution of evangelism actions at their churches.

The expert panel reviewed the EFQ and provided the researcher with insight into the validity of the instrument. Each panel member reviewed the EFQ individually and submitted their conclusions to the chairperson who compiled and synthesized the information for presentation to the researcher. The expert panel expressed that the survey questions were well-suited to provide the researcher with the information necessary to address the research questions. The panel also expressed that the survey questions were clear, concise, and easily understandable. Finally, the expert panel shared the possibility that some participants may provide inaccurate information because the survey relies on self-reporting.

The researcher recognized that errors may occur in self-reporting for any number of reasons such as identity-based bias (Brenner & Delamater, 2016) or social desirability (Fadnes et al., 2009). Identity-based bias is when an individual possesses bias on the basis of a person's identity, typically favoring in-group members who are similar to themselves over outsiders (Montalan et al., 2011). For example, a lead pastor who experiences identity-based bias may not realize that they prioritize church congregants over the unchurched. This could cause the pastor to unwittingly have a lower importance of evangelism than they realize or report. Additionally, social desirability bias occurs when an individual selects responses that they believe are socially desirable or acceptable rather than answering questions honestly (Grimm, 2010). This could cause a participant to report the answers they think will make them look better, such as higher levels of importance of evangelism and a larger number of baptisms, rather than reporting accurate information. Respondents could have an inaccurate view of the importance of

evangelism in their churches or could inflate their attendance numbers to protect their own views of themselves as pastors.

Reliability

The reliability of an instrument is determined by the ability to yield similar results each time the instrument is used, “Reliability refers to the stability of the measuring instrument used and its consistency over time” (Sürücü & Maslakçi, 2020, p. 2707). To measure the reliability of the EFQ, the researcher used Cronbach’s alpha. Cronbach’s alpha is a coefficient of reliability or consistency, with a value of .70 or higher typically being considered acceptable (UCLA, n.d.). The Cronbach’s alpha for the EFQ was .342. This is considered an unacceptable value for proving reliability. Sürücü and Maslakçi identify a small sample size as one of the most likely reasons that an instrument may have low reliability (2020). This means that if the study were repeated using the same instrument, it could potentially yield different results.

Research Procedures

The researcher used Qualtrics XM to compose the EFQ (Appendix C) and EFFQ (Appendix D). The researcher submitted the EFQ and EFFQ to Liberty University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval. Upon receiving IRB approval (Appendix E), the researcher disseminated written invitations to participate in the study. First, invitations were sent to the researcher’s contacts. This included a snowball element in which the researcher asked invitees to provide him with the names and contact information of other potential participants. One potential participant was identified through the snowball approach. The researcher sent him a written invitation to participate in the study (Appendix B), but his church did not fit the criteria for inclusion in the study. It had a weekly average attendance of fewer than 50 adults which is outside the research parameters of 50 to 1000 adults. Next, the researcher perused the USA

Churches online database to find participants. The researcher scrolled through database entries and navigated to the websites of churches that fit the study's participation criteria. The researcher emailed potential participants and sent them invitations to the study (Appendix A) including a link to the EFQ through Qualtrics XM. The online invitations did not result in any snowball participants. The survey remained open for two weeks after each round of invitations was sent out. At the conclusion of this period, the researcher began analyzing the data.

Qualtrics XM recorded and displayed the participant's responses to the EFQ. The researcher reviewed the responses and exported the data into IBM SPSS Statistics for analysis. The simplicity of the EFQ allowed the researcher to transfer the data from Qualtrics XM to SPSS without complication. The researcher used SPSS to calculate the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient for each of the variable pairings. The researcher used an online calculator to determine the *p*-value or significance for each of the variable pairings (Barcelona Field Studies Centre, n.d.).

Data Analysis and Statistical Procedures

Once the quantitative responses were collected from the participants and exported into the SPSS software, quantitative data analysis began. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the study participants. Sample characteristics inform study results.

Research questions one through three are the quantitative research questions that were addressed through data collected by the EFQ. The study has three main variables, and its aim is to examine the relationships, if any, between the variables, as follows:

- The relationship between the level of importance the source churches place on evangelism and the number of their new believer baptisms.

- The relationship between the level of importance the source churches place on evangelism and the ranges of their tangible evangelism practices implemented.
- The relationship between the source churches' ranges of tangible evangelism practices and the number of their new believer baptisms.

Study participants self-reported data related to the variables.

The researcher used Spearman's rank correlation coefficient to evaluate and examine if there were relationships between the study's variables. Spearman's rank correlation coefficient is most effective for analyzing data when: (a) the data are ordinal, (b) the data are not normally distributed, (c) the data include outliers, and (d) the relationship between the variables is non-linear (Turney, 2022). This study's quantitative data fit the four criteria for use of Spearman's rank correlation coefficient.

The EFQ collected ordinal data. Ordinal data are data in which response categories have a natural rank order, but the gap between categories is not necessarily even (Bhandari, 2022). For example, regarding EFQ response options for how participants rated evangelism's level of importance, the gap between "Very unimportant" and "Unimportant" may not necessarily be equal to the gap between "Unimportant" and "Neither important nor unimportant."

The variables were not normally distributed. The researcher used the Shapiro-Wilk test to assess the normality of the data. The researcher used .05 as the minimum Shapiro-Wilk value acceptable for determining normality (Lund Research, n.d.). Table 1 shows the Shapiro-Wilk significance values for each of the variables.

Table 1*Shapiro-Wilk Significance Values*

	Shapiro-Wilk Sig.
Value Placed on Evangelism	.005
Evangelism Actions	.022
Baptism Ratio	.018

The table shows that data for each study variable fell below the Shapiro-Wilk threshold. This means that data for each variable were abnormally distributed.

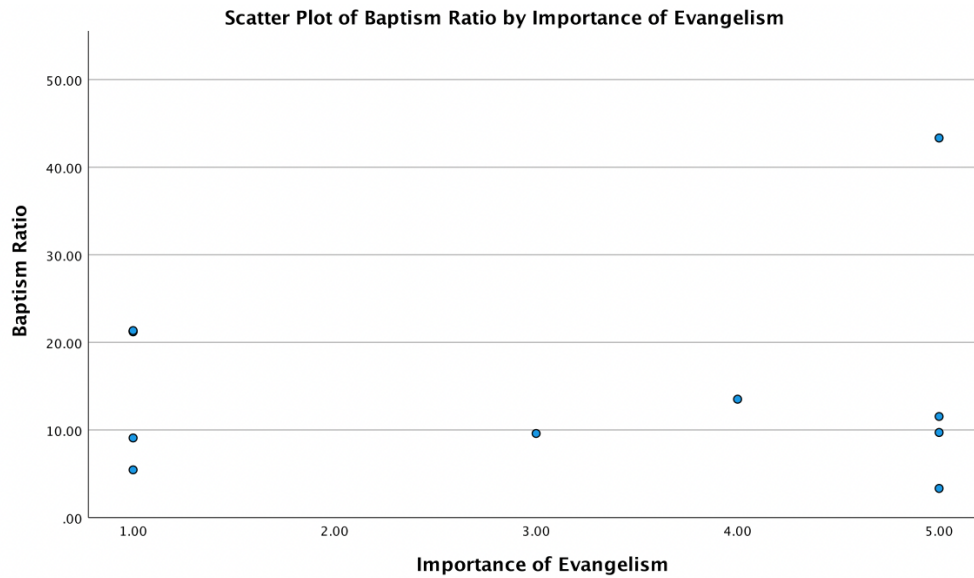
The data included outliers. This is when a datum varies greatly from other data. In this study for example - Seven out of the ten responses reported a baptism ratio between 9.09 and 21.33. However, the highest reported baptism ratio was 43.33, more than twice as high as the next highest response.

The relationships between the variables of this study were non-linear. Scatter plots are used to assess the relationships between variables. In a scatter plot approach, the researcher represents one variable on the X-axis and another variable on the Y-axis of a graph. Each dot is a single coordinate, representing the intersection of two variables, so that the relationship between the variables can be determined (Gogtay & Thatte, 2017). Figures 1 through 3 show the non-linear relationships between the variables of this study.

Figure 1 depicts data for the importance placed on evangelism (variable a), X-axis, and the baptism ratio (variable c), Y-axis.

Figure 1

Association Between Importance of Evangelism and Baptism Ratio



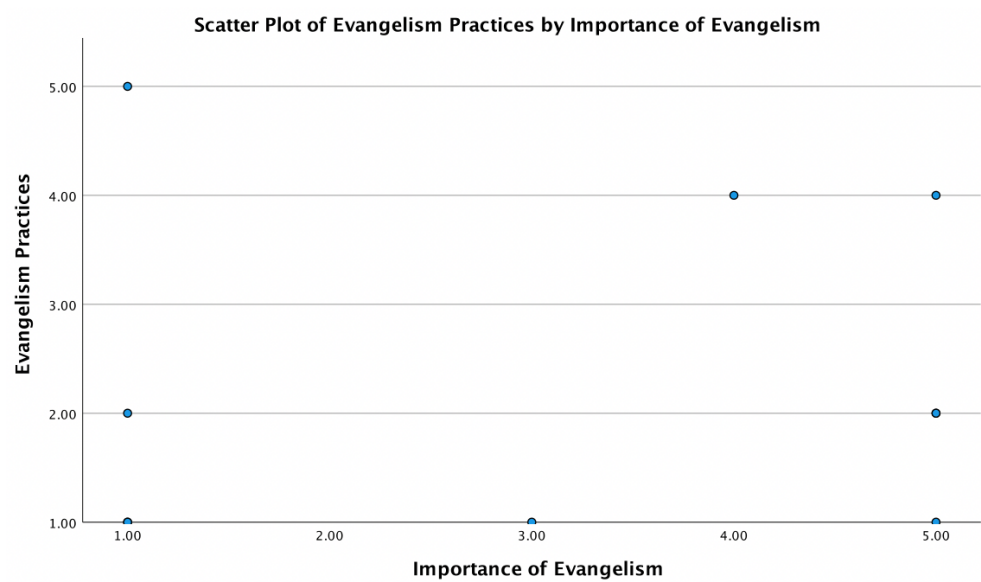
Note. Each dot represents a study participant. While there were 10 participants, 9 dots show due to similar responses from 2 participants.

Figure 1 illustrates the nonlinear relationship between these variables. The dots show no pattern that renders a straight line. This means that the relationship between these two variables is non-linear. Further results are discussed in Chapter Four.

Figure 2 displays data for the importance placed on evangelism (variable a), X-axis, and the number of evangelism actions (variable b), Y-axis.

Figure 2

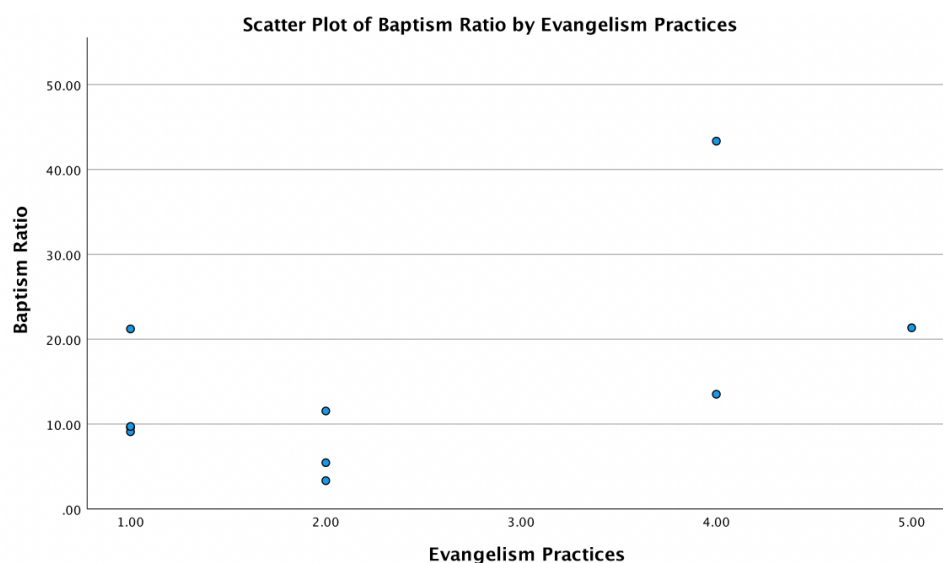
Association Between Importance of Evangelism and Evangelism Practices



Note. Each dot represents a study participant. While there were 10 participants, 8 dots show due to the same responses from 2 participants and a similar response from 1 participant.

Figure 2 illustrates the nonlinear relationship between the variables. The scatter plot indicates that there is no straight line or direct relationship between the variables. Further results are discussed in Chapter Four.

Figure 3 shows data regarding the number of evangelism actions (variable b), X-axis, and the baptism ratio (variable c), Y-axis.

Figure 3*Association Between Evangelism Practices and Baptism Ratio*

Note. Each dot represents a study participant. While there were 10 participants, 9 dots show due to the same responses from 2 participants.

Figure 3 illustrates the nonlinear relationship between the variables. The data on the scatter plot does not render a straight line. Additional discussion of the findings is provided in Chapter Four.

Use of Spearman's rank correlation coefficient enabled the researcher to determine any relationship between variables, as well as the strength and direction of the relationships (Leedy & Ormrod, 2018). Additionally, each correlation was assessed for statistical significance. Humble (2020) describes this as determining if the correlation result is due to other factors rather than the data. Leedy and Ormrod (2018) add that statistical significance allows the researcher to determine whether the data can be used to draw meaningful conclusions about the correlation between the variables. For these reasons, based on the characteristics of the data, the researcher relied on Spearman's rank correlation coefficient and statistical significance to analyze the quantitative data.

Qualitative Research Methodology

The qualitative aspect of the mixed-methods study was conducted in the form of a follow-up survey that allowed the respondents to provide responses to open-ended questions. Qualitative analysis of the survey responses allowed the researcher to understand why the relationships between variables do or do not exist from the lenses of respondents. This provided a deeper understanding of the quantitative findings.

Setting

The qualitative study included lead pastors from churches in suburban areas across the United States. The study focused on the suburban context rather than a specific geographic location. Suburban areas are outgaining urban and rural areas in terms of population (Fry, 2020). The consistent change and growth occurring in the suburbs bring the opportunity to collect new data and to better understand the trends that will affect the Church's future.

The setting for the qualitative portion of the study was governed by where each respondent chose to complete the survey. Participants were from churches in the suburban United States – as described in the Quantitative, Population section. Surveys were delivered to the participants electronically and the researcher was not present while the surveys were completed by respondents.

Participants

Participants for the qualitative portion of the study were drawn from the lead pastors who completed the quantitative research portion of the study. There were 10 quantitative participants and all 10 were invited to participate in the qualitative portion of the study. In an explanatory sequential mixed methods design, the qualitative participants are selected from the quantitative sample so that the qualitative data can directly build upon the quantitative findings (Creswell &

Creswell, 2018). Four of the quantitative participants responded to the invitation to participate in the qualitative portion of the study.

The qualitative participants completed a follow-up survey (Appendix D) which is named External Focus Follow-up Questionnaire (EFFQ). The participants were from source churches located in Texas, Ohio, and Illinois. Each church's average weekly attendance ranges from 185 people to 825 people. The exact data is provided in Chapter Four. The EFFQ included open-ended questions that were designed to discover a deeper understanding about the study's quantitative results. Responses to the EFFQ provided reasons for quantitative results as depicted and explained in Chapter Four and Chapter Five.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher did not have a preexisting relationship with the participants in the study. The lead pastors with whom the researcher had a preexisting relationship either did not respond to the invitation to participate in the study or responded but were not included because their churches did not fit the study's criteria. By using an online church database, the study included only participants with which the researcher had no pre-existing relationship. As such, there was no conflict of interest between the participants and the researcher.

The researcher was not present during the completion of the survey, allowing the participants to complete the survey at their own convenience in a setting of their choosing. The researcher contacted the participants only through email to administer the survey. Through the survey, the researcher aimed to provide the participants with the opportunity to discuss the phenomenon of evangelism in their churches.

Preparing the open-ended questions for the EFFQ was one of the primary roles that the researcher played in the qualitative research portion of the study. The researcher composed

questions that allowed the participants to provide data related to the research variables. The data informed an understanding of church growth through conversion.

By incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data into the study, the researcher limited the potential impact that subjectivity and the researcher's perspective might have had on the results. By using a mixed-methods approach, the researcher had both a quantitative and qualitative dataset from which to draw conclusions.

Data Collection Method and Instruments

The researcher used a qualitative online survey to collect data from the respondents about their lived evangelism experiences in order to answer research questions four through six and explain the quantitative findings. The survey questions asked the respondents to describe their experiences and views about their churches as they related to the research variables. The main variables are: (a) importance churches place on evangelism, (b) tangible acts of evangelism, and (c) new believer conversions or baptisms. The respondents provided in-depth answers about their churches' views and approaches to evangelism. This section includes information about the methods of data collection, instruments used, and the procedures for analyzing the data.

Collection Methods

The qualitative portion of the study used survey instrumentation, the EFFQ, to better understand how the relationships, or lack thereof, between variables affect evangelism for source churches. While many qualitative studies use interviews to collect data, some scholars have advocated for the use of online surveys in qualitative studies. Qualitative online surveys have greater ease of access than interviews while still collecting deep and rich data (Braun et al., 2021; Wright, 2005). By using a qualitative online survey, respondents were able to complete the

EFFQ at their own convenience. The researcher selected a research design that was accessible and convenient for respondents.

The data collected via the EFFQ were analyzed using an open coding approach (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The researcher read through the raw data and combined the data into groupings that represented the content of the responses (Thomas, 2006). Descriptive coding was then used to group similar codes into categories (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019; Saldaña, 2015). This approach allowed the categories to emerge from the codes and represent the data at a more general level. The researcher then sorted the categories into a larger theme (Khandkar, 2009). The theme represented the content of the responses on the most general level. This approach allowed the codes, categories, and theme to emerge from the data and represent the content of the responses.

Instruments and Protocols

This section describes the instrument used in the study to collect qualitative data as well as how the instrument was developed and validated. Survey instrumentation was used. The survey instrument yielded qualitative data that were analyzed, interpreted, and then used to explain the quantitative findings in an explanatory sequential mixed methods study design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Survey Questionnaire

The qualitative research aspect of the study utilized an open-ended survey that collected data regarding the lived experiences of the respondents regarding evangelism and the research variables. The researcher used Qualtrics XM to design an External Focus Follow-up Questionnaire (EFFQ). The EFFQ was designed to expand upon the quantitative data. Additionally, some of the expert panel's feedback regarding the EFQ was incorporated into the

composition of the EFFQ. The panel suggested collecting data regarding the respondents' perception of the effectiveness of their current evangelistic efforts and the methods used to mobilize the congregants to evangelize. This feedback was used to shape EFFQ questions 7 and 9 in particular and ensure the questions collected the intended data. The EFFQ (Appendix D) is comprised of open-ended questions that seek to answer research questions four through six. The instrument has three sections.

Section one of the questionnaire addressed the relationship between the level of importance a church places on evangelism and the church's evangelism practices. The questionnaire requested each participant to provide information about the way(s) in which the church communicates the level of importance it places on evangelism. Further, the questionnaire requested the participant's opinions about whether there is a connection between the church's level of importance on evangelism and its evangelism actions.

Section two of the questionnaire focused on the relationship between evangelism actions and the church's new believer baptisms. In this section, participants provided information about the ways, if any, the church's evangelism actions impacted the number of new believer baptisms the church performed. Participants also were asked to evaluate the effectiveness of their churches' evangelism actions, identifying how the actions could have been more effective and what prevented the actions from being more effective.

Section three of the questionnaire contained questions regarding the relationship between the level of importance of evangelism and the church's new believer baptisms. In this section, the participants answered questions about the ways, if any, the level of importance their churches place on evangelism impacted the amount of the churches' new believer baptisms. Participants

were asked to explain why their churches' view of evangelism has or has not translated into results.

Procedures

Qualitative data were collected through the use of an online survey. All 10 of the participants in the quantitative portion of the study received an email inviting them to complete the EFFQ. Four of the ten participants responded.

The survey was administered electronically in the same manner as the EFQ. This allowed the respondents to reflect on the relationships, or lack thereof, between the variables and discuss the causes behind the strengths, or lack thereof, of the relationships.

Survey instrumentation through an online survey was used because it allowed the respondents to answer the questions at their pace. The researcher chose this method because of the ease of access it provides for respondents while still yielding deep and rich data.

The researcher composed the EFFQ based on the research questions. It was developed within the Qualtrics XM platform which later also was used for distribution of the EFFQ to potential study participants. Before launching the survey, it was validated by an expert panel and approved for use by the IRB (Appendix E).

Using the email addresses provided by the participants in the quantitative portion of the study, the researcher sent the participants a written invitation to participate in the qualitative portion of the study (Appendix F) and an electronic link to the EFFQ. The researcher left the survey open for two weeks to allow for responses. At the conclusion of this period, the researcher began analyzing the data. Qualtrics XM recorded and displayed the participants' responses to the EFFQ. The researcher reviewed and coded the responses.

The responses were analyzed and coded using a thematic analysis approach in order to write a narrative that communicates the story of the phenomenon as illustrated by the data (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). This analysis of qualitative data supplemented the quantitative findings to provide a comprehensive analysis of evangelism.

The results from the EFFQ were compared to the results from the EFQ to ensure internal consistency which establishes reliability of instruments. Creswell and Creswell (2018) recommend the establishment of validity and reliability during data analysis if instruments are combined in a study. While this source was focused on quantitative studies, Golafshani (2003) applies reliability standards to qualitative research as well. Internal consistency indicates whether or not the items in a test or survey that are intended to measure the same construct produce consistent scores (Tang et. Al, 2014). For example, the EFQ responses indicated that the source churches implemented a low range of evangelism practices. The EFFQ responses revealed that three of the four respondents utilized a relational approach to evangelism, which uses few evangelism actions. In this way, the EFQ and EFFQ data demonstrates internal consistency in regard to measuring the source churches' evangelism actions.

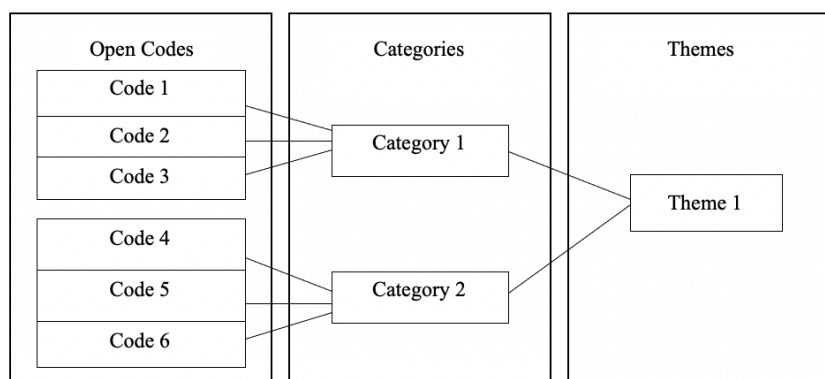
Qualtrics XM distributed and collected the responses. Only the researcher and institutional supervisors were given access to the data. All data were stored on a password-locked computer to which only the researcher had access. Electronic records will be kept for three years and then deleted. While the nature of the qualitative research aspect of the study required disclosing general information about the source churches as part of data collection, the researcher did not publish this information or use the names of participants during the analysis or reporting of the study results. This ensures the confidentiality of all participants.

Data Analysis

This section discusses how data were organized and analyzed primarily through coding. Coding is an important element of qualitative research. It pertains to the process of systematically categorizing qualitative data to find themes and patterns of information (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). Coding enabled the researcher to take open-ended EFFQ responses (data) and structure them into themes and patterns for analysis. Figure 4 illustrates the process of grouping codes together to form categories and themes.

Figure 4

Open Codes to Theme Example



Note. This model is based on *The Art of Coding and Thematic Exploration in Qualitative Research* by M. Williams & T. Moser, 2019. *International Management Review*, 15(1), 45–55.

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As implied in Figure 4, in an open coding approach, the researcher reads through the raw data and creates codes based on the responses. The process of coding assigns descriptive labels or codes to segments of the data so that the researcher can identify related content across the data (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, n.d.). The researcher then develops categories that describe the codes. An overarching theme is then created to encapsulate the categories and codes.

Analysis Methods

The researcher used an open coding approach to sort and analyze the data. The use of open coding means that, rather than using predetermined labels to organize the data, the researcher reviewed the data and allowed the labels to emerge from the participants' responses (Thomas, 2006; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). These labels represent the evangelism lived experiences described by the respondents. The labels or codes emerged primarily through repetition. The more often an aspect was mentioned by the same or multiple respondents, the more likely the aspect was labeled as a code.

In the next round of coding, the researcher used a descriptive coding approach (Saldaña, 2014; Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). During descriptive coding, the researcher grouped the codes into categories so that the data could be analyzed and interpreted (Thompson et al., 2004). The categories emerged from the similarities of codes. All codes with similar meanings were put in the same group or category.

The researcher then used a thematic analysis approach (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). This approach allowed the researcher to examine the pattern of meaning that emerged from the data in order to use the qualitative portion of the study to explain the quantitative findings. The categories and codes were sorted into the theme "Positive Perception of Evangelism Lived Experience" in order to bring identity and meaning to recurrent experiences that emerged from the data (Nowell et al., 2017).

Toward analysis, an inductive approach was utilized. Codes rolled up into categories and categories into themes or larger patterns (Kandkar, 2009). This evolution allowed conclusions to emerge from the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This analysis method allowed the data from participants to drive the conclusions because the goal of the qualitative portion of the study was

to understand how and why the relationships between variables do or do not exist and to explain the quantitative findings.

Once the responses were coded, the researcher analyzed the data and identified the narrative and conclusions that emerged from the data. Incorporating themes and quotes from the responses, the researcher wrote a narrative that communicates the story of the phenomenon as illustrated by the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, the standard that is most frequently used for judging good and bad research is trustworthiness (Roberts, 2010). To ensure the trustworthiness of the EFFQ and the subsequent results of the study, the researcher took the following steps in regard to credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

By allowing the participants to record their own responses to the questionnaire, the researcher minimized potential miscommunications or misrepresentations of the participants' responses. The participants were able to review and edit their responses prior to submission, allowing the participants to trust that their experiences and opinions were recorded and reported accurately. Having participants record and review their own responses allowed the study to be conducted with the highest level of credibility.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the possibility that results found in one context apply to other contexts. The results will not generalize to the population of interest because the quantitative portion of the study used convenience sampling. However, the findings of the qualitative portion of the study may be applicable to churches outside of the study in isolated, non-scientific ways.

Churches may be able to draw application from the lived experiences of the qualitative study participants.

The study has implications for lead pastors as they reexamine their churches' approaches to evangelism. The study has provided lead pastors with information to strengthen the relationships between the level of importance of evangelism in their churches, their tangible evangelism actions taken, and the number of new believer baptisms performed at their churches. For example, the study determined that relationships do not exist between the variables. Pastors can use this finding to improve their evangelism efforts by addressing the effectiveness of their evangelism actions and increasing the connection between their evangelism actions and new believer baptisms. By understanding how and why the relationships between variables do not exist, the study has illustrated how pastors could more effectively translate their beliefs about evangelism into actions in order to achieve the desired results of new believer conversions.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the detail of both the research context and the processes and procedures. This study's approach of collecting both quantitative and qualitative data helped to ensure the dependability of both datasets. Although the quantitative and qualitative portions of the study examined evangelism in different ways, the data between the two approaches were confirmed to be compatible.

The qualitative data were used to explain the quantitative findings, demonstrating the internal consistency. Drastic discrepancies between the datasets would indicate a flaw in the instruments or inconsistent responses from participants. In this study, there was internal consistency which confirms the reliability of the data collected and the reliability of both instruments.

For example, the quantitative data indicated that the churches implemented a low number of evangelism actions. The qualitative data revealed that the churches used a relational approach to evangelism that involves few evangelism actions. In this way, the data collected by both the quantitative and qualitative portions of the study were compatible. Additionally, the researcher provides clear and concise outlines in the quantitative and qualitative sections of the study report. This enables the reader to replicate the study.

Confirmability

To ensure confirmability, the researcher documented how interpretations and findings were derived from the data in specific of terms – to the fullest extent possible (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Throughout the study, the researcher demonstrated how conclusions were reached (Nowell et al., 2017). By illustrating the process by which conclusions were reached and explaining the rationale behind every decision, the researcher minimized the subjectivity of the study.

Ethical Considerations

The ethical considerations of both phases are discussed together in this section because both the quantitative and qualitative phases of the study involved a survey design. The study was subject to IRB approval and was not implemented without that approval.

In order to ensure that the study was conducted in an ethical manner, the researcher determined that the risks and potential negative effects of participating in the study were minimal and disclosed this to the participants. This disclosure allowed the participants to give their informed consent to participate in the study.

The researcher took the appropriate steps to protect the privacy of participants and mitigate any possible negative effects. As part of this, the researcher did not present the survey

results in a way that could allow the participants to be identified. The identities of the participants will remain confidential because the names of the surveyed churches and participants were not important to the study.

Chapter Summary

The Church is facing the important issues of declining attendance and ineffective evangelism. There is currently a gap in the literature regarding the ways in which the importance of evangelism, evangelism practices, and evangelism results do or do not affect each other. By examining the topic of evangelism from both a quantitative and qualitative perspective, the study aimed to examine the interplay of three variables related to Church evangelism. The mixed-methods study examined the level of importance churches place on evangelism and the relationship, if any, between that importance and conversion-based church growth. Data related to evangelism practices or tangible actions taken by churches also were collected and examined in order to understand the process by which the level of importance influences evangelism results or conversions.

The quantitative research sample was comprised of 10 lead pastors from nondenominational, baptistic, evangelistic, Christian churches located in suburban areas in the United States with weekly worship service attendances between 60 and 942 adults. The researcher used a non-probable, convenience sampling approach to identify potential participants.

The study used a quantitative questionnaire to collect data about the level of importance of evangelism, tangible evangelism actions, and new believer baptisms in source churches. Using Spearman's rank correlation coefficient, these data were used to determine the direction and strength of the relationships between variables, if any.

Once the researcher examined these relationships and reviewed the results, the researcher invited the participants into the qualitative portion of the study. Four of the quantitative participants responded by completing the EFFQ. The qualitative data were used to understand and explain the quantitative findings in greater depth.

While there are limitations to the generalization of the study, primarily due to the sampling method used and the size of the sample that was drawn, the goal was to provide churches with information that may inform their evangelism efforts. The Church is called to engage in evangelism. However, the decline of church attendance in the United States indicates that the American Church is not actively engaging in effective evangelism. This mixed-methods study examined the relationships, if any between the level of importance churches place on evangelism, their tangible evangelism actions, and the number of new believer baptisms performed by churches. By conducting quantitative correlation and qualitative research, the study was able to determine if relationships between these variables exist and why or why not. Chapters Four and Five provide details about the study's results.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to examine the effectiveness of evangelism at non-denominational, baptistic, evangelistic, Christian churches in suburban areas of the United States by collecting both quantitative and qualitative data. A review of the existing literature revealed the need for a deeper understanding of the American Church's evangelism efforts. This researcher contends that the decline in church attendance, which is well-documented in the literature, indicates the Church's failure to evangelize effectively. The Church is commanded to evangelize (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Matt. 28:18-20,) and must engage in evangelism effectively. To understand why churches are not evangelizing effectively, the study examined the relationships between the level of importance churches place on evangelism, their tangible evangelism practices, and their number of new believer baptisms. Chapter Four recaps elements of the research design and purpose. The chapter then presents the compilation protocols and measures as well as the demographic and sample data for the study. Following this, the chapter examines the data analysis and findings of the study. These elements are organized into two sections. First, it will cover the quantitative portion of the research and then the qualitative portion of the study. Chapter Four concludes with an evaluation of the study's research design.

Research Questions

RQ1. What relationship, if any, exists between the level of importance the source churches place on evangelism and the number of their new believer baptisms?

RQ2. What relationship, if any, exists between the level of importance the source churches place on evangelism and the ranges of their tangible evangelism practices implemented?

RQ3. What relationship, if any, exists between the source churches' ranges of tangible evangelism practices and the number of their new believer baptisms?

RQ4. In what ways, if any, do lead pastors describe the level of importance their churches place on evangelism?

RQ5. In what ways, if any, do lead pastors describe their churches' outreach-oriented ministries and initiatives?

RQ6. In what ways, positively or negatively, do lead pastors perceive that their churches' emphasis on evangelism impacts their churches' new believer baptisms?

Null Hypotheses

H₀1: No relationship exists between the level of importance the source churches place on evangelism and the number of their new believer baptisms.

H₀2: No relationship exists between the level of importance the source churches place on evangelism and the range of their tangible evangelism practices implemented.

H₀3: No relationship exists between the source churches' range of tangible evangelism practices and the number of their new believer baptisms.

Quantitative Research: Compilation Protocol and Measures

For the quantitative aspect of the study, the researcher used the EFQ to gather data regarding the research variables. The research variables were: (a) importance churches place on evangelism, (b) tangible acts of evangelism, and (c) new believer conversions or baptisms. The data were analyzed to answer research questions one through three and to assess the related null hypotheses.

The researcher used the Qualtrics XM program to create the EFQ. Qualtrics XM produced a shareable link that the researcher used to invite participants to the study. Use of the EFQ was approved by the IRB prior to its distribution. Using an internet database of churches, the researcher found 425 potential participants and emailed them an invitation to participate in the study along with a link to the EFQ. Responses were received from 12 participants and 2 of those responses did not meet the criteria for inclusion in the study. This yielded 10 participants for the quantitative portion of the study. Qualtrics XM recorded and displayed the participants' responses to the EFQ. The researcher inputted the data into the IBM SPSS program to analyze

and determine the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient. The researcher used an online calculator (Barcelona Field Studies Centre, n.d.) to determine the p -value, or statistical significance, for each correlation (variable pairing). Statistical significance determines whether or not the relationship between variables was the result of chance (Leedy & Ormrod, 2018).

Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient

To analyze the quantitative data, the researcher used Spearman's rank correlation coefficient scatter plots. Spearman's rank correlation coefficient is most effective for analyzing data when: (a) the data are ordinal, (b) the data are not normally distributed, (c) the data include outliers, and (d) the relationship between the variables is non-linear (Turney, 2022). In Chapter Three, the researcher established that this study's data met the conditions for use of the Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient. The results of the data analysis are discussed in the Data Analysis and Findings section.

Quantitative Research: Demographic Sample Data

The demographic of the sample was more diverse and representative of the population of interest than initially anticipated by the researcher. The researcher had originally planned on including lead pastors with whom the researcher had existing relationships. The lead pastors with whom the researcher had existing relationships either did not meet the study's criteria for inclusion, due to denominational affiliation or attendance size, or did not respond. Consequently, the researcher relied on an online database to access participants for the quantitative portion of the study. The sample likely is more reflective of the population because the participants were all from the online database.

Twelve people accepted the study invitation and completed the EFQ. Two of the responses were not included in the study because the source churches did not fit the study's

criteria. One of the responses was not included because the source church's average attendance was 1100, which is greater than the 1000 people study parameter. The other response was not included because the source church was denominational as opposed to nondenominational as stated in the study parameters.

Ten respondents met the study's criteria and were included in the study. Table 2 provides an overview of study participants and related data.

Table 2

Quantitative Data

Respondent	Importance Placed on Evangelism	Number of Evangelism Practices or Actions	Number of Baptisms	Average Worship Attendance	Baptism Ratio	Geographic Location
1	Very Unimportant	Less than 3	175	825	21.21	Texas
2	Important	10 to 12	25	185	13.51	Texas
3	Very Unimportant	3 to 5	15	275	5.45	Ohio
4	Very Unimportant	Less than 3	35	385	9.09	Illinois
5	Very Important	3 to 5	5	150	3.33	Missouri
6	Very Important	3 to 5	15	130	11.54	Arizona
7	Very Important	10 to 12	26	60	43.33	California
8	Very Important	Less than 3	68	700	9.71	Indiana
9	Neither Imp. Nor Unimp.	Less than 3	72	750	9.60	Oregon
10	Very Unimportant	More than 12	201	942	21.33	Ohio

The far-right column shows that study participants were from churches located in Arizona, California, Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, Ohio, Oregon, and Texas. Additionally, the average weekly attendance of the source churches varied from 60 people to 942 people.

Although the sample was relatively small, the diversity of the sample matters. The study's sample or source churches were diverse in regard to location and average attendance. The sample was not a random sample which means study results do not generalize to the population of interest with a high confidence level. However, the diversity of the sample may produce results that have implications for churches with similar characteristics as the churches that comprised the sample.

Quantitative Research: Data Analysis and Findings

To analyze the data, the researcher used Spearman's rank correlation coefficient. Spearman's rank correlation coefficient determines the strength and direction of the relationships between variables (Gupta, 2022). The study's three variables were paired to assess relationships between the variables. Through statistical manipulation, each pairing is assigned a value (ρ) between negative one (-1) and positive one (1). Negative one (-1) means a perfect negative correlation, positive one (1) means a perfect positive correlation, and zero (0) means no correlation between the variables that have been paired (Humble, 2020). A perfect negative correlation indicates that when one variable increases, the other decreases in equal proportion. A perfect positive correlation indicates that when one variable increases, the other variable increases in equal proportion. While there are no set categories for the strength of a correlation, scholars recommend interpreting the data within the context of the posed research question (Schober et al., 2018). For the purposes of this study, Appendix G depicts the strength of positive and negative correlations:

- ρ values between .001 and .400 were considered weak,
- ρ values between .401 and .700 were considered moderate, and

- p values above .701 were considered strong. Table 2 provides the correlation coefficients for the three variable pairings.

Once a correlation coefficient is determined, its significance level is assessed to determine if the relationship indicated by the coefficient is valid or if the results occurred by chance. The significance level also can be used to reject or accept the null hypothesis (Leedy & Ormrod, 2018).

Significance levels are expressed in decimal form. A .05 level indicates a 1-in-20 probability that the statistical result occurred by chance. Most researchers use .05 or .01 as the highest acceptable significance level (Leedy & Ormrod, 2018). This study used a .05 significance level. This means that if the significance level for a correlation exceeds this threshold, there is a greater than 5% probability that the correlation was the result of chance and the null hypotheses cannot be rejected (Barcelona Field Studies Centre, n.d.).

Table 3 illustrates the correlation coefficients and significance levels for the study's three variable pairings. The n value indicates the number of data points or participants in the study and reflects the EFQ responses that are included in the dataset (Gupta, 2022). The n value was 10 for all three correlations because the sample size was 10 participants for all of the quantitative survey responses. Following the table, study results are discussed in order by research question.

Table 3*Correlation Coefficients and Statistical Significance Levels (n=10)*

	Importance of Evangelism	Evangelism Actions	Baptism Ratio
Importance of Evangelism	1.000		
Evangelism Actions	.122	1.000	
Baptism Ratio	.019	.458	1.000

*No correlation was significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)***Research Question One**

Research question one asked what relationship, if any, exists between the level of importance the source churches place on evangelism and the number of their new believer baptisms. Answering this question and determining if the church's view of evangelism impacted its evangelism results were at the center of this study. Null hypothesis one hypothesized that no relationship exists between the level of importance placed on evangelism and the baptism ratio.

Results show a weak positive association ($\rho = .019$) between the importance source churches place on evangelism and the churches' baptism ratios. However, this result is without statistical significance ($p > .05$). Therefore, this result fails to reject the null hypothesis. Any association between these two variables was likely due to chance.

Given these findings, there is no relationship between the level of importance source churches place on evangelism and their baptism ratio in the sample group. This means that if a church increased the level of importance that it places on evangelism, it would not necessarily translate to an increase or decrease in the number of new believer baptisms.

Research Question Two

Research question two asked what relationship, if any, exists between the level of importance the source churches place on evangelism and the ranges of their tangible evangelism practices implemented. Answering this question is essential to understanding the current state of evangelism. The answers may help determine where the breakdown between evangelism and results is occurring. For instance, the lack of relationship between the variables may indicate that churches are failing to translate their value of evangelism into action. Null hypothesis two hypothesized that no relationship exists between the level of importance the source churches place on evangelism and the range of their tangible evangelism practices implemented.

Results show a weak positive association ($\rho = .122$) between the importance source churches place on evangelism and their tangible evangelism practices. However, this result is without statistical significance ($p > .05$). Therefore, this result fails to reject the null hypothesis. Any association between these two variables was likely due to chance.

Given these findings, there is no relationship between the level of importance source churches place on evangelism and their tangible evangelism practices. This means that if a church increased the level of importance that it places on evangelism, it would not necessarily translate to an increase or decrease in the range of its tangible evangelism practices implemented.

Research Question Three

Research question three asked what relationship, if any, exists between the source churches' ranges of tangible evangelism practices and the number of their new believer baptisms. Answering this question and determining the impact that the range of evangelism practices has on new believer baptisms is important for understanding the effectiveness of churches' evangelism efforts. The researcher sought to know if ineffective evangelism actions by churches

impede evangelism results such as baptisms Null hypothesis three hypothesized that no relationship exists between the source churches' range of tangible evangelism practices and the number of their new believer baptisms.

Results show a moderate positive association ($\rho = .458$) between the churches' tangible evangelism practices and the number of their new believer baptisms. However, this result is without statistical significance ($p > .05$). Therefore, this result fails to reject the null hypothesis. Any association between these two variables was likely due to chance.

Given these findings, there is no relationship between the churches' tangible evangelism practices and the number of their new believer baptisms. This means that if a church increased the range of its evangelism practices, it would not necessarily increase or decrease the number of new believer baptisms.

The quantitative portion of the study did not reveal statistically significant relationships between the variables. All three variable pairings failed to reject null hypotheses one through three. Any association between the variables is likely due to chance. This means that the level of importance churches place on evangelism, the ranges of their evangelism practices, and the number of new believer baptisms do not impact one another. If churches were to invest resources into increasing one of the variables, it would not necessarily result in either of the other variables increasing or decreasing. This indicates a breakdown in the Church's ability to translate its value of evangelism into tangible action or its ability to implement effective practices that will lead to more baptisms.

Quantitative Research: Evaluation of the Research Design

The strength of the quantitative research design was its simplicity. By using a narrow focus and limiting the EFQ to only four questions, the researcher was able to collect the intended

and relevant data without confusion. The design allowed the researcher to quantify each of the research variables in a concise but effective manner.

The research design's sampling procedures could be improved in future studies in order to increase participation. Two main factors that contribute to statistical significance are the sample size and the variation in the population (Gallo, 2022). This means that increasing the sample size or drawing a random sample may improve the statistical significance of the results.

Expanding the criteria for participants or providing incentives to encourage participation may yield a larger sample. Additionally, not limiting participation exclusively to lead pastors may increase participation. As the researcher navigated through church websites, he discovered that many lead pastors do not make their email addresses available to the public. Presumably, this is done to protect the lead pastors' time given the busy nature of their positions - thus making lead pastors more difficult to contact. Broadening the sample to include other pastors, such as executive pastors or outreach pastors, who have access to the same information, may expand the number and diversity of participants and responses.

Qualitative Research

After the completion of the quantitative portion of the study, the qualitative portion began. Through qualitative study, the researcher hoped to gain a deeper understanding of the quantitative results. Specifically, the researcher sought additional information about the lack of relationships between the research variables. Four participants from the quantitative study also participated in the qualitative portion. This section provides details about the qualitative portion of the study. It includes data analysis, findings, and methodological information.

Qualitative Research: Compilation Protocol and Measures

The researcher used an open approach to coding, allowing the codes to emerge from the data. The researcher then used descriptive coding to group the coding labels into categories and analyze the qualitative data (Saldaña, 2014; Thompson et al., 2004). Based on the categories, three primary themes emerged. This allowed the data to inform the researcher's understanding of the quantitative results, specifically, why no correlations exist between the study's three research variables.

Coding occurred at three levels: (a) labeling, (b) categorization or groups, and (c) development of larger patterns or themes. Labeling identified key responses from participants toward answering the research questions. These responses prompted categories that organized the responses. The final level sorted the responses into broader categories (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Figure 4 depicts the flow of the study's open coding approach. Labels fill the first box to depict the codes that emerged from the data as the researcher read through the raw data. These codes represent frequent responses and concepts expressed by the respondents. After reviewing the codes, the researcher categorized each of the codes into descriptive categories that represent the content of the codes. The researcher then developed the three primary themes to encapsulate the categories and codes. Based on the respondents' responses, the researcher developed these themes, categories, and codes to classify their lived experiences regarding evangelism. The source of these codes is discussed in greater detail in the research questions sections of this chapter.

Qualitative Research: Demographic and Sample Data

The 10 lead pastors who responded to the (quantitative) EFQ were invited to participate in the qualitative research portion of the study. Four participants responded by taking the EFFQ. Table 4 is an extraction from Table 1 and includes quantitative data as well as geographic information about the qualitative sample.

Table 4

Qualitative Sample Demographics and Quantitative Responses

Respondent	Level of Importance of Evangelism	Number of Evangelism Actions	Number of Baptisms	Average Worship Attendance	Baptism Ratio	Geographic Location
1	1	1	175	825	21.21	Texas
2	4	4	25	185	13.51	Texas
3	1	2	15	275	5.45	Ohio
4	1	1	35	385	9.09	Illinois

Table 4 shows that the four qualitative respondents were lead pastors from source churches in three different states including Texas, Ohio, and Illinois. The average weekly worship attendance of the source churches ranged from 185 to 825 adults. Additional qualitative data from the sample will be shared in the next section and in order by research question.

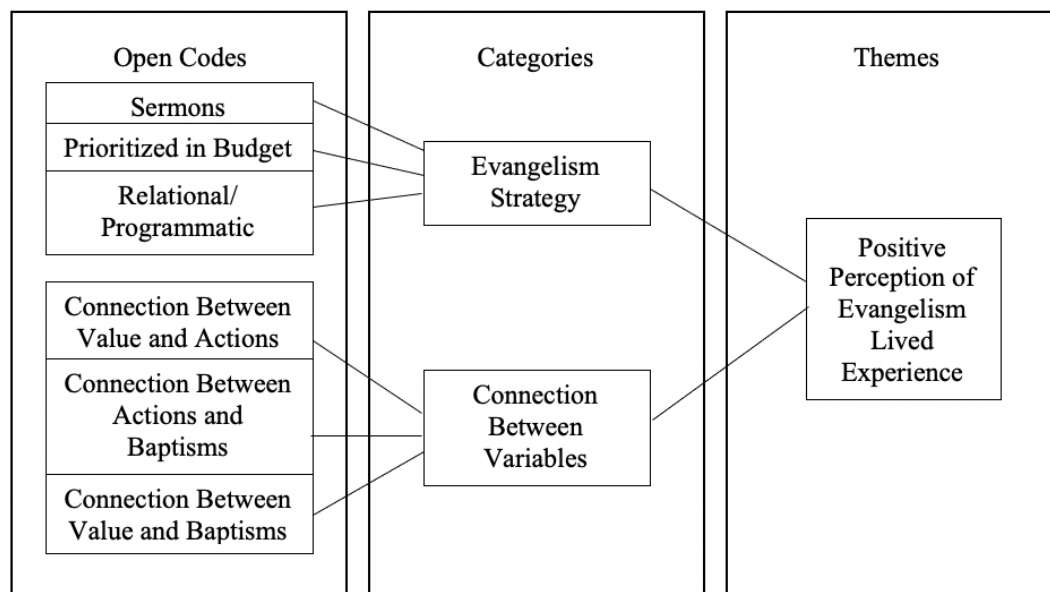
Qualitative Research: Data Analysis and Findings

This section discusses the qualitative data that were collected through responses to the EFFQ. The instrument's questions were aligned with the research questions. To protect the identities of the participants while discussing the findings and results, the researcher refers to the four qualitative participants as Respondent 1, Respondent 2, Respondent 3, and Respondent 4.

In the following sections, the qualitative findings are discussed by research question, specifically research questions four through six. Figure 5 illustrates the theme, categories, and codes that emerged from the data.

Figure 5

Qualitative Data Coding



In each of the following sections, the coding results for each EFFQ question are presented. The discussions of the EFFQ questions are organized by the research question to which they contributed data. The respondents' individual responses are recorded in Appendix H.

Research Question Four

Research question four asked in what ways, if any, do lead pastors describe the level of importance their churches place on evangelism. EFFQ questions 1, 4, 5, and 6 were used primarily to answer this research question. These EFFQ questions prompted respondents regarding the use of communication, staff meetings, and budgets to demonstrate how their churches value evangelism. Additionally, respondents were asked about any hindrances or obstacles to their churches' valuing of evangelism.

EFFQ Question 1

EFFQ question 1 asked the respondents to describe how their churches communicate the level of importance that they place on evangelism. In their responses, 100% of the respondents mentioned sermons, 50% referenced their churches' values, and 50% identified missions work.

As shown in Figure 5, the prevailing code that emerged from these responses was "Sermons." This code represents the method that the source churches most frequently reported using to communicate their value of evangelism.

EFFQ Question 4

EFFQ question 4 asked the respondents to describe the ways that the level of importance their church places on evangelism affects its evangelism practices. In their responses, 50% of the respondents mentioned that the importance of evangelism drives their churches' evangelism. Based on these responses and the absence of any factor being repeated by more than two respondents, no codes emerged from the data collected by EFFQ question 4.

EFFQ Question 5

EFFQ question 5 asked respondents how evangelism is prioritized compared to other focuses and ministries when making major decisions such as the allocation of the budget. In their responses, 75% of the respondents stated that evangelism is prioritized in their churches' budgets.

As shown in Figure 5, the prevailing code that emerged from these responses was "Prioritized in Budget." This code represents the way that the source churches reported demonstrating the importance of evangelism through their budgets.

EFFQ Question 6

EFFQ question 6 asked the respondents what factors hindered their ability to translate the importance of evangelism into evangelism practices. In their responses, 50% of the respondents

identified conflict with their congregants' schedules or other ministries, and 50% mentioned evangelism being dependent on the maturity and involvement of the congregation. Based on these responses and the absence of any factor being repeated by more than two respondents, no codes emerged from the data collected by EFFQ question 6.

Based on all of these responses, the lead pastors that participated in the study described the importance of evangelism by stating that it is communicated through sermons and prioritized in the budget. The codes that emerged from the data collected by EFFQ questions 1, 4, 5, and 6 were "Sermons" and "Prioritized in the Budget." As shown in Figure 5, the category "Evangelism Strategy" emerged from the data to describe these codes. This category describes the way that pastors used the importance of evangelism to develop a strategy for evangelism. This strategy included communicating the importance of evangelism through sermons and demonstrating evangelism's value by prioritizing it in the budget.

Research Question Five

Research question five asked in what ways, if any, do lead pastors describe their churches' outreach-oriented ministries and initiatives. EFFQ questions 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, and 10 were used primarily to answer research question five. The EFFQ questions prompted responses to identify types of evangelism actions or practices and their effectiveness, connections between practices and the value churches place on evangelism, as well as connections between practices and baptisms.

EFFQ Question 2

EFFQ question 2 asked the respondents to describe the evangelism practices at their churches. In their responses, 75% of the respondents described a relational approach to evangelism in which the congregants are encouraged to share their faith with the people in their

daily lives. The other 25% of respondents described a programmatic approach to evangelism in which the church emphasized staff-led, outreach ministries. This fundamental difference between the source churches became apparent and impacted the other responses related to evangelism actions.

As shown in Figure 5, the prevailing code that emerged from these responses was “Relational/Programmatic.” This code represents the way that the source churches approached evangelism actions. This code rolled up into the category “Evangelism Strategy” because of the way the source churches’ approaches to evangelism impacted their overall strategy.

EFFQ Question 3

EFFQ question 3 asked respondents if they felt that there is a connection between the level of importance their churches place on evangelism and their evangelism practices. In their responses, 75% of the respondents stated that they believed there was a connection between the value their churches placed on evangelism and their churches’ evangelism actions.

As shown in Figure 5, the prevailing code that emerged from these responses was “Connection Between Value and Action.” This code represents the perceived connection between the value that the churches place on evangelism and the evangelism actions that the churches implemented as reported by the respondents.

EFFQ Question 7

EFFQ question 7 asked the respondents to describe their most effective evangelism practice. In their responses, 50% of the respondents mentioned relationship-based practices, and 50% identified community-building or long-term outreach practices. Based on these responses and the absence of any factor being repeated by more than two respondents, no codes emerged from the data collected by EFFQ question 7.

EFFQ Question 8

EFFQ question 8 asked the respondents how their churches' evangelism actions affected the number of new believer baptisms they performed. In their responses, 100% of the respondents reported that their churches' evangelism actions resulted directly in new believer baptisms.

As shown in Figure 5, the prevailing code that emerged from these responses was "Connection Between Actions and Baptisms." This code represents the perceived connection between the evangelism actions that the churches implemented and the new believer baptisms that the churches performed as reported by the respondents.

EFFQ Question 9

EFFQ question 9 asked the respondents about the effectiveness of the church's evangelism practices. In their responses, 50% of the respondents said that their church's evangelism practices were very effective and 50% reported that their practices were becoming more effective. Based on these responses and the absence of any factor being repeated by more than two respondents, no codes emerged from the data collected by EFFQ question 9.

EFFQ Question 10

EFFQ question 10 asked the respondents to identify evangelism practices that they believed would increase the number of new believer baptisms performed by their churches. In their responses, 50% of the respondents mentioned that a greater focus on the relational approach to community evangelism would increase the number of new believer baptisms. Based on these responses and the absence of any factor being repeated by more than two respondents, no codes emerged from the data collected by EFFQ question 10.

Based on all of these responses, the lead pastors that participated in the study described their churches' outreach-oriented ministries and initiatives as the result of their approach to evangelism and the value that their churches place on evangelism. The prevailing codes that emerged from the data collected by EFFQ questions 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, and 10 were "Relational/Programmatic" and "Connection Between Value and Action." As shown in Figure 5, the categories "Evangelism Strategy" and "Connection Between Variables" emerged from the data to describe these codes.

Research Question Six

Research question six asked in what ways, positively or negatively, do lead pastors perceive that their churches' emphasis on evangelism impacts their churches' new believer baptisms. The EFFQ questions prompted responses regarding how the source churches' view of evangelism affected the number of new believer baptisms, whether or not the number of new believer baptisms was reflective of their value of evangelism, and how the connection between the number of baptisms and the level of importance of evangelism could be strengthened. EFFQ questions 11, 12, and 13 were used primarily to answer research question six.

EFFQ Question 11

EFFQ question 11 asked the respondents how their churches' view of evangelism affected the number of new believer baptisms performed at their churches. In their responses, 50% of the respondents reported that they believed their churches' view of evangelism increases their number of baptisms. Based on these responses and the absence of any factor being repeated by more than two respondents, no codes emerged from the data collected by EFFQ question 11.

EFFQ Question 12

EFFQ question 12 asked the respondents if they believed that the number of new believer baptisms performed by their churches was reflective of the level of importance that their churches place on evangelism. In their responses, 75% of the respondents stated that the number of new believer baptisms performed at their churches was reflective of the level of importance that their churches place on evangelism.

As shown in Figure 5, the code that emerged from these responses was “Connection Between Value and Baptisms.” This code represents the perceived connection between the value that the churches place on evangelism and the new believer baptisms that the churches performed as reported by the respondents.

EFFQ Question 13

EFFQ question 13 asked the respondents what would allow the level of importance their churches place on evangelism to better translate into more new believer baptisms. In their responses, no factor or concept was mentioned by more than one respondent. Based on these responses and the absence of any factor being repeated by more than one respondent, no codes emerged from the data collected by EFFQ question 13.

Based on all of these responses, the lead pastors that participated in the study perceive that their churches’ emphasis on evangelism positively impacts their churches’ new believer baptisms. The codes that emerged from the data collected by EFFQ questions 11, 12, and 13 were “Connection Between Value and Baptisms.” As shown in Figure 5, the category “Connection Between Variables” emerged from the data to describe this code.

Using the Qualitative Data to Explain Quantitative Findings

After collecting and analyzing the qualitative data, the researcher used the qualitative data to explain the quantitative findings. This process is described in the following section. The discussion refers to the quantitative data (Table 2), the correlation analysis results (Table 3), and the qualitative findings (Figure 5).

Level of Importance Placed on Evangelism

The quantitative descriptive data show that the participants' churches were split regarding the value they placed on evangelism (Table 2). Four of the ten participants (40%) indicated that evangelism was "Very unimportant." One participant (10%) responded that evangelism was "Neither important nor unimportant." The remaining 50% responded that the level of importance that their churches place on evangelism is important or very important. Despite the clear biblical mandate for the church to engage in evangelism, almost half of the participants viewed evangelism as unimportant or not important.

Deeper analysis of this phenomenon happens when analyzing the subset of participants who also participated in the qualitative portion of the study. Three of the four respondents who participated in the qualitative portion of the study reported that evangelism was "Very Unimportant" on the EFQ. Respondent 2 reported evangelism was "Important." None of the qualitative respondents indicated that their churches' level of importance of evangelism was "Very Important."

The qualitative data helped to explain why some churches did not place a high level of importance on evangelism. In their responses to the EFFQ, all four of the qualitative respondents recognized the importance of evangelism but acknowledged that their churches had not always prioritized it properly. When prompted by EFFQ question 1 to explain if he felt his church could

fully communicate the value of evangelism, Respondent 1 said, “While this is a high value, it’s not our only value.” Respondent 2 stated that his church was currently readjusting its budget because they had not prioritized evangelism previously, saying “It hadn’t been a priority, but we are slowly trying to remedy that.” Respondent 3 admitted that his church had recently made the decision to be honest about their “lack of success” and recommit to holding evangelism as an important value. Respondent 4 acknowledged that other ministries in the church pulled focus away from evangelism, saying “There are many other ministers of great importance that draws our church’s attention.”

During quantitative inquiry, when considering the level of importance their churches place on evangelism, “unimportant” was selected by 75% of the qualitative respondents (Table 4). The qualitative data explain these quantitative responses. The respondents reveal that the unimportant value that their churches place on evangelism may be a due to competing focuses. Participants recognized the importance of evangelism but acknowledged that their churches had failed to prioritize it. All of the respondents cited emerging strategies that should raise the level of importance that their churches place on evangelism.

No Relationship Between the Level of Importance of Evangelism and the Number of Baptisms

The quantitative findings revealed that no relationship exists between the level of importance of evangelism and the number of new believer baptisms. This means that an increase in a church’s value of evangelism does not necessarily lead to an increase in the number of new believer baptisms it performs.

Respondent 1 said it was “hard to say” how his church’s level of importance of evangelism had affected the number of baptisms. He reiterated that his church valued and talked about evangelism and baptism but did not identify any concrete ways that the value of

evangelism impacted baptisms. When asked what would better allow the level of importance of evangelism to translate into more baptisms, he responded “Not sure.” Respondent 2 declined to answer questions relating to how his church’s level of importance of evangelism had affected the number of baptisms. Respondent 3 believed that there was a connection between how his church’s level of importance of evangelism and the number of baptisms. He stated that “They are connected. You communicate what matters and you become what you celebrate.” Respondent 4 indicated that he felt there was a connection between how his church’s level of importance of evangelism and the number of baptisms. He could not identify any specific ways the level of importance of evangelism could translate into more baptisms.

The respondents were not able to identify tangible ways in which the value of evangelism led to an increase in baptisms. There appeared to be a lack of intentionality or strategy for translating the value of evangelism into the result of new believer baptisms. The best explanation that the respondents could provide was the process of valuing evangelism, which led to talking about evangelism, which they hoped would in turn result in baptisms. Respondent 1 used this approach and had a baptism ratio of 21.21. Respondent 3 used the same approach and had a baptism ratio of 5.45. This illustrates the unreliability of relying on talking about evangelism to result in baptisms. The absence of intentional evangelism processes helps explain why there is no relationship between the level of importance of evangelism and the number of new believer baptisms.

Low Range of Evangelism Actions

The quantitative findings revealed that the source churches implemented a low number of evangelism actions. Seven of the 10 participants indicated that their churches had implemented the lowest range of evangelism actions (less than 3) or the second lowest range (3 to 5).

The qualitative data explained these findings by illustrating the churches' approach to evangelism. Respondents 1, 2, and 3 described their evangelism approaches as relational. Respondent 1 said that "Sunday mornings are our best evangelism practice." He explained that his church communicates the importance of evangelism during worship services and relies on the congregation to share their faith with the people in their lives throughout the week. Respondent 2 said his church's only evangelism practice was relationship building. Similarly, Respondent 3 described his church's evangelism practices as "person to person out of relationship." Respondent 4 described his church's evangelism practices as programmatic and staff-led. Despite this, the quantitative data revealed that his church implemented less than 3 evangelism actions. His qualitative responses explained that this was because his church valued "developing solid, long term ministries rather than one-off or cold-turkey evangelism." His church invested in creating a few long-term ministries, such as a campus outreach ministry, rather than using its resources to implement a large number of short-term events or campaigns.

The literature review in Chapter Two revealed that some experts were advocating for churches to move away from programmatic approaches to evangelism in favor of relational approaches (Brooks, 2012). The quantitative portion of the study found that churches were implementing a low number of evangelism actions. The qualitative data explained this finding by illustrating how the shift toward a relational approach to evangelism has resulted in fewer evangelism actions. Church used their worship services to communicate the value of evangelism and relied on their congregants to share their faith with people in their lives throughout the week. The source church that still used a programmatic approach invested in a small but focused number of evangelism actions. This may indicate that the low number of evangelism actions revealed in the quantitative findings is due in large part to a shifting approach to evangelism.

No Relationship Between the Level of Importance of Evangelism and Range of Evangelism Actions

The quantitative findings revealed that no relationship exists between the level of importance of evangelism and the range of evangelism actions. This means that an increase in a church's value of evangelism does not necessarily lead to an increase in the number of evangelism actions that it implemented.

As discussed in the previous section, the qualitative data revealed a shifting approach to evangelism in the source churches. Three of the four source churches used a relational approach to evangelism. This approach entails a low number of evangelism actions and puts the onus on individuals to evangelize to the people around them. The low number of evangelism actions is a function of this design.

The quantitative portion of the study revealed that the level of importance of evangelism did not impact the range of evangelism actions implemented. The qualitative data explained that because of their relational approach to evangelism, the participants did not believe that the importance of evangelism should affect the number of evangelism actions that they implement. They were not motivated to implement evangelism actions as a result of their value of evangelism. Instead, they expressed that the value of evangelism was communicated to their congregations through their worship services. In essence, the use of a relational approach to evangelism helps explain why there is no relationship between the level of importance of evangelism and the range of evangelism actions.

No Relationship Between the Range of Evangelism Actions and the Number of Baptisms

The quantitative findings revealed that no relationship exists between the range of evangelism actions and the number of new believer baptisms. This means that an increase in the

number of evangelism actions that it implemented does not necessarily lead to an increase in the number of new believer baptisms performed.

Part of this finding may be attributed to the ineffectiveness of the implemented evangelism actions. Respondent 3's church had the lowest baptism ratio among the four qualitative respondents. When asked about the effectiveness of his church's evangelism actions, he replied "I'd say we are a 6/10." He explained that COVID-19 had disrupted his church's evangelism efforts. His church uses a relational approach to evangelism that relies on congregants sharing their faith with the people in their daily lives. However, he explained that the social disruption caused by COVID-19 affected the effectiveness of this approach, "If you aren't hanging out with people you are not sharing your faith." Respondent 4 had a baptism ratio of 9.09. He explained that his church had recently implemented new outreach ministries and, as a result, the effectiveness of their evangelism actions was increasing.

Respondent 1's church implemented less than 3 evangelism actions but had the highest baptism ratio among the four qualitative respondents. He explained that his church had recently shifted away from effective evangelism actions, such as a "Journey to Bethlehem" Christmas drama that was popular with the community and unchurched. Instead, his church has relied on a relational approach to evangelism. He believes that this shift in evangelism actions has "resulted directly in baptisms." Respondent 2's church had the second-highest baptism ratio among the four qualitative respondents. Respondent 2 said that he believed his church's evangelism actions had been "very effective." He described relationship building as his church's only evangelism practice.

The quantitative portion of the study revealed that the range of evangelism actions implemented did not impact the number of new believer baptisms performed. The qualitative

data explained that this is due in large part to the ineffectiveness of the implemented evangelism actions as well as a shift toward evangelism approaches that do not rely on evangelism actions.

Qualitative Research: Evaluation of the Research Design

One of the biggest strengths of the research design was the decision to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. By using a mixed-methods research design, the researcher was able to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the state of evangelism in the source churches. Determining the relationships, or lack thereof, between the research variables and following up with a qualitative survey provided data that were used to understand why evangelism is declining in the church and how churches may be able to address the problem.

The use of open-ended questions in the qualitative portion of the study drew rich explanations from respondents about evangelism at their churches. The respondents were able to provide a diversity of answers and information beyond preset choices that the researcher could have anticipated. By using open-ended questions, the researcher was able to gain insight into the state of evangelism at the source churches as indicated in the quantitative portion of the study.

The research design could have benefitted from a more focused qualitative survey. The open-ended EFFQ questions provided valuable insight, but the survey was too lengthy and could have been pared down to be more closely aligned with the research questions. Multiple questions could have been combined in order to make the survey-taking process more streamlined for respondents. This is indicated by repetition from the same respondent when answering different EFFQ questions.

The research design could have benefitted from a more sequential composition. In the Creswell and Creswell explanatory sequential mixed methods design, the quantitative portion of the study is completed before the qualitative research instrument is composed. This is done so

that the researcher can use the qualitative portion of the study to address the specific quantitative findings. However, the researcher was not able to implement a sequential design because of time constraints.

The results of the study may have been impacted by the relatively small sample size. For example, a larger sample size may have yielded statistically significant correlations. This would have resulted in greater trustworthiness for the study.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Overview

This chapter provides conclusions from a study of evangelism, its importance, practices, and new believer baptisms. Chapter Five begins with a restatement of the study's purpose and research questions. This is followed by a discussion of the researcher's conclusions. The chapter then contains an analysis of the theoretical, empirical, and practical implications of the study's findings. Afterward, the researcher presents the applications of the study and the research limitations. Ideas for further research are then discussed. The chapter ends with a summary.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to examine the effectiveness of evangelism at non-denominational, baptistic, evangelistic, Christian churches in suburban areas of the United States by collecting both quantitative and qualitative data. This study first collected data in quantitative form to identify evangelism's importance to the churches, their congregant attendance, evangelism practices, and new believer baptisms. The study then collected data in qualitative form with regard to the churches' evangelistic views and their lived experiences. These data then were analyzed to understand the relationship, if any, between the study's variables: (a) importance churches place on evangelism, (b) tangible acts of evangelism, and (c) new believer conversions or baptisms.

Research Questions

RQ1. What relationship, if any, exists between the level of importance the source churches place on evangelism and the number of their new believer baptisms?

RQ2. What relationship, if any, exists between the level of importance the source churches place on evangelism and the ranges of their tangible evangelism practices implemented?

RQ3. What relationship, if any, exists between the source churches' ranges of tangible evangelism practices and the number of their new believer baptisms?

RQ4. In what ways, if any, do lead pastors describe the level of importance their churches place on evangelism?

RQ5. In what ways, if any, do lead pastors describe their churches' outreach-oriented ministries and initiatives?

RQ6. In what ways, positively or negatively, do lead pastors perceive that their churches' emphasis on evangelism impacts their churches' new believer baptisms?

Research Conclusions, Implications, and Applications

This study examined whether or not relationships exist between the level of importance churches place on evangelism, the range of their tangible evangelism practices, and the number of their new believer baptisms performed. This mixed-methods study included ten participants in the quantitative portion and four (from the quantitative sample) in the qualitative portion. Each portion involved the completion of surveys. To answer the research questions, descriptive and correlational statistics were used in the quantitative study while open coding was used in the qualitative study. Qualitative data were used to further interpret the quantitative results. Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was used to process the quantitative data and showed no correlation between the study's variables. From the study's results, the researcher concluded:

- Leadership matters when complying with the Great Commission.
- Lead pastors' perception of the state of evangelism at their churches contradicts reality.
- Lead pastors should aspire to value and prioritize evangelism more.
- Lead pastors should aspire to translate their evangelism beliefs into action better by allowing the importance of evangelism to dictate their evangelism practices.
- Churches should implement effective relational and programmatic practices into their approach to evangelism.

- The failure to translate the beliefs and value of evangelism into tangible action, failure to properly value evangelism, churches' reliance on relational evangelism exclusively, and ineffectiveness of evangelism actions are all factors that are contributing to the decline in attendance in the American Church.

In this section, the researcher discusses these conclusions in greater detail. The conclusions are meant to equip churches with the information necessary to reevaluate and improve their own approaches to evangelism in light of the study's findings.

Conclusions

In Chapter Two, the researcher constructed frameworks for the study and identified gaps in the existing literature. The theological framework for the study highlighted passages, such as the Great Commission (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Matt. 28:18-20), that provide a clear mandate for the Church to evangelize. However, declining church attendance indicates that the American Church is not evangelizing effectively. It was unclear from the existing literature if this was the result of the Church not valuing evangelism enough, a breakdown in the translation of value into action, an ineffectiveness of actions, or some combination of factors.

Leadership Matters

The study's findings indicate that no relationships exist between the level of importance churches place on evangelism, the range of their tangible evangelism practices, and the number of their new believer baptisms performed. This means that a church's value of evangelism, evangelism actions, and baptisms do not affect one another.

The study's variables should have logical progression toward evangelism success. Valuing something positive usually means one would practice it more and good results would follow. In this study, however, findings reveal that valuing evangelism does not have a logical

progression toward more baptisms for source churches. Based on literature, a key impediment to evangelism success could be behavioral integrity in leadership.

The theory of Intention and Behavior Gap described in Chapter Two identifies factors that contribute to the discrepancy between an individual's beliefs and actions. These factors include diminished awareness of one's own emotions and behavior, lack of awareness of one's intention or desired outcomes, and the inability to change behavior (Raimundo, 2020). This study's findings, including the conflict between the participants' perception and reality, support this theory. Lead pastors lack awareness regarding their churches' evangelism effectiveness. Churches will not be able to fulfill the Great Commission unless leaders address their lack of awareness and strengthen the connection between their beliefs and actions.

Conflict Between Perception and Reality

The qualitative data helped to explain the quantitative findings. However, the qualitative data also indicated that the respondents believed that relationships exist between the level of importance churches place on evangelism, the range of their tangible evangelism practices, and the number of their new believer baptisms performed. The quantitative findings determined that no such relationships exist. This means that the respondents' perception of evangelism at their churches likely contradicts reality.

This contraction may help explain why churches are experiencing ineffective evangelism. If the lead pastors are not aware of the evangelism-related issues facing their churches, they will not take steps to address them. Pastors must objectively evaluate their evangelism beliefs, practices, and results.

Pastors should value every conversion and baptism. Respondent 3, whose church had a baptism ratio of 5.45, mentioned celebrating every baptism and highlighting the stories of those

who are baptized. However, this appreciation for each baptism should not prevent pastors from acknowledging that their evangelism efforts have not been effective. It is because conversions are so important that pastors need to view their evangelism beliefs and practices critically in order to maximize their effectiveness.

It is unclear if this contradiction is the result of an overly optimistic perspective or some other factor. Only by acknowledging and addressing reality can pastors improve their churches' evangelism beliefs, practices, and results.

Value of Evangelism

The Bible is clear that evangelism is at the core of Jesus's ministry. He preached the gospel message that the Kingdom of God was here (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, Mark 1:15). Jesus has entrusted the ministry of reconciliation to His Church (*New International Version*, 1978/2005, 2 Cor. 5:11-21). Pastors who step into positions of authority in the church have a responsibility to continue Jesus's ministry and value the things He values. The Church has not done this consistently in the area of evangelism.

The findings indicate that the source churches value evangelism less than expected. Four of the ten quantitative research participants (40%) and three of the four qualitative research respondents (75%) indicated that evangelism is "very unimportant" at their church. Despite the Bible's clear mandate to evangelize, the participants acknowledged that the source churches have not embraced this command.

This, in part, is due to the competing focuses in the Church. The respondents in the qualitative portion of the study revealed that the low level of importance of evangelism is the result of prioritizing the other ministries and functions of the church. With an array of various ministries and programs vying for their attention and resources, lead pastors are not able to

prioritize evangelism the way that they are called to value it. Many of these competing ministries and programs may be beneficial and worthwhile but few, if any, are as important as evangelism.

In the theoretical framework for the study discussed in Chapter Two, the notion of competing focuses was presented as a factor that was possibly contributing to the decline of evangelism effectiveness. The literature review revealed that churches often do not prioritize evangelism in their budgets (Braley, 2021) and an over-dependency on the worship services to function as the primary method of evangelism (McKinney, 2021). The findings of the study partially supported this theoretical framework. While two of the qualitative respondents acknowledged that they had not financially prioritized evangelism in the past, they had made the necessary adjustments to prioritize evangelism. All four respondents indicated that their churches now prioritize evangelism in their budgets.

However, three of the four qualitative respondents did report that their churches' worship services were the primary method of evangelism. The source churches used sermons and holiday services as the main form of structured evangelism. They relied on the congregants to engage in relational evangelism individually. This approach does not use staff-led programs or ministries for outreach. This approach does not require the same level of involvement and resource allocation as the programmatic approach. It is easier for a church to not prioritize or value evangelism when its evangelism approach does not require a high level of money, staff, or resources.

The Bible clearly commands the Church to engage in evangelism. Only by valuing and prioritizing evangelism, even at the cost of other ministries and programs, can pastors lead their churches to accomplish their God-given purpose.

Translating Value into Action

The theoretical framework for the study in Chapter Two revealed that a lack of behavioral integrity can exist in leaders, meaning that belief does not always translate into action (Raimundo, 2020). As a result, pastors' views on evangelism may not dictate the practices they implement.

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher has concluded that the failure to translate belief into action is one of the primary reasons for the evangelistic struggles and failures at the source churches. Some of the participants indicated a level of importance of evangelism while others indicated a low level of importance of evangelism. These levels of importance did not translate into tangible action. It is the researcher's conclusion that it is not enough for lead pastors to care, or say they care, about evangelism. Their beliefs must translate into action, otherwise, they are not fully fulfilling their responsibility to evangelize.

The shift toward the relational approach to evangelism is contributing to the churches' lack of evangelism actions. The approach primarily relies on the congregation's individual evangelism acts rather than structured, corporate actions. As churches embrace this approach, they are less likely to implement evangelism actions and ministries. However, this approach limits lead pastors' ability to translate their value of evangelism into action because it is dependent on the individual congregants. When churches implement evangelism actions and ministries, they rely on the congregation to participate, but the participation is structured and measurable. It is more difficult for lead pastors to control and measure the individual evangelism of congregants in a relational approach. In essence, the relational approach limits the control and influence that a lead pastor has in translating value into action.

Based on the data, Christian churches are struggling to evangelize because their beliefs about the importance of evangelism are not driving them to implement new evangelism ministries and actions. As long as lead pastors are able to claim to value evangelism but not prove this value through action, or even openly claim not to value evangelism, the Church will struggle to change the current downward trend of attendance and membership. The Bible makes it clear that faith without action is dead, and lead pastors' view and value of evangelism is incomplete without action.

Ineffectiveness of Actions

The Related Literature section of Chapter Two discussed the different approaches to evangelism. In response to the ineffectiveness of previous methods, churches have moved away from programmatic evangelism toward relational evangelism (Brooks, 2012). However, the effectiveness of relational evangelism and the impact of abandoning programmatic evangelism had not been fully explored.

The findings from the qualitative research portion of the study also indicate that the source churches rely on loose and mostly unstructured relational approaches to evangelism. When asked about their evangelism practices, most of the respondents' responses were limited to sermons, a missionary mentality, and big events such as Christmas and Easter. An overarching intentionality or strategy was missing from the approach. Direct training and equipping outside the weekly worship service sermon or small groups were also not mentioned in any of the responses. The approach relied primarily on congregants' organic social interactions. As a result, several of the respondents reported that their church's evangelism struggled or ceased entirely when the COVID-19 pandemic hit and disrupted normal social interactions.

While organic social interactions were part of Jesus's model of evangelism, His approach also involved intentional and structured efforts as well. Pastors can help their churches follow Jesus's example of evangelism by training and equipping their congregation to evangelize in their everyday lives while also leading them in intentional times of outreach.

When the church implements an evangelism approach that only involves one-on-one evangelism, it misses out on engaging the community in service and outreach. Throughout its history, the Church has occupied a unique space in society and has made an unequalled impact on American society through charity and community service. This outreach to the community accomplishes the two-fold purpose of providing for people in need while also evangelizing.

Causes of Decline

After the Chapter Two literature review, it was unclear which factors, in particular, were contributing to the decline in attendance in the American Church. However, the data collected regarding the research variables indicate that multiple factors are responsible for the decline.

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher has concluded that one of the primary reasons for the Church's evangelism struggles is the failure to translate the beliefs and value of evangelism into tangible action. The study found no connection between how much a church valued evangelism and the number of evangelism actions it implemented. This means that pastors are not allowing the importance of evangelism to cause them to initiate new evangelism practices and ministries.

This is made worse by lead pastors' failure to value evangelism in the same way that Jesus valued evangelism during His ministry. Despite the clear biblical mandate to evangelize, the participants in the study were split on the value of evangelism. Pastors cannot effectively lead

their congregations to evangelize if they do not recognize the value and importance of evangelism.

Additionally, some churches have relied on relational evangelism exclusively rather than implementing a strategic plan that includes both relational evangelism and communal outreach. This approach lessens churches' involvement in evangelism and primarily relies on the individual's evangelism actions. While the previous corporate evangelism practices, such as door-to-door evangelism, had become ineffective and needed to be reevaluated, some churches have overcorrected by abandoning programmatic evangelism altogether.

The participants expressed the belief that the evangelism actions their churches had implemented were effective. However, the data indicated that the number of a church's evangelism actions was not connected to the number of their new believer baptisms. This means that the actions that the churches did implement, did not directly lead to an increase in baptisms.

The respondents expressed the belief that relationships exist between the level of importance churches place on evangelism, the range of their tangible evangelism practices, and the number of their new believer baptisms performed. The quantitative findings revealed that no such relationships exist. This means that the pastors' perception of evangelism at their churches is not aligned with reality.

These factors all contribute to the current state of evangelism and the decline in attendance in the American Church. The study found that pastors do not value evangelism the way that they are commanded by the Bible. Their value of evangelism does not translate into actions and the actions that they do implement do not necessarily lead to new believer baptisms. Pastors do not recognize the disconnection between their perception of their churches' evangelism and reality. In essence, this study concludes that the American Church must

reevaluate each aspect of its approach to evangelism objectively in order to reverse the current trends and experience more effective evangelism.

Theoretical Implications

In Chapter One, the researcher examined the theoretical problems that have contributed to the Church's current state of evangelism, mainly the negative perception of the Church by the unchurched and the consumer mindset that has impacted some congregations.

The findings of the study indicate that many churches have shifted their evangelism approach to rely on relational evangelism, often to the neglect of communal outreach. This finding supports the theoretical concern that the negative view of the Church has been formed by exposure to the Catholic Church, Evangelical mega-churches, and preachers on television (Vermurlen, 2015). The unchurched do not experience the tangible expression of God's love through the Church because the Church's community involvement has decreased in order to focus on individual interactions. If churches reengaged with their communities through evangelism, they may be able to address this issue and begin changing the perception of the Church among the unchurched.

Additionally, the theoretical concern of a consumer mentality in congregations affects the relational approach that the study found many churches are implementing. The consumer mentality creates an inwardly focused and self-serving perspective in the Church (Ringma, 2004). Churches could benefit from addressing this concern by implementing more structured outreach. Rather than just relying on congregants to evangelize to the people in their daily lives, pastors have the opportunity to work against the consumer mindset by leading their congregations in structured, strategic, communal outreach.

Moving forward, the study's findings can be used to develop a theory for addressing the Church's declining attendance numbers in the United States. Based on the findings of the study, lead pastors' value of evangelism does not translate into tangible action. As such, the theoretical implications of the study are the development of the theory that the American Church can combat the trend of declining attendance by translating its value of evangelism into tangible evangelism actions more frequently and improving the effectiveness of its evangelism actions, potentially by implementing more structured and communal outreach efforts.

Empirical Implications

There was a theoretical expectation that lead pastors would value, or at least claim to value, evangelism because of the theological framework of the study. However, in the limited sample size of the study, the empirical data indicate that lead pastors do not value evangelism to the degree which might be expected based on the theological framework. While some of the participants claimed to value evangelism but failed to prove that with their leadership decisions or tangible action, other participants openly admitted that their churches do not value evangelism.

Much of the existing literature about evangelism and the decline of the Church in the United States has focused on changes in society or in the congregation. But the findings of this study have implications for church leadership and indicate that further research is needed to understand the role that leadership failures, especially in regard to evangelism, have contributed to the decline of the American Church.

Practical Implications

The empirical implication that many lead pastors do not value evangelism to the degree that they are commanded to in scripture is concerning for the future of the Church. However, on

a practical level, this also means that lead pastors may have more influence on evangelism results than previously realized. If the breakdown between the lead pastor's beliefs about evangelism and tangible evangelism actions is a significant contributor to the decline of the American Church, then lead pastors have the ability to impact the situation. Rather than needing to change society or entire congregations in order to have evangelism success, lead pastors can make adjustments to their own practices and decision-making processes.

Practically, lead pastors are limited in their ability to impact the external factors that limit church growth but can directly influence the decision to take more evangelism actions or implement a more structured approach to evangelism. If lead pastors want their churches to grow through conversion, they can choose to practically implement the changes necessary to take more evangelism actions or implement a different approach to evangelism.

Applications

The findings of this study are primarily applicable to lead pastors. As the participants in the study, lead pastors and their beliefs and practices were the subjects of the study. The results indicate that lead pastors need to value evangelism more and convert that value into effective action more consistently in order to improve their church's growth through conversion.

This application process begins with studying scripture. This involves studying the Bible's instruction about evangelism and the role that the Church is commissioned with playing in evangelism. By exegeting these passages, pastors can allow scripture to dictate their beliefs and practices.

Pastors can then reevaluate their decision-making process in light of scripture. Pastors should reorganize their budgets and priorities to reflect the value of evangelism found in the

Bible. While other ministries may compete for resources and focus, scripture indicates that evangelism should be prioritized as one of the most important functions of the church.

With the budget and resources properly allocated, lead pastors can then implement tangible evangelism actions. These actions should include both relational evangelism as well as structured community outreach. This approach allows for congregants to individually evangelize to the people in their daily lives and also brings the congregation together to serve the community in a larger scale way.

Research Limitations

The biggest limitation of this study was the small sample size. Although the researcher sent out 425 invitations to participate in the study, the researcher only received 10 responses that fit the study's criteria. The size of the sample limits the generalization of the study's findings. If the sample size had been larger, the researcher could have more confidently applied the findings of the study to the broader research population. However, it is unknown how representative the source churches are of the research population at large because the sample size was limited. The sample size was small enough that it is conceivable that the source churches are outliers who do not reflect the state of evangelism in the other churches in the research population. The researcher could have addressed this limitation by expanding the criteria for participation in the study to allow other staff members to respond or by offering incentives to encourage more responses.

Additionally, the research was limited also by the dependence on participants to self-report the data. The study relied on participants to evaluate the level of importance that their church places on evangelism because the study measured the participants' claimed value of evangelism. As such, it is possible that the participants provided biased or faulty information.

The researcher could have used objective measures to gauge the churches' levels of importance of evangelism, such as looking at churches' published list of values or calculating the number of evangelism-related sermons preached. However, by using self-reported data, the study was able to produce findings about the perspective of lead pastors which could have important implications. The study indicated that there is a disconnect between the way some lead pastors view their value of evangelism and the realities of the state of evangelism at their churches.

Further Research

In the process of answering the study's research questions, the findings of the study also indicated that there are several relevant subtopics related to evangelism that deserve further research in subsequent studies. These subtopics were mentioned during the study but fall outside of the scope of the study and warrant further research.

Effectiveness of Evangelism

Further research is needed to determine how effective the evangelism actions taken by churches are and how churches could make them more effective. The data indicate that the number of evangelism actions taken does not correlate with the number of new believer baptisms performed at a church. It is unclear how the use of a relational approach, which involves fewer evangelism actions, or a programmatic approach impacts the results. It stands to reason that some evangelism actions are more effective than others. However, further research is needed to determine the effectiveness of the various evangelism approaches and the evangelism actions associated with each approach.

Evangelism Approaches

The qualitative research portion of the study indicated that the source churches primarily used a relational approach to evangelism that almost exclusively relies on the congregants to

evangelize to the people in their spheres of influence throughout the week. While there are benefits to this approach and relational evangelism should be a component of a church's evangelism strategy, this approach can come at the expense of communal outreach. Further research is needed to determine the extent to which churches have shifted away from communal outreach towards more of a relational evangelism approach. These two approaches also warrant further research to determine their effectiveness. Understanding the value and impact of relational and communal evangelism is important in order for churches to understand how to implement a comprehensive approach to evangelism.

Low Value of Evangelism

Although the level of importance of evangelism was found to have no correlation with the number of evangelism actions taken or the baptism ratio, the researcher did not anticipate that participants would indicate such a low level of importance of evangelism. Of the 10 participants, four responded that evangelism was "very unimportant" at their church. It is possible that this low view of evangelism has implications for the church beyond the scope of this study and warrants further research. Additionally, if pastors do not value evangelism despite the clear biblical mandate, there may be other essential areas of biblical instruction that are being neglected. If pastors are willing to undervalue evangelism, further research is needed to determine what other commands and responsibilities they are failing to prioritize.

Alternative Settings

This study exclusively examined the state of evangelism in nondenominational, suburban, Christian churches in the United States. As such, the findings of this study are limited to churches that fit the study criteria. Further research is needed in order to understand the state of

evangelism in churches outside of this study's criteria. A similar study could be conducted to examine evangelism in denominational, urban, rural, or non-American churches.

The Effects of the Pandemic

In their qualitative responses, multiple respondents mentioned the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic had on their relational approach to evangelism. The social disruption of the pandemic made relationship-building difficult. While there has been some initial research about the effects of the pandemic on the church, more research is needed to understand the way that the pandemic has affected evangelism, specifically the relational approach to evangelism.

It is unclear how the pandemic affected the effectiveness of relational evangelism. The respondents indicated that the pandemic had a lasting effect on both the relational evangelism actions their congregants were able to take as well as the mentality and missional mindset of the congregation. Current research has studied churches' immediate response to the pandemic (Hartford Institute for Religion Research, 2021), but further research is needed to understand the ways that churches adjust their long-term approach to evangelism in response to the pandemic.

Summary

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to examine the state of evangelism at non-denominational, baptistic, evangelistic, Christian churches in suburban areas of the United States by collecting both quantitative and qualitative data. In this chapter, the researcher used the findings of the study to draw conclusions about the current state of evangelism. Based on the findings of this study, the researcher concluded that one of the primary reasons for the Church's evangelism struggles is the failure to translate beliefs and value of evangelism into tangible action, made worse by lead pastors' low view of evangelism and neglect of communal outreach.

These conclusions have important implications and applications for churches. The findings of the study provide the data needed for churches to reevaluate their approach to evangelism and implement changes. These applications involve lead pastors using scripture to shape their view and value of evangelism, allowing that value to impact their decision-making, and reevaluating their approach to evangelism. If lead pastors are able to apply these changes, they may be able to affect the state of evangelism in the Church.

The study was limited by a small sample size. A larger sample would have allowed the results of the study to be generalized more confidently. Additionally, the study was also limited by its reliance on participants to self-report data.

Beyond the scope of the study, there are several other evangelism-related subtopics that warrant further study. These subtopics include the effectiveness of specific evangelism actions, the different evangelism approaches that churches can implement, and the effect of lead pastors having a low view of evangelism.

The American Church is in decline. This study has concluded that the failure to value evangelism and put that value into action effectively has contributed to that problem. If churches are going to turn that trend around, they must reevaluate their approach to evangelism and implement changes. Lead pastors must value evangelism the way that Jesus commands His Church to value evangelism. This value must then translate into effective evangelism actions. If churches can value evangelism and engage the community around them in effective evangelism, they can increase their growth through conversion and move the American Church towards fulfilling the purpose with which it has been commissioned.

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Appendix A: Written Invitation to Participate in the Study

Dear Recipient:

As a graduate student in the John W. Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctorate degree. The purpose of my research is to understand how the value that churches place on evangelism impacts the church's evangelism practices and the new believer conversions that occur as a result of those practices. I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be 18 years of age or older, and must be a lead pastor from a nondenominational, baptistic, evangelistic, Christian church located in a suburban area of the United States. Participants' churches must have an average weekly worship service attendance between 50 and 1,000 adults.

Participants will be asked to complete an initial questionnaire (approximately five minutes). Some participants will be selected to complete an additional follow-up questionnaire (approximately twenty minutes).

Please consider inviting other lead pastors to participate in the study. The study aims to include lead pastors from at least 50 different churches. If you know other lead pastors who fit the criteria of the study, please reply to this email, and provide the researcher with their contact information so that the researcher can include them in the study.

Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential. Participant identities will not be disclosed in the study report.

To participate, please click here (include hyperlink to online survey)

A consent document is attached to the survey. The consent document contains additional information about my research. After you have read the consent form, please click the consent signature button to proceed to the survey. Doing so will indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to take part in the study.

Sincerely,

Shane Redding



Appendix B: Snowball Sampling Written Invitation to Participate in the Study

Dear Recipient:

As a graduate student in the John W. Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctorate degree. The purpose of my research is to understand how the value that churches place on evangelism impacts the church's evangelism practices and the new believer conversions that occur as a result of those practices. I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

You have been recommended to participate in this study by [\[Insert Name\]](#)

Participants must be 18 years of age or older, and must be a lead pastor from a nondenominational, baptistic, evangelistic, Christian church located in a suburban area of the United States. Participants' churches must have an average weekly worship service attendance between 50 and 1,000 adults.

Participants will be asked to complete an initial questionnaire (approximately five minutes). Some participants will be selected to complete an additional follow-up questionnaire (approximately twenty minutes).

Please consider inviting other lead pastors to participate in the study. The study aims to include lead pastors from at least 50 different churches. If you know other lead pastors who fit the criteria of the study, please reply to this email, and provide the researcher with their contact information so that the researcher can include them in the study.

Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential. Participant identities will not be disclosed in the study report.

To participate, please click here (include hyperlink to online survey)

A consent document is attached to the survey. The consent document contains additional information about my research. After you have read the consent form, please click the consent signature button to proceed to the survey. Doing so will indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to take part in the study.

Sincerely,

Shane Redding



Appendix C: External Focus Questionnaire (EFQ)

PART 1 - Before completing the survey questions, please provide identifying information and answer the screening questions to verify that you and your church meets the criteria for participation in the study.

Identifying Information (used for follow-up if needed and will be kept confidential):

Name:

Email:

Church:

Position:

Screening questions:

- Does your church meet the following description: Christian, nondenominational, evangelistic (practicing evangelism), baptistic (practicing new believer baptisms)?
- Is your church located in a suburban area?
- Is your average weekly worship service attendance between 50 and 1,000 adults?
- Are you the lead pastor at your church?

PART 2 - The following questions seek to understand the level of importance that your church places on evangelism (how much your church claims to value evangelism), the evangelism-related actions (evangelism-related events and ministries) your church has taken over the last three years, and your church's evangelism results (as illustrated by the number of new believer baptisms).

For the purposes of this study, evangelism is defined as the act of communicating the Gospel (the message that Jesus Christ is Lord) to those outside the Church. When answering the following questions, please keep this definition in mind.

1. Based on your church's stated values (e.g., core values, vision statements, mission statements, sermons) how important is evangelism to your church?

- (1) Very unimportant (2) Unimportant (3) Neither important nor unimportant
(4) Important (5) Very Important

2. How many new evangelism actions (new evangelism-related ministries, programs, church-wide campaigns, etc.) has your church started between July 2019 and July 2022?

- (1) Less than 3 (2) 3 to 5 (3) 6 to 9 (4) 10 to 12 (5) More than 12

3. How many new believer baptisms has your church performed between July 2019 and July 2022?

4. What is the average attendance of your church's weekly worship services?

Thank you for completing the questionnaire. Please review and edit your responses, if needed prior to submission

Appendix D: External Focus Follow-up Questionnaire (EFFQ)

The following questions seek to understand why the value your church places on evangelism, your church's evangelism practices, and your church's evangelism results do or do not affect each other.

Identifying Information (used for matching responses from initial questionnaire, will be kept confidential)

Name:

Email:

Church:

Section 1: The relationship between the importance of evangelism and evangelism practices

1. How does your church communicate the level of importance that it places on evangelism? (Through sermons, mission statement, etc.)
 - a. Do you feel that you are able to fully communicate the importance of evangelism to your congregation? Why or why not?

2. Describe the types of evangelism practices at your church (ministries, programs, church-wide campaigns, etc.)

3. Do you feel that there is a connection between how much your church values evangelism and the evangelism practices at your church?
 - a. Why or why not?
 - b. Describe an instance when you saw this connection or disconnection occur

4. In what ways does the level of importance that your church places on evangelism affect the evangelism practices (new ministries, events, campaigns, etc.) at your church?
 - a. How does the level of importance that your church places on evangelism factor into staff meetings? How is it discussed among the staff?

5. When making major decisions such as the allocation of the budget, how is evangelism prioritized compared to other focuses and ministries?
 - a. Why?
 - b. Describe the decision-making process surrounding the last major evangelism-related decision your church had to make

6. What factors are obstacles or hindrances that impact your ability to translate the importance of evangelism into evangelism practices?

Section 2: The relationship between evangelism actions and new believer baptisms

7. Describe your most effective evangelism practice.
 - a. What makes it effective?
 - b. What makes it different than your other evangelism practices?

8. How have the evangelism actions taken by your church affected the number of new believer baptisms performed by your church?
 - a. Describe a recent instance in which an evangelism action led to someone deciding to get baptized at your church
9. How effective do you think your church's evangelism actions have been?
 - a. What contributes to their effectiveness?
 - b. How could they be more effective?
 - c. What has prevented them from being more effective?
10. What evangelism practices do you believe would increase the number of new believer baptisms performed at your church?
 - a. Why?

Section 3: The relationship between the importance of evangelism and new believer baptisms

11. How has your church's view of evangelism affected the number of new believer baptisms your church has performed?
 - a. Has your church's view of evangelism translated into tangible results?
 - b. Why has or why hasn't your church's view of evangelism translated into tangible results?
12. Do you believe that the number of new believer baptisms performed by your church is reflective of the level of importance that your church places on evangelism?
 - a. Why or why not?
13. What would allow the level of importance your church places on evangelism to better translate into more new believer baptisms?

Thank you for completing the questionnaire. Please review and edit your responses, if needed prior to submission

Appendix E: IRB Approval

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

October 5, 2022

Shane Redding
Nancy Flanagan

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY22-23-179 Commissioned: A Mixed-Methods Study of Evangelism Beliefs, Practices, and Results

Dear Shane Redding, Nancy Flanagan,

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 46:104(d):

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(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) 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(s) 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

Appendix F: Written Invitation to Participate in the Qualitative Portion of the Study

Dear Recipient:

Thank you for completing the External Focus Questionnaire. Based on your responses, you have been selected to participate in the second portion of the research study by completing the External Focus Follow-up Questionnaire.

The purpose of this aspect of the research study is to gather additional information from your perspective and experience. Specifically, I am interested in knowing how your church's beliefs regarding evangelism have impacted its evangelism actions and results. By completing this second questionnaire, you will provide me with rich details of how evangelism looks at your church. This should take approximately twenty minutes to complete.

As with the first questionnaire, your name and other identifying information will be requested on the second questionnaire. However, the information will remain confidential. Participant identities will not be disclosed in the study report.

To participate, please click here (include hyperlink to online survey)

A consent document is attached to the survey. The consent document contains additional information about my research. After you have read the consent form, please click the consent signature button to proceed to the survey. Doing so will indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to take part in the study.

Sincerely,

Shane Redding



Appendix G: Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient Value Table

Correlation Coefficient ρ	Strength of Correlation
.000	No correlation
.001 to .400	Weak correlation
.401 to .700	Moderate correlation
.701 to .999	Strong correlation
1	Perfect correlation

Note. Based on Schober et al. (2018)

Appendix H: EFFQ Responses and Coding

Research Question 4

RQ4		Responses	Emerging Data
<p>In what ways, if any, do lead pastors describe the level of importance their churches place on evangelism?</p> <p><i>Subsidiary Question (EFFQ1): How does your church communicate the level of importance that it places on evangelism?</i></p>	1	Sermons because evangelism is one of the church's stated values	Sermons (100%)
	2	Sermons also small groups and "bringing missionaries to the forefront"	Church Values (50%)
	3	Sermons, encouraging congregants to invite their neighbors into their homes; also the church's vision and values.	Mission Work (50%)
	4	Sermons, teachings, missions, local outreach	
RQ4		Responses	Emerging Data
<p>In what ways, if any, do lead pastors describe the level of importance their churches place on evangelism?</p> <p><i>Subsidiary Question (EFFQ 4): In what ways does the level of importance that your church places on evangelism affect the evangelism practices?</i></p>	1	Drives church's outreach events.	Importance Drives evangelism (50%)
	2	Talk about how the Word of God should be central to every ministry	
	3	Drives what they choose to promote	
	4	Affects congregational involvement in evangelism practices. Congregation support outreach ministries with prayer, finance, and involvement	
RQ4		Responses	Emerging Data
<p>In what ways, if any, do lead pastors describe the level of importance their churches place on evangelism?</p> <p><i>Subsidiary Question (EFFQ5): When making major decisions such as the allocation of the budget, how is evangelism prioritized compared to other focuses and ministries?</i></p>	1	Big outreach events, such as Christmas and Easter services, are factored into the budget; excited about re-starting this work after the pandemic	Evangelism is prioritized in the church's budget (75%)
	2	Church established a goal recently to increase the evangelism budget by 1% annually; added new missionary families to the budget	
	3	No salvation decisions after the pandemic; "lack of success"; Recommitted to prioritizing evangelism by inviting and loving on mission again.	
	4	Highly prioritized in the budget; recently hired a campus evangelist regarding college outreach.	
RQ4		Responses	Emerging Data
<p>In what ways, if any, do lead pastors describe the level of importance their churches place on evangelism?</p> <p><i>Subsidiary Question (EFFQ6): What factors are obstacles or hindrances that impact your ability to translate the importance of evangelism into evangelism practices?</i></p>	1	No hindrances	<p>Conflict with schedules or timing of other ministries (50%)</p> <p>Dependent on congregation (50%)</p>
	2	Ignorance of the Gospel; lack of time in schedules; "cultural Christianity"; competition with other church ministry schedules	
	3	Relational approach to evangelism – "hard to translate a message into a backyard barbecue or a bonfire"	
	4	Gifted ministers in charge of other ministries draw the church's attention away from evangelism	

Research Question 5

RQ5		Responses	Emerging Data
<p>In what ways, if any, do lead pastors describe their churches' outreach-oriented ministries and initiatives?</p> <p><i>Subsidiary Question (EFFQ2): Describe the types of evangelism practices at your church (ministries, programs, church-wide campaigns, etc.)</i></p>	1	Emphasize outreach during Christmas and Easter	<p>Relational (75%)</p> <p>Programmatic (25%)</p>
	2	Hospitality comprised of "table fellowship that includes non-believers, workplace evangelism (through deep and meaningful relationships)"; doesn't believe true evangelism happens through programs.	
	3	Church-wide campaigns; encourages congregation to share faith with people in their lives	
	4	Long-term investments, specific ministries aimed at groups of people such as college students and politicians; biblical counseling focused on the community	
<p>In what ways, if any, do lead pastors describe their churches' outreach-oriented ministries and initiatives?</p> <p><i>Subsidiary Question (EFFQ3): Do you feel that there is a connection between how much your church values evangelism and the evangelism practices at your church?</i></p>	1	Yes. Saw congregation members bring friends and family to church, leading to baptism	<p>Connection between the value church places on evangelism and the evangelism actions of the church (75%)</p>
	2	No. Most Christian value evangelism but do not practice it. Maturity and commitment are factors. "Cultural Christians" are not serious about their faith.	
	3	Yes. However, the pandemic negatively impacted this connection...disruption.	
	4	Yes. Programmatic Approach. Church funds, develops, and promotes outreach ministries.	
<p>In what ways, if any, do lead pastors describe their churches' outreach-oriented ministries and initiatives?</p> <p><i>Subsidiary Question (EFFQ7): Describe your most effective evangelism practice.</i></p>	1	Sundays morning worship	<p>Relationship-based (50%)</p> <p>Community or outreach based (50%)</p>
	2	Relationship and community building (no programmatic emphasis)	
	3	Through relationships.	
	4	Development of long-term outreach ministries (short-term is ineffective). LT has a "deeper level of involvement in the lives of those needed the Gospel.	

RQ5 (continued)	Responses	Emerging Data
<p>In what ways, if any, do lead pastors describe their churches' outreach-oriented ministries and initiatives?</p> <p><i>Subsidiary Question (EFFQ8): How have the evangelism action taken by your church affected the number of new believer baptisms performed by your church?</i></p>	<p>1 Evangelism actions have “resulted directly in baptisms.” Example someone listened to Sunday worship and decided to get baptized recently.</p> <p>2 Personal evangelism results in baptism. Example of his investment in someone for 9 months who decided to get baptized.</p> <p>3 Natural part of church's relational evangelism actions. Example: Man who began participation in a small group resulted in baptism</p> <p>4 Increase in baptisms. Conversion after hearing the Gospel during sermons.</p>	<p>Church's evangelism actions resulted in new believer baptisms (100%)</p>
<p>In what ways, if any, do lead pastors describe their churches' outreach-oriented ministries and initiatives?</p> <p><i>Subsidiary Question (EFFQ9): How effective do you think your church's evangelism actions have been?</i></p>	<p>1 Very effective. Consistent presentation of the Gospel message.</p> <p>2 Very effective. “The Holy Spirit, time, caring, doing life together”</p> <p>3 60%. Investment in relationships, being on mission.</p> <p>4 Becoming increasingly effective.</p>	<p>Very effective (50%)</p> <p>Becoming effective (50%)</p>
<p>In what ways, if any, do lead pastors describe their churches' outreach-oriented ministries and initiatives?</p> <p><i>Subsidiary Question (EFFQ10): What evangelism practices do you believe would increase the number of new believer baptisms performed at your church?</i></p>	<p>1 More teaching on evangelism and baptism</p> <p>2 Importance of people living out their faith and evangelizing in their neighborhoods, communities, and workplaces. More effective if more members of the congregation built loving and intentional relationship with their neighbors (from EFFQ9)</p> <p>3 Focus on improving the effectiveness of the church's relational approach to evangelism. Commentary: Busyness is a hindrance “If you aren't hanging out with people you are not sharing your faith.”</p> <p>4 None named. Commentary: “We are doing all we can reasonably do.”</p>	<p>More focus on the relational approach to community evangelism would increase new believer baptisms (50%)</p>

Research Question 6

RQ6	Responses	Emerging Data
<p>In what ways, positively or negatively, do lead pastors perceive that their churches' emphasis on evangelism impacts their churches' new believer baptisms?</p> <p><i>Subsidiary Question (EFFQ11):</i> How has your church's view of evangelism affected the number of new believer baptisms your church has performed?</p>	1	Increase in baptisms
	2	No response
	3	Connection between emphasis on evangelism and the number of new believer baptisms. "It's always driven it and kept them happening."
	4	Increase in baptisms
<p>In what ways, positively or negatively, do lead pastors perceive that their churches' emphasis on evangelism impacts their churches' new believer baptisms?</p> <p><i>Subsidiary Question (EFFQ12):</i> Do you believe that the number of new believer baptisms performed by your church is reflective of the level of importance that your church places on evangelism?</p>	1	Yes. Church values evangelism and "we talk about baptism a lot."
	2	No response
	3	Yes. "They are connected. You communicate what matters and you become what you celebrate."
	4	Yes.
<p>In what ways, positively or negatively, do lead pastors perceive that their churches' emphasis on evangelism impacts their churches' new believer baptisms?</p> <p><i>Subsidiary Question (EFFQ13):</i> What would allow the level of importance your church places on evangelism to better translate into more new believer baptisms?</p>	1	None identified
	2	No response
	3	"Celebrating stories on video" Highlight the testimonies of those who chose baptism.
	4	Implementation of new ministries and evangelism practices

Appendix I: Informed Consent

Title of the Project: Commissioned: A Mixed-Methods Study of Evangelism Beliefs, Practices, and Results

Principal Investigator: Shane Redding, Liberty University Doctoral Candidate

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be at least 18 years old and must be a lead pastor from a nondenominational, baptistic, evangelistic, Christian church located in a suburban area of the United States. Your church must have an average weekly worship service attendance between 50 and 1,000 adults. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

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

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to understand if and how the importance of evangelism influences evangelism practices and results in the church. The study will explore how the value that churches place on evangelism impacts the church's evangelism practices and the new believer conversions that occur as a result of those practices.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following things:

1. Complete the External Focus Questionnaire. This should take approximately 5 minutes to complete.
2. Consider inviting other lead pastors to participate in the study. The study aims to include lead pastors from at least 50 different churches. If you know other lead pastors who fit the criteria of the study, please provide the researcher with their contact information so that the researcher can include them in the study.
3. Complete a follow-up survey (External Focus Follow-up Questionnaire), if requested. The researcher will select a few participants to complete a follow-up questionnaire. The follow-up questionnaire will gather finer details from your perspective and experience about how your church's beliefs about evangelism have impacted its evangelism actions and results. By doing this, the researcher will get a more complete picture of what evangelism looks like at your church. The second questionnaire should take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study. Benefits to society include providing churches with data about the current state of evangelism. This data will help pastors lead their churches to more effective evangelism practices.

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 and confidential. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a study participant or church. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the 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 or codes. Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision on whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, exit the electronic survey prior to submission.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Shane Redding. If you have any questions, **you are encouraged** to contact him at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Nancy Watkins Flanagan, [REDACTED].

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.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

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 study team using the information provided above.

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

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date